





# Welcome to the workshop



## Why the three of us together?

- ✓ working together on a KA2 project *Supporting Academics to Become International Educators through Professional Learning Communities* since 2021
- ✓ Renáta and Ida collaborating in the NEOLAiA alliance since 2020

## Why on professional learning communities?

- ✓ to share experiences with a format that's promising but still novel in the academic environment

## What can you expect?

- ✓ an interactive session in which your view of the PLC potential is needed and highly appreciated

# Icebreaker Activity: Dealing with complex challenging issues



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## Are all voices included?

Turn to your neighbour and share  
(3min):

- **Do you feel you have a voice** at your university in these issues?
- How do you know **your voice is accounted for**?



# Today's Agenda



## Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to work together on interdisciplinary challenges

1. We will **explore phases of PLCs**:
  - STEP 1 – **Voices heard and belonging**
  - STEP 2 – **Equal Access and participation**
  - STEP 3 – **Collaboration across the differences**
2. Share our experience: **success factors and challenges**
3. **Invite you to make a plan** on how to work on complex issues as a 'community'

# *Belonging to a* **COMMUNITY**



*Communities of practice are groups of people **who share a concern or a passion** for something they do and learn how to **do it better** as they **interact regularly and work together***

- Bottom-up decision making → all voices are accounted for
- Participatory leadership → sharing responsibility (ideally with passion😊)

# ***Collaboration across DIFFERENCES***



- ***Across disciplines and faculties*** → *think out of the box*
- ***Administrative and Academic units*** → *using strengths to support*
- ***Across universities*** → *intercultural communication, language, time zones*

# EQUAL Access and Participation

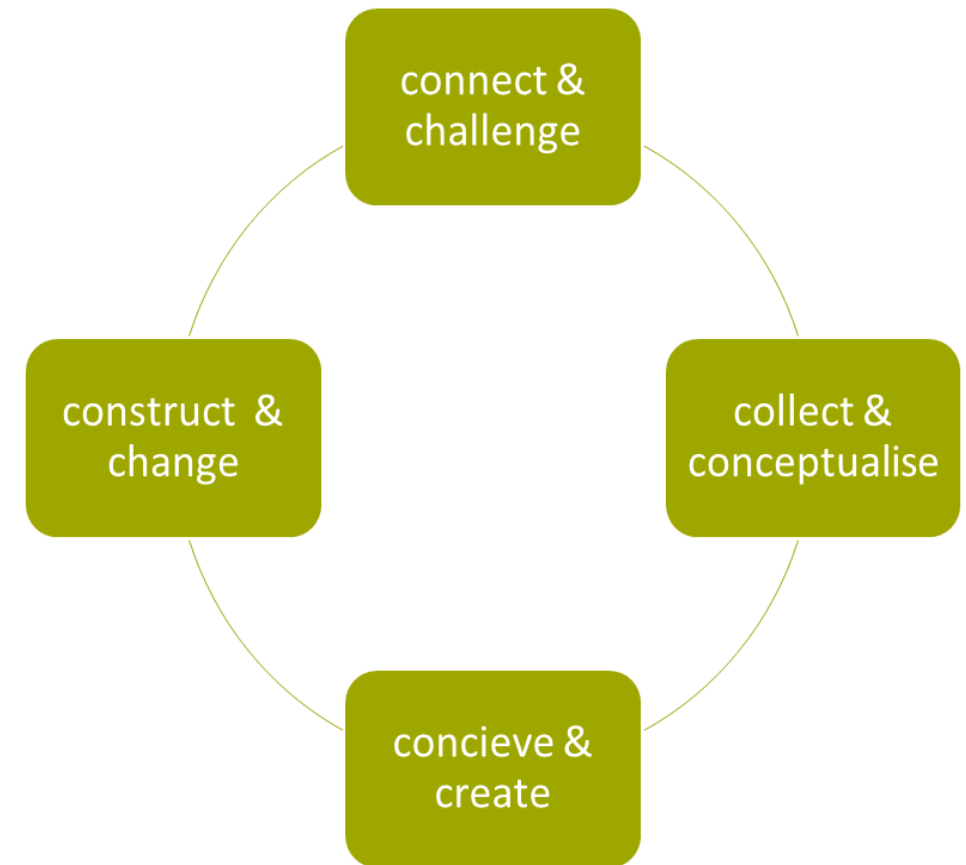


*Making sure that everyone has access to a community → requires **time investment***

*Everyone participates in all phases of community efforts → requires **individual accountability***

## Examples:

- Co-designing vision at ORU
- Building PLCs at OU
- Equal participation as 'DNA' of our PLC project





# International Educators & PLC



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- Erasmus+ project – Key Action 2
  - *Supporting Academics to Become INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS through Professional Learning Communities*
- Nov 1, 2021 – Oct 31, 2024
- 7 universities in Europe and the US
  - Lead by Palacký University Olomouc
- Focusing on building Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for university instructors
  - 3 PLC's – Tandem + Tandem + Triplet

*A **professional learning community**, or PLC, is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students.*

- <https://www.edglossary.org/professional-learning-community/>

# Triplet PLC



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- Three universities:
  - The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), NL
  - Ostrava University (OU), CZ
  - Örebro University (ORU), SE
- Planning in October 2022 (in Örebro)
  - Jointly agreed on PLC design and structure
- Facilitators – joint ownership for planning & execution
  - Working with continuous improvements
- Year 1 (2022/2023)
  - 6 on-line sessions (trans institutional) + "reflection template"
  - 6 "fika" sessions (institutional)
  - On-site in Ostrava (trans institutional) – funding for travel via E+ staff
- Year 2 (2023/2024)
  - Focus on the interest of all participants – joint ownership
  - On-line sessions, fika-sessions & On-site in the Hague



# Triplet PLC – success factors



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- Mixing disciplines internationally
- No experts – peer-learning
- Link the international and the local
- Address form and content
- Lots of unintended results

Read more in the EAIE blog:

- <https://www.eaie.org/blog/online-international-learning-communities.html>
- Authored by Eveke de Louw (one of the PLC facilitators) based on the facilitators' reflections



# Triplet PLC – challenges



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- **Setting the mind for the PLC format**
  - embrace informal peer learning, a slow process
- **The challenge of the English language competence**
  - being aware of that, working in tandems, materials in advance, visual support
- **Time to invest in the PLC: webinars and fikas**
  - flexibility: do not expect 100% attendance (recordings, sharing, facilitation), different dynamics
- **Get the right balance between open space and outcome-oriented approach**
  - small sub-teams – bottom-up: proposals of topics, ways of tackling them, objectives
- **Get the facilitation right – support enough and not too much**
  - changing roles: facilitators become learners, PLC team members become facilitators
- **Keeping the participants committed by incentives:** recognition, international on-site sessions (Ostrava, The Hague), networking, financial incentives...

# Small group discussion

How to start collaboration in a new international PLC?



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**Together identify one complex issue that could be tackled in a PLC at your university/alliance.**

- What benefits do you perceive in creating PLCs to deal with your issue?
  - What would be the essential steps you would take to have “diverse voices heard”, ensure “inclusive bottom-up participation”?
  - How would you support collaboration across your institution/alliance and what characteristics do you think a PLC facilitator needs for PLC to work well?
- **Choose an animal that represents/visualizes your groupwork.**

# PLC as a way to participatory leadership – the NEOLAiA case



- 9 universities – a large, diverse group developing into a close-knit team
- EUI → inclusiveness, comprehensiveness is the point for the whole community to benefit,
- and the most challenging task for each university in the alliance



## **A collaborative way for WP tasks, BIPs, teams within the team:**

- ✓ opening a wide topic from the top
- ✓ address as broad a community as possible
- ✓ invite all interested
- ✓ let them specify, select, and elaborate on the topic from the bottom
- ✓ set up a community, incl. a name...
- ✓ the community then translates the topics into tasks – and defines the outcomes
- ✓ make sure the work is recognized from the top



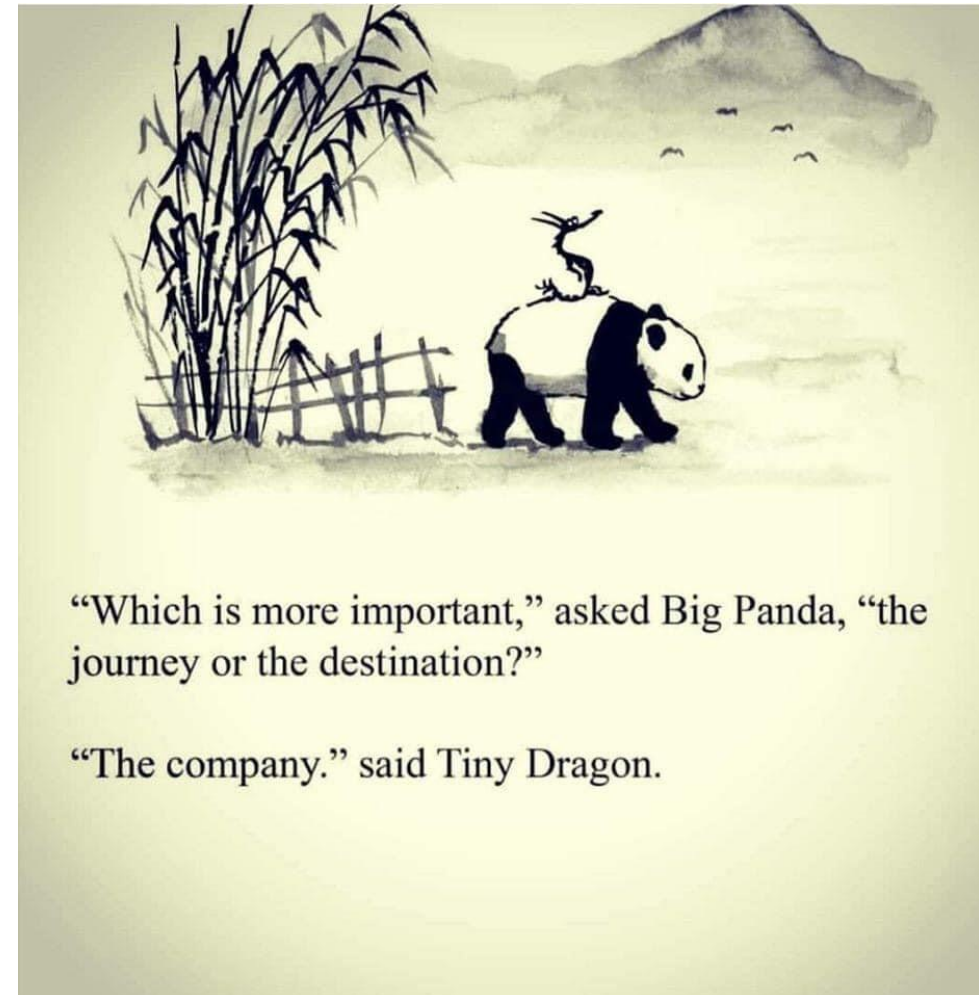
# PLC as a way to participatory leadership

## – the NEOLAiA case



### Some of the must-haves:

- ✓ high communication culture – don't impose, give options, make the receiver feel good
- ✓ make sure all voices are heard – be proactive in facilitation: participants should not fight for speaking time
- ✓ supportive facilitation for innovative endeavours – helping participants feel confident to start things *they haven't been trained for*, learning by doing and from the peers
- ✓ vision and resilience is needed: working for a vision, issues on the way expected = opportunities to delve deeper and learn
- ✓ safe space, sense of belonging to an international community, meeting the same challenges together – the most appreciated added value





# Mestenhauser Institute for International Collaboration

Want to start a community at your university/alliance?

## MASTERCLASS on Professional Learning Communities

Join and learn how to design and facilitate PLC

**Registration opens December 23!**





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