

Learning Cluster Methodology

This document proposes a **methodology for Learning Cluster (LC) establishment and the initiation of corresponding peer exchange** among municipalities and practitioners.

LC definition

In the project's context, a **LC is defined** as follows: *A learning cluster is a self-steered and collaborative Capacity Development format that joins practitioners of state and non-state stakeholders sharing the same work environment to benefit from complementary know-how and diverse experiences to develop and scale up applicable solutions and successful approaches in the relevant work environment guaranteeing economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights of women, children and youths, elderly, people with disabilities and minorities and their equal participation in society.*

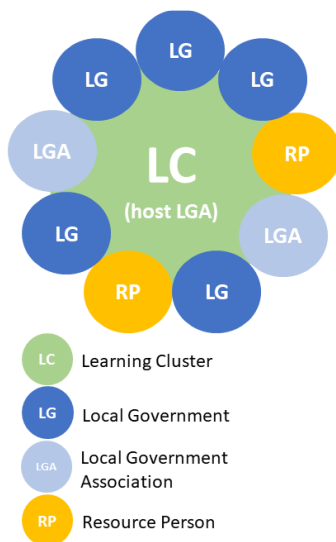
Guiding methodological LC principles
Self-steering
Collaboration
Joining practitioners
Complementary know-how
Diverse experiences
Applicable solutions
Successful approaches
Relevance work environment
Guarantee of ESC rights

LC composition and Functions of LC members

It joins LGs, LGAs and Resource Persons (RPs) forming a LC on a particular and successful social approach that is hosted by LGA. Their **functions matter**:

Function of Host LGA: Each LC is coordinated and implemented by the **host Local Government Association (LGA)**. Corresponding project coordinator (host LGA project coordinator) is tasked with the overall LC organisation and facilitation. The LGA has the ownership for application of community based service in the work environment and to scale it up. In addition, it backs the RPs to share good practice/s regarding the successful approach, and acts as source of know-how and coach for conceptualization and its future application.

The host LGA is responsible to organise the LC in close coordination with the LC members and the RP, in particular.



Function of LGs: The LGs, their practitioners in the field of ESC rights, are the LC members. Their intention is to build on the knowledge they have on community based services and to learn from the good practices of a RP regarding the application of one successful approach; and, thus, to benefit from corresponding lessons learnt.

To maximise this benefit, the LGs enter the LC prepared with a particular case of their work environment related to the successful approach, if possible. Such case facilitates association of the good practice of the RP to the context of a LC member and its future application, as the LGs will prepare corresponding concept to apply the approach in their municipalities.

All LC members pro-actively collaborate complementing the know-how of the RP and sharing their experiences and obstacles faced in the area of the successful approach. Furthermore, they feedback successful alterations made in course of the contextualisation of a

successful approach and corresponding scaling-up so that all LC members as well as the host LGA can benefit from. In course of the conceptualisation, they provide support to other LC members acting as a coach, discussing potentially faced challenges and brainstorming on solutions etc.

Functions of RPs: The RPs are LC members, too. They are either practitioners of a LG, a non-state actor or an expert that owns the good practice/s regarding the successful approach. They share the good practice/s with the other LC members, the LGs, and act as fundamental source of knowhow. The RPs pro-actively contribute to sharing experiences and lessons learnt with regard to a successful approach. They are put in scene, so to speak, by the host LGA, lead the provision of input but do neither dominate other LC members nor take over a host LGA function. If agreed on prior to the LC, they can share moderation duties with the host LGA. In course of the conceptualisation, they are key advisors coaching other LC members to facilitate the conceptualisation and the future application of a successful approach.

Functions of LGAs: The LGAs have rather an overserving character. However, representatives of other host LGAs or future host LGAs take the opportunity to learn and exchange on how to manage a LC. Furthermore, they can provide additional input to the knowhow of a LG and/or a RP on a successful approach.

LC design

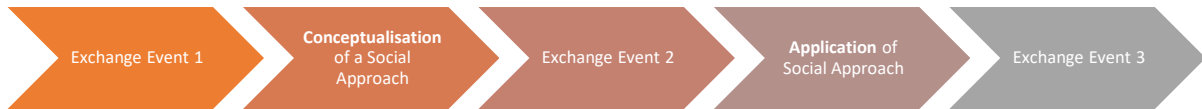
A sound **preparatory phase** shall be considered before establishing the LCs. The selection of LGs will be done by LGAs based on previously agreed selection criteria.

As a LC is a very dynamic CD format, there might be various designs tailored to the successful approach and composition of the LC. For sure, the design will change in course of the LC conduction and continuously will be adapted to the dynamics of the LC members.

However, the following illustration proposes a **generic LC design** that can be taken as starting point:

The LC consists of three **peer exchange events (EE)** a **period of conceptualisation (C)** and a **period of application (A)**. By conceptualisation, the development phase is meant allowing LC members to develop a concept for the future application of a successful social community-based service. The

application period is the phase where the LC members start to apply the service in their municipality based on the concept.



Between the first and second exchange event, the period of conceptualisation takes place. Here, LC members start developing the concept according to the input provided and action plan template introduced in EE1. The concepts shall be presented in EE2, in which other LC members provide feedback. Based on the feedback, the concepts are consolidated.

Afterwards, the period of application takes place between the second and third exchange event. Here, LC members start the application of the social approach and service. Naturally, they can get continuous support and feedback from other LC members and the RPs, in case of challenges or open questions during the implementation of the approach. In general, the host LGA and RPs are coaching and supporting the conceptualisation and application period, e.g. by quickly responding to urgent questions that need sudden reaction through mentorship sessions. LC members use the conceptualisation period to clarify emerging questions, if any, allowing them to develop the concept and to start application.

The third exchange event focuses on a) sharing first experiences on the application of the successful approaches, b) evaluating the learning experience and c) identifying a potential way forward. It is planned that all members of the five LCs meet benefitting from a rich set of experiences regarding the start of the application of the successful approaches.

Key aspects of facilitation

The open learning outcome is mandatory and leads to some key aspects of facilitation. At this stage, the following aspects crucial for LC facilitation are highlighted:

- The learning goal of the LC is to **transfer of knowhow** to the LC members enabling to scale-up a successful approach.
- The task of the LC members is to **learn from each other** and to choose what they want to learn and whom they want to support in learning.
- The purpose of a LC is **collaborative learning** that is created by the LC members.
- In consequence, **flexible facilitation** adapting to the dynamics of the LC members is key and calls for the absence of dominance by the LC Resource Person.
- The LC shall include the RP in such manner that the **RP is able to boost collaborative learning** among the LC members.

To conclude, moderating a LC requires sound facilitation skills. The RP must steadily adapt to the LC members (and their dynamics). For sure, the **success of a LC very much depends on the competences of the RP** (the moderation tandem of the host LGA project coordinator and the RP) and his/her capacity to successfully handover the so-called driving seat to the LC members aiming at steadily withdrawing from his/her original moderation function.