



Index on Communities of Practice for Inclusion (iCoPi) - a Reflection Tool for School Teams

Erasmus+ Project

I CO-COPE: Inclusion through
Interprofessional Collaboration in a
Community of Practice in Education

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Introduction

This reflection tool for school teams – the iCoPi - was developed as part of the I CO-COPE project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and developed between 2023-2026. The project's overall goal was to promote sustainable development of Communities of Practice (CoP) at schools, developing capacity to cope with inclusive education' challenges through interprofessional collaboration and students' agency. In that scope of action, a tool that all professionals can use to reflect on their own processes of collaborative work and of prompting students' agency towards the improvement of inclusion in the school was developed.

Inclusion, Interprofessional Collaboration, Students' Agency and Communities of Practice (CoP)

The building of inclusive environments of learning has been assumed as a critical goal across the education systems of the European countries. Building “**Inclusive environments**” means creating access and quality education for all students, ensuring meaningful and high-quality educational opportunities to all students along their friends and peers, regardless their diverse backgrounds and needs (EASNIE, 2015).

To adjust learning environments for valuing and responding to students' forms of diversity (cultural, linguistic, ethnic or developmental) involves multidimensional processes from different sectors, areas of knowledge and namely between the professionals within the school. Interprofessional collaboration is a critical requirement to cope with the complex realities of each school and with the wide range of local staff and contextual circumstances and needs. Here, **interprofessional collaboration** is understood as “*joint efforts in teams to achieve mutually desired outcomes through shared decision-making*” (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020, p. 542). Examples of these joint efforts include:

- Teaching together in a same classroom;
- Reflective conversations between professionals to reach alternative instructional approaches;

- Problem solving through mutual sharing of expertise;
- Collective learning activities.

Creating inclusive environments means also to build a democratic school community in which all students experience and participate democratically. **Students' agency** has been defined as *“having influence to make transformational change within the educational environment (...) when learners are able to initiate discussions, take action and have shared power to influence decisions”* (EASNIE, 2022, p. 23). The right of learners' agency requires creating necessary conditions for the learners to be heard and to be agents on their community, starting with opportunities for joint deliberation in the context of class-group management and progressively moving towards the co-design, co-leadership and co-governance on matters related to school management.

Interprofessional collaboration and students' agency, both are ways to understand inclusion as joint processes of learning and problem-solving in a school community. **Communities of Practice (CoP)** consist in a structured approach for collective and contextual embedded learning that results from a shared focus and practice, and a continuous dialogue. The CoP approach combines three basic elements (Wenger, 1998):

- Domain – A common and shared interest that brings the community together.
- Community - Relationships among members that enable them to learn from each other.
- Practice - Members deepen their knowledge and skills by sharing resources, experiences, and strategies.

This reflection tool aims to improve conditions for the schools to set up CoP around inclusion-related dilemmas.

Development of the Reflection Tool iCoPi

The iCoPi consists of a set of questions which address the core values, principles and the practices defining **inclusive education, interprofessional collaboration, students' agency and CoP**. The tool is drawn on a literature review – intitled *Mapping CoP: a knowledge base* (Silveira-Maia *et al.*, 2025) - in which 38 scientific texts were examined for the identification of core principles and successful practices around the four concepts. Well-established instruments related to inclusion were also used as inspiration (e.g., IECEE Self Reflection tool from the EASNIE (2017), or the Index for Inclusion from Booth & Ainscow (2002)). The development of the iCoPi involved a validation process that included the revision by the I CO-COPE project members, as well as its piloting in the 8 associated schools of the four partner-countries: Belgium, Portugal, Austria and Slovakia.

How to use the iCoPi

The questions of iCoPi were designed to provide a picture of the schools' preparedness to initiate a CoP focused on inclusion-related dilemmas. The tool is intended to be used flexibly – in which new questions can be added by the user(s) - for individual or collective reflection. In both modalities, the intention of using this tool is:

1. to support a common understanding of the concepts of interprofessional collaboration, students' agency and CoP for inclusive education purposes;
2. to raise awareness about the importance of interprofessional collaboration, students' agency and CoP for creating inclusive settings;
3. to identify and prioritize areas in need of improvement to promote inclusive processes of school development planning.
4. to provide a picture of the school's preparedness for setting up a CoP for inclusion.

Modalities

Deciding if the iCoPi tool will be used for individual or collective reflection is important. For each option, a context is set for an individual or a group reflection.

Individual reflection – Follow the steps provided by the iCoPi tool, considering a specific situation within a CoP in your school. Thus, start by defining what was the situation, what was the purpose of that CoP meeting, who was participating, and what this reflection activity aims to accomplish. This first step defines a common ground and a focus to guide the individual reflection.

Collective reflection - When including the iCoPi tool in the CoP agenda, as a group reflection activity to improve the CoP experience, it is important to agree on the terms. Besides the roles (who will be moderating this activity) and the time (how long should it take), for each CoP meeting it may make sense to use specific parts of the tool or use it full extent. Overall, the CoP participants must understand the goals of this reflection activity, ensuring that all are committed with its purpose.

Action

How to use the reflection tool:

- Read and reflect on each question.
- Rate from 1 (none) to 5 (complete) the extent to which each question is operated in your school.
- Record comments and examples of resources, situations or activities that illustrate what you already have been doing in your setting.
- Identify things in need to be done or reinforced in your setting towards the improvement of an inclusive education.
- Set priorities for change.

Results

The results reached after running the iCoPi tool, partially or totally, are quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative assessment - For each set of questions – exploring the principles of inclusive education, interprofessional collaboration, students' agency and CoP – an average rate can be calculated presenting an overall assessment of the individual or collective opinion. Thus, in a first moment, participant(s) can overview the status for each principle.

Qualitative assessment – Depending on the quantitative result and the answers provided for the open questions – “What has already been done?” and “What needs to be done or reinforced?” – agree on improved or new resources/activities that are needed to reach a higher level of progress in inclusive education, interprofessional collaboration, students' agency and CoP.

From a quantitative and qualitative assessment, participant(s) can agree on what resources or activities may be improved or developed and implemented to support this CoP moving forward in the inclusion-related dilemma.

Learning

The iCoPi tool intends to be a learning tool, either because the questions presented introduce ideas that should be considered at the school context and because the results achieved, individual or collectively, support participant(s) to progress towards an inclusive education altogether.

It is suggested to include the iCoPi reflection tool in the CoP agenda, in order to enable participants to be aware of the state of play and learn from other participants and evidence-based examples, available in this document, making decisions on the next steps (resources/activities to be improved/developed). It is also important to create a new purpose for a next CoP meeting, creating the time to work on the agreed resources or activities.

Individually, the iCoPi tool gives the chance to conclude using the insights gained from the reflection. The participant may reflect on what was learned from the experience, if it makes sense to do the same reflection again or if this should be different and how. Sometimes, participants in a CoP may be open to start using the tool individually and

then, after this first experience, share it within the CoP meeting. Most important is using the iCoPi tool to support the CoP progress.

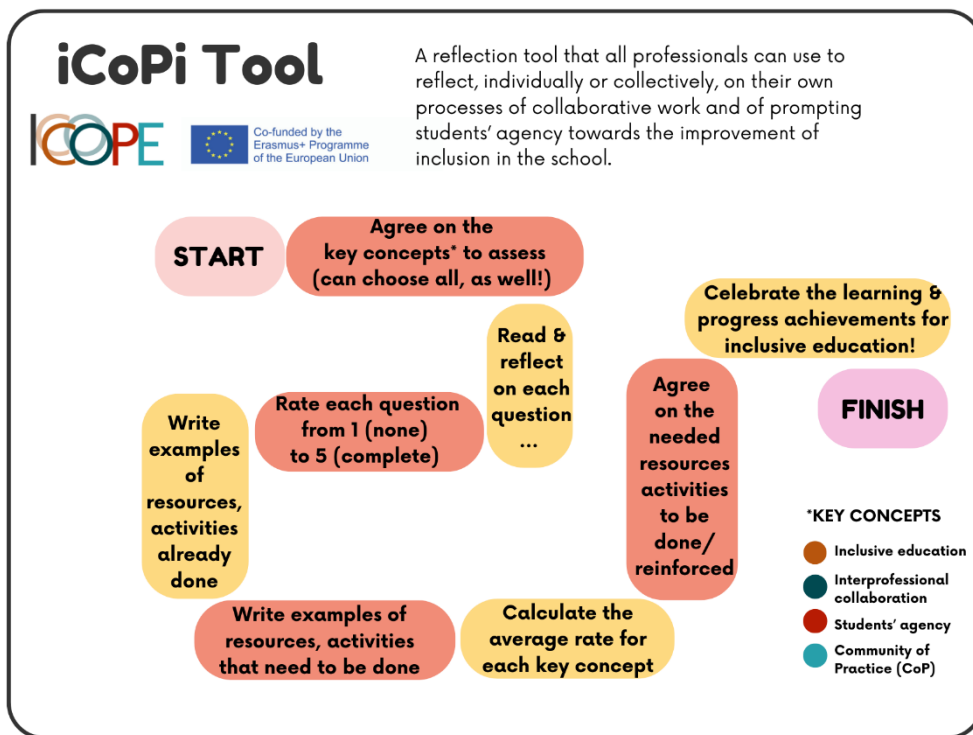


Figure 1. Roadmap to use the iCoPi reflection tool.

Reflection Tool - The Index for CoP for Inclusion (iCoPi)

School's name:	
Date:	
Participant(s):	

1. Inclusive Education

Questions	Rate 1 to 5	What has already been done?	What needs to be done or reinforced?
<i>To which extent...</i>	<i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i>	<i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i>	<i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i>
1.1. The school sees and values students' diversity as an asset for the school <i>e.g., students' different needs, points of view and perspectives are taken into account, discussed in a safe environment and nurtured to full potential.</i>			
1.2. The school implements effective support to respond to students' specific needs			

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<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p><i>e.g., diversify strategies and support are implemented to engage all students (see national policies).</i></p>			
<p>1.3. The school promotes all students' wellbeing</p> <p><i>e.g., students have equal opportunities to participate, they know how to deal with and embrace diversity, they are protected and cared for.</i></p>			
<p>1.4. The school enables opportunities for teachers to develop competencies for inclusive practices with other colleagues and professionals in the school community</p> <p><i>e.g., training and collaborative workshops are promoted, involving the school community towards inclusive practices (including school staff, students, parents, and external stakeholders).</i></p>			
<p>What do you consider a priority for change? <i>(learn from the operational concept shared at the Knowledge Base document)</i></p>			

2. Interprofessional Collaboration

<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p>2.1. The schoolteachers get together on a regular basis to talk and share ideas about common interests and dilemmas related to inclusion</p> <p><i>e.g., a safe environment of teamwork is promoted among school staff and external professionals supporting school inclusive practices.</i></p>			
<p>2.2. The schoolteachers engage in discussions about the learning development of specific students</p> <p><i>e.g., time slots dedicated to teamwork are defined to enable reflection and practice-oriented discussions among the interprofessional team.</i></p>			
<p>2.3. The schoolteachers exchange materials with other professionals</p> <p><i>e.g., school/national platforms (online or offline) promote sharing materials among interprofessional teams and/or school professionals.</i></p>			

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<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p>2.4. The schoolteachers observe each other's classes or sessions</p> <p><i>e.g., school strategies include time slots and/or freedom of choice for attending each other's classes or sessions.</i></p>			
<p>2.5. The schoolteachers teach jointly – with other professional(s) as a team in the same class</p> <p><i>e.g., school/national strategies include the possibility to involve other colleagues or external professionals in the same class.</i></p>			
<p>2.6. The schoolteachers plan classroom lessons jointly with other professionals</p> <p><i>e.g., teamwork meetings are organised in a collaborative scheme, including time for sharing, reflecting and planning practice-oriented lessons.</i></p>			
<p>2.7. The schoolteachers try to influence policies based on your local and team knowledge</p>			

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<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p><i>e.g., demonstrating and disseminating good practices and needs; advocating for changes.</i></p>			
<p>2.8. The schoolteachers work closely with parents and families, starting from the idea that they know their child best</p> <p><i>e.g., meeting with students' parents and families are organised to also gather their opinions, concerns, expectations.</i></p>			
<p>2.9. The schoolteachers cooperate with community agencies (like social, health, employment agencies) in using resources and building comprehensive services to support learners' diverse needs</p> <p><i>e.g., having nursing support within the school for special health conditions; prompting employment experiences through the municipalities.</i></p>			
<p>2.10. The schoolteachers cooperate with other schools in terms of transition processes</p>			

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<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p><i>e.g., share information, organizing school visits/open house, buddy systems between younger and older students.</i></p>			
<p>What do you consider a priority for change? <i>(learn from the evidence-based examples shared at the Knowledge Base document)</i></p>			

3. Students' Agency

<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p>3.1. The school informs the students about things that concern them in the school</p> <p><i>e.g., school-related issues that are relevant for them may be introduced and debated in a safe environment.</i></p>			
<p>3.2. The school encourages students to speak up</p> <p><i>e.g., activities organised in class or overall school events include students' active participation.</i></p>			
<p>3.3. The school values students' perspectives and act on them where possible</p> <p><i>e.g., students' points of view and perspectives are included in the class/school decision making.</i></p>			
<p>3.4. The school encourages students' presence and participation in school council or governance bodies</p> <p><i>e.g., school includes a democratic approach to involve students in decision making.</i></p>			

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<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p>3.5. The school engages in dialogue with students about why their ideas are or are not developed</p> <p><i>e.g., a safe environment for debate is nurtured around constructive feedback rules.</i></p>			
<p>3.6. The school engages students in co-implementing the ideas/ solutions that jointly were approved / accepted?</p> <p><i>e.g., students are involved in the implementation of practices and strategies and their accountability is promoted.</i></p>			
<p>What do you consider a priority for change? <i>(learn from the evidence-based examples shared at the Knowledge Base document)</i></p>			

4. CoP

<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p>4.1. The schoolteachers share a common interest or dilemma on inclusion</p> <p><i>e.g., school fuels the debate on inclusion allowing staff to identify needs, concerns on inclusion.</i></p>			
<p>4.2. The schoolteachers get together to talk and share ideas about inclusion-related dilemmas</p> <p><i>e.g., time slots are agreed to enable the exchange of needs and ideas to provide equal opportunities for learning.</i></p>			
<p>4.3. The schoolteachers feel that there is a safe and trusting environment for sharing ideas</p>			

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<p>Questions</p> <p><i>To which extent...</i></p>	<p>Rate 1 to 5</p> <p><i>(1-none; 2-not much; 3-average; 4-a lot; 5-complete)</i></p>	<p>What has already been done?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>	<p>What needs to be done or reinforced?</p> <p><i>(Give examples of resources, situations or activities)</i></p>
<p><i>e.g., rules to promote a safe and trusting environment for CoP are defined and agreed.</i></p>			
<p>4.4. The schoolteachers jointly develop ideas to respond to the inclusion-related dilemma</p> <p><i>e.g., a moment to exchange materials and collaboratively develop resources and/or activities.</i></p>			
<p>4.5. The schoolteachers have <i>space for experimentation</i> – for acting and testing new ideas</p> <p><i>e.g., the school organises workshops to develop, test and improve new resources, activities, strategies for inclusive education.</i></p>			
<p>What do you consider a priority for change? <i>(learn from the evidence-based examples shared at the Knowledge Base document)</i></p>			

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