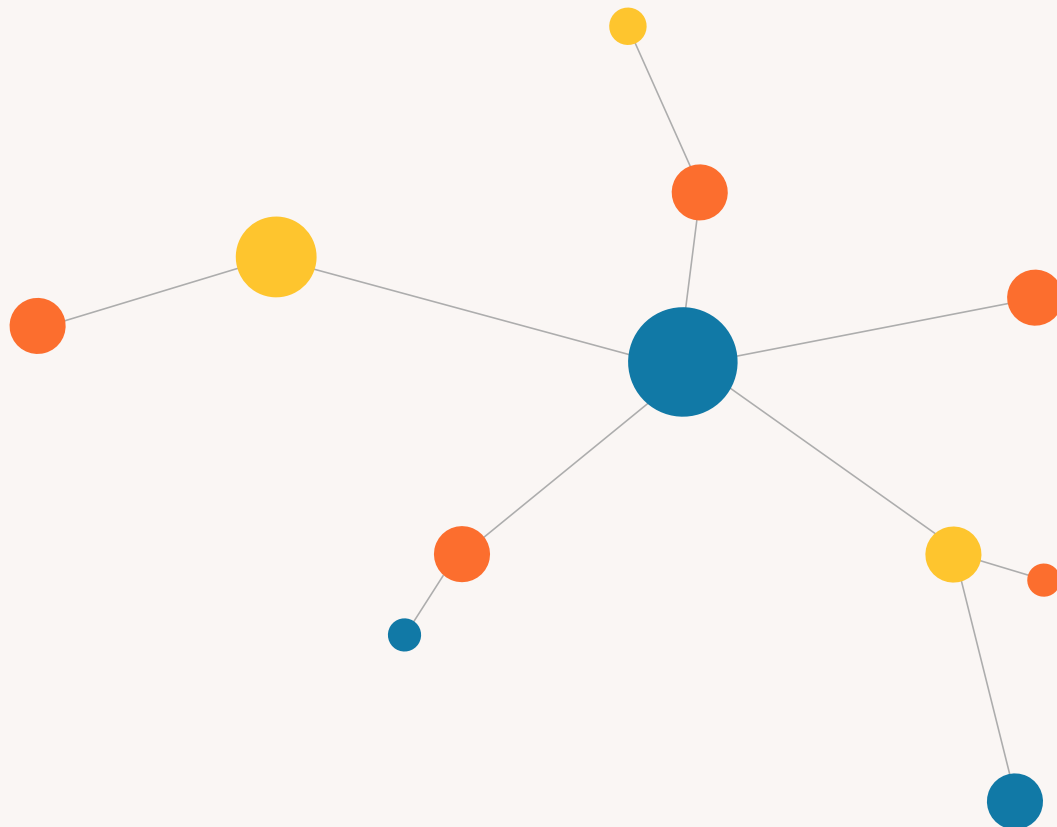
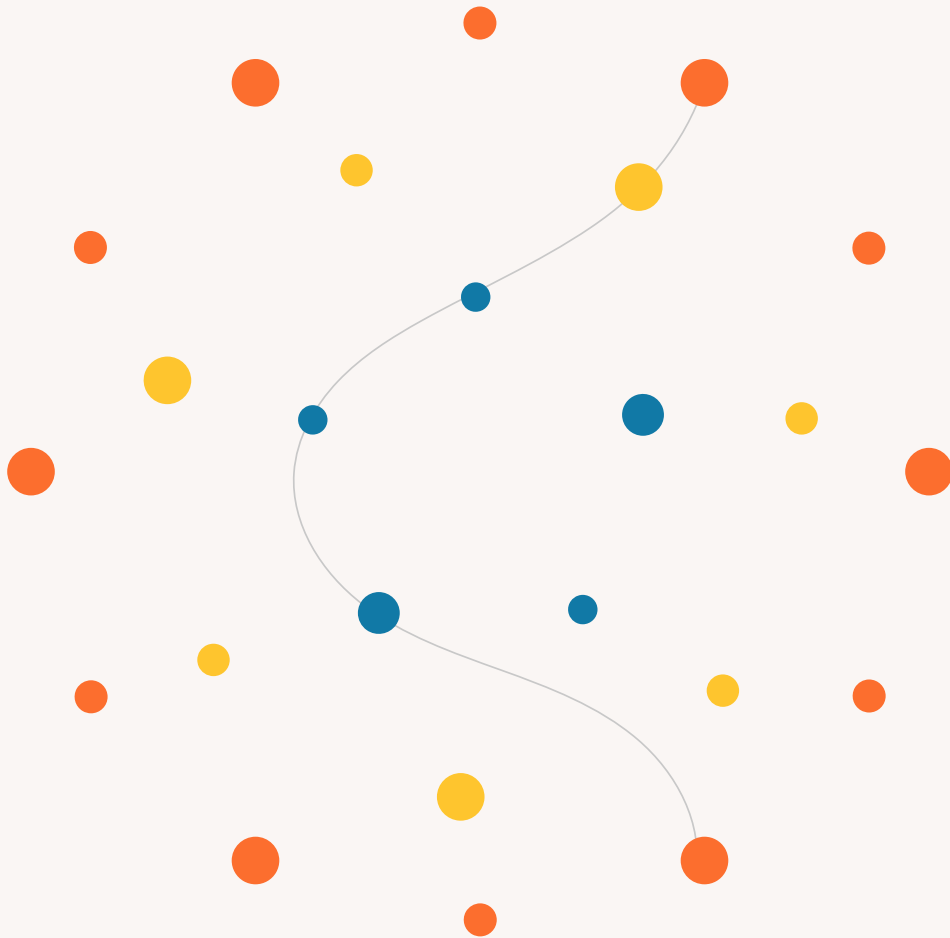


cadra

Peer learning groups for leaders

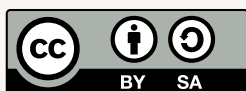
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What is CADRA?

The CADRA project is a three year Erasmus+ co-funded initiative, running from December 2020 until August 2023. It explores leadership needs leadership development and focusses on delivering working tools and methodologies to help leaders navigating the challenges of our times.



The CADRA leadership learning space

In designing the CADRA programme we hold as a premise that inter- and transdisciplinary thinking and connecting are becoming increasingly relevant to tackle real world problems, while generating innovative methods and insights at the same time.

This implies that leaders need to be able to collaborate with each other beyond the field of their own expertise or responsibilities.

Consequently, the peer learning programme needed to provide foundations to exercise mutual collaboration on open, complex topics that are at the same time relevant for the participants. Besides the shared relevance of topics from any field, all participants of a transdisciplinary team have in common that they don't know in advance what the best method, outcome or solutions will be.

We adopted the open inquiry format of "Action Learning" for holding peer learning spaces. The CADRA participants were invited to meet in small peer learning groups of 5-6 people, accompanied by an experienced Action Learning coach. In each session, one of the participants presents an important unsolved issue, which all explore with open ended questions and sharing from their own experiences, insights and speculative answers. The goal of the inquiry is not to "solve" the problem immediately, but rather to uncover underlying assumptions, deeper connections, the more relevant questions, or insights - aha moments. From this, ways of dealing with the situations become apparent through the shared inquiry. Each session ends with a moment of reflection and learning, and resolutions from the presenter how they are going to deal with the situation moving forward.

Facilitation guides for running peer learning sessions of 90 minutes

Our peer learning spaces had a duration of 90 minutes to allow the mainly very busy participants to schedule the meetings into their work days. We found that the group size was variable, so that we have a design for groups of 5-7 participants and one for smaller groups. The second design would also work with a group of 5-7 people, so you might just use that one. The purpose of each meeting is that the concrete situation of one of the participants is explored by all. You as a host of the session have as a main role to facilitate the process, keep the time, see that all are participating, and that the session client, whose situation is explored, can draw practical and applicable conclusions from the session.

The role of the session client/case presenter is to choose a situation that is not yet fully clear to them, while there is some urgency in them to act.

All other participants come in with their curiosity, the readiness to ask open questions and their empathy with the presenter to make the case to some extent their own during the session. After a brief introduction by the presenter you'll have the group intervene with questions according to the design 1 or 2.

For hosting the Action Learning design, please refer to the [Action Learning facilitation guide](#).

For hosting the modified pro action guide, see the notes below.

1. Groups of 5-7 participants with one Action Learning coach, optional with Co-host

Action Learning Session flow			
Time	Effect	Process	Who
00:00 - 00:05	Creates an intentional space for learning and sharing	Overview of sessions, intent of invitation	
00:05 - 00:10	Engaging within the group	Embodied check in	
00:10 - 00:12	Discerning complex, non solved issues in their lives	Silent reflection of 2 mins	
00:12 - 00:15	Give the headline	Explain roles: Share your question/ situation and have the group share in or: Keep it in the back of mind and revisit it in between and after the process	Action Learning coach Co host interject throughout to check in emotional field (weather report)
		People who choose to share speak a headline	AL coach
00:15 - 00:20		If more than one speaker, all speakers discern among each other who will go into the Action Learning session	AL coach
00:20 - 00:22	Preparing the case session	Recall Action Learning principles and rule	AL coach
00:25	Case exploration	Action Learning set	
01:10 - 01:20	Elicit Learnings and reflections 1. About my question/the topic 2. About myself 3. About the process and learning	Reflection	

01:20 - 01:25	Resolutions of case giver shared, commitment to act	Asking for specific action steps	AL coach
01:28	Closing	How are you leaving: A sentence	

2. Adapted pro action café flow for smaller groups of 2-5 participants

As above, one participant is the case presenter, all other participants are coming in to co-own the case and to co-produce insights and possible actions, which the presenter can undertake.

In the silent section, you as a host give the participants time to let the important open issues come to them. Even if not presenting their issue, participants are likely to gain insights on their individual situations out of the conversation if it is well felt for them right at the start.

We suggest here a structured approach to survey the group for a topic for the session.

1. Reflect in silence: What is an important, unsolved question or issue in your work, where you need to act upon in some near future?
2. Share the headline of your topic, if you could present your case
3. Choice of the topic for the session, in case more than one headline is presented

Once the roles are clear and the presenter is chosen, you hold space and time for three conversation rounds to explore the issue:

1. What is the quest behind the question?
2. What is missing?
3. What are the next elegant steps?

In the first round, participants will question the whole issue, so that the issue itself is shifting. What is the real question here? Who is actually touched by the issue? How have you handled it so far, so that it could not solve itself yet? Etc....

In the second round, participants are invited to bring anything up that hasn't been put on the table. Questions often brought up here are for example: What is the view from a user/client perspective? What solutions have not been considered? What questions have we not asked yet? ...

The third round is not about a whole list of todo items, but to rather examine the whole system and its connections, so that a small intervention could lead to important results. Some typical questions in this round are:

- What if the whole thing would be ignored or not acted upon?
- What is the smallest possible action here?

- How would one impulse trigger another one?

After the three rounds, you invite the case presenter to sum up their conclusions and which of the many explored actions they will explore further and implement them. Ensure the session is well closing and ask a statement from everyone on how they are now feeling about themselves, the group and the topic and/or what they are taking away for themselves.

Pro action Session flow			
Time	Effect	Process	Who
00:00 - 00:05	Creates an intentional space for learning and sharing	Overview of sessions, intent of invitation	
00:05 - 00:10	Engaging within the group: Discerning complex, non solved issues in their lives	Embodied check in: Silent reflection of 2 mins	
00:10 - 00:12	Give the headline	Explain roles: Share your question/ situation and have the group share in or: Keep it in the back of mind and revisit it in between and after the process	Session facilitator Co hosts interject throughout to check in emotional field (weather report)
		People who choose to share speak a headline	Session facilitator
00:15 - 00:20		If more than one speaker, all speakers discern among each other who will present their situation in the session	Session facilitator
00:20 - 00:22	Preparing the case session	Overview of three rounds: What is the quest behind the question? What is missing? What are elegant next steps?	Session facilitator
00:25	Case exploration	15-20 mins per round	
01:10 - 01:20	Elicit Learnings and reflections: 1. About my question/the topic 2. About myself 3. About the process and learning	Reflection, notes on google doc	
01:20 - 01:25	Resolutions of case giver shared, commitments	Asking for specific action steps	Session facilitator
01:28	Closing	How are you leaving: A sentence	

The influence of such peer learning on my own development

I first came across this way of peer learning when I was responsible for the management and leadership development programmes in the European Commission, the governing institution of the European Union. I introduced Action Learning Circles, set up an intensive coach training programme and participated in many sessions.

I noticed how my role as a leader began to take a different shape. When I led my team meetings, I shifted from giving instructions and answers to asking more and more open questions, challenging my team members to bring up their own answers and initiatives.

In many places people felt the need and wish to meet among peers regularly, like once a week. Colleagues became friends over time, as they shared and explored more and more aspects of their work predicaments with each other.

These peer learning opportunities created islands of human connection and open, mindful intelligence in a context where people normally felt they could only share what was known and politically acceptable or would avoid any fundamental critique of status quo.

From the peer learning circles a fellowship of engaged people emerged who took initiatives addressing some of the major issues that they felt were in the way of achieving the higher purpose of their work, to organise peaceful connections across a continent, transcending national and cultural limitations.

Since then, peer learning has become an integral part of my professional life. I have learned to openly address what is important to me, to receive help from others, mainly through their questions and their connecting to the issue with their own life experiences. I feel connected with peers who share a transparent view on how life is unfolding, while each of us is at a frontier of understanding or experimenting with some aspects of it.