

## Soft Skills Training Event

***We can repeat the theory many times, but experiencing it at least once is the most valuable thing!***

That was the starting point for us to shape a series of training events for - in total - 7 modules. Each module reflected an area that should be covered while we were working in a Social Solidarity Economy milieu. These 7 modules are appropriate no matter where you are working or with whom, but especially for the communities where the model of organization is more horizontal than vertical, where all members of the community regardless of the task performed should be seen and heard. Such conditions are demanding and competence in how to listen, receive, and give feedback is key to preventing misunderstandings, resolving difficult situations peacefully, and ultimately growing in the community instead of descending into chaos. Such a cherry on the cake was the module on taking care of yourself. We came out of observing how the activist community is fragile and prone to burnout, so taking care of yourself is the first and necessary step to taking care of the whole team. We ended the training series with this module although you might as well take it as the first.

We wish you to set up your combinations in implementing the pieces of training. We have shared our comments at the end of this collection, hope you can find there some inspiration and worthwhile reflections.

Modules are as follows:

1. Nonviolent communication model
2. Active listening & giving and receiving a feedback
3. Organizing a successful meetings: facilitation & moderation
4. Inclusive decision making
5. Distributed leadership
6. Working with conflict
7. Self-care

## **Module 3. Organizing Successful Meetings, Facilitation, Moderation**

| <b>Duration</b> | <b>What</b>                                       | <b>Content</b>   | <b>Materials</b>   |
|-----------------|---|--|--|
| 20'             | 3.1 Setting Ground Rules                          | Participants collaboratively identify and set common rules for effectively working together as a group during the workshop<br><br>Method: Work in pairs, plenary discussion  | Flip-chart, markers, post-it (or other) stickers             |
| 40'             | 3.2 What Makes a Meeting Un/successful?           | Participants will arrive to and discuss what makes a meeting successful by collecting their negative experiences.<br><br>Method: The headstand method, work in small groups, plenary discussion  | Flip-chart, markers and beamer                               |
| 20'             | 3.3 Democratic Meetings - the Core of the SSE     | Brief introduction into the social solidarity economy (SSE) and its principles, relation between the democratic meetings and the SSE<br><br>Method: introductory presentation, discussion/clarification, the trainer provides handouts about SSE principles  | Beamer, handouts   |
| 90'             | 3.4 What Makes a Meeting Democratic and Inclusive | Explore the lines and intersections of social power and privilege (gender, ethnicity/race, age, ability, class and other social statuses and ascribed characteristics). How can they play out in your initiative/organization? How to counter the imbalances of power and social privilege (e.g. boys tend to be socialized into being more assertive...)? How to accommodate differences stemming from people's social and cultural characteristics? How to include those who tend to be excluded from participation (e.g. women, people from minorities/people of colour, introverted people and the like)?<br><br>Method: Panel exercise, open discussion | None. But one female and one male facilitator will be needed |
| 30'             | 3.5 Different Meetings for Different Purposes     | In what situations/instances do we need to organize a meeting? Similarities and differences between various types of meetings<br><br>Method: work in groups  | Flip-chart, markers and beamer                               |
| 30'             | 3.6 Active Listening                              | Is it that easy to listen to one another? How would it feel if you have to only listen to someone (no interruptions, or preconceived judgements)? Would you be able to repeat  | None.  |

|      |                              |   |  |
|------|------------------------------|---|--|
|      |                              | <p>the message without misinterpreting it? How we should talk not to destroy the discussion, and to really deliver the message you want to?</p> <p>Method: work in pairs</p>  |  |
| 100' | 3.7 Facilitation in Practice | <p>The participants will have a chance to compare how the discussion with and without facilitation goes, and be a part of a real facilitated discussion in practice.</p> <p>Method: role play game in 2 parts</p>   | <p>Papers with the description of the roles, flip-chart, markers, 2 separate rooms</p> |
| 120' | 3.8 Facilitating Meetings    | <p>The participants will familiarize themselves with these 4 areas of meeting facilitation skills:</p> <p><b>Before the meeting:</b> Preparing the meeting and yourself - what to keep in mind - checklists</p> <p><b>During the meeting:</b> Setting up the rules for discussion and communication; Find or assign the people for key roles; Key facilitating skills; Facilitation techniques and facilitating large groups,</p> <p><b>What is good facilitation:</b> What does a facilitator have to keep in mind?</p> <p><b>Troubleshooting/Facilitating challenging situations:</b> How to handle difficult people, disagreement and conflict</p> <p>Method: world café, plenary discussion, presentation/debriefing by the trainer</p> | <p>Flip-chart and beamer, handouts/checklists</p>                                      |

## **Method Descriptions and Links to Materials**

### **3.1 Setting Ground Rules**

**Goal:** The participants will learn that it is important to set the ground rules for meetings and discussions, why it is important and what are examples of rules which work in practice. They collaboratively agree on the ground rules for working together during the workshop.

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people

**Method description:** 1. phase - work in pairs:

The participants will in pairs identify behaviours for working together as a group during the workshop that they would like the group to adapt to make the training effective and pleasant working experience for all.

2. phase - debriefing:

The trainer collects and summarizes the ideas, let people sticker/dot vote about their ranking, if necessary provides corrections and/or additions, may also present a general model of ground rules for group work and discussion.

**Meta comment:** Can be used also at the beginning of module 4. Inclusive decision making - as a practical exercise.

**Indoor and outdoor**

**Materials needed:** Flip-chart, markers, post-it (or other) stickers

### 3.2 What Makes a Meeting Un/successful?

**Goal:** Many meetings are annoying and exhausting. A viable initiative or organisation has to make all efforts to organise meetings which will make their operation effective and members energised. It is a good prevention of burnout as well. Participants will arrive to and discuss what makes a meeting successful by collecting their negative experiences.

**Duration:** 40 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people (manageable to 50)

**Method description:** 1. phase - the headstand method. Participants will be divided into groups of 4-5 people for 15 minutes. They will introduce and collect their own negative experiences with various meetings and start to discuss what a “successful” meeting means for them.

They can start by trying to answer following questions:

- What did the worst meeting you’ve attended look like?
- Why was it bad, what was (not) going on at it?
- Have you ever organized an unsuccessful meeting? If so, what went wrong?

2. phase - at the plenary discussion the participants collectively arrive at a list of points about what makes a meeting successful. The trainer collects the ideas and summarizes them.

3. phase - debriefing. The trainer wrap up the discussion and provides an overview of a successful meeting.

**Indoor and outdoor**

**Materials needed:** Flip-chart, markers and beamer

**Further resource:** the project publication *Organizing Larger Grassroots Events* chapter: How to organize a good meeting <https://www.socioeco.org/hati-SOS>

### 3.3 Democratic Meetings - the Core of SSE

**Goal:** The participants will learn about the values and principles of the SSE and importance and role of meetings in an SSE initiative/organisation, will understand the linkages between democratic and inclusive meetings and SSE principles. The trainer will list the SSE values and

principles and relate them to real life situations about how to make a meeting democratic and inclusive and how to accommodate different personalities (e.g. introverts) and address cultural and social differences.

**Duration:** 20 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people (manageable to 50)

**Method description:** introductory presentation. Trainer will provide the presentation of the basic SSE principles and values and why are they important. Discussion/clarification will follow. At the end the trainer provides handouts about SSE basic values and principles and with some examples of SSE initiatives and organisations.

**Meta comment:** The trainer must be familiar with the principles and values of SSE and know some examples. Recommended resource: RIPESS website, the BUSSE brochure

**Indoors preferably**

**Materials needed:** Beamer, handouts

**Further resource:** the project publication *Organizing Larger Grassroots Events* chapter: How to organize a good meeting <https://www.socioeco.org/hati-SOS>

**Meta comment:** The trainer must be familiar with the principles and values of SSE and know some examples.

Recommended resource: RIPESS <https://www.ripest.org/quest-ce-que-less-2/?lang=en>  
The BUSSE project brochure: [https://www.socioeco.org/bdf\\_fiche-outil-526\\_en.html](https://www.socioeco.org/bdf_fiche-outil-526_en.html)

### 3.4 What Makes a Meeting Democratic and Inclusive

**Goal:** Explore the lines and intersections of social power and privilege.

One of the aims of the SSE movement is to create democratic and inclusive environment which could be a safe space for everyone. Nowadays we have to cope with various mechanisms of exclusion and authoritarianism. Therefore it is crucial for everyone participating in the movement to understand what is privilege and to think about power relations and understand the mechanisms of exclusion and oppression.

“Privilege is invisible to those who have it.”

**Duration:** 90 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people, 1 male and 1 female facilitator

**Method description:**

1. phase - panel

Four volunteers from the “margin” (you need to recruit them ahead of time - in this example the margin is a group of women) sit on chairs in front of the room with a facilitator beside them.

The facilitator explains: Something we learned from the mainstream/margin exercise is that the mainstream can become more aware by listening carefully to the margin, and learn about its life experience.

Here we have a panel of women who have agreed to share from their life experience, in response to my interview questions. The men will have the job of listening as deeply as they can. They won't get a chance to ask women any questions; they have the opportunity to put full attention on what they hear and mark it down.

The women will finish when they finish. Then the men will go to a break-out room to compare notes on what they've heard and learned, while the panel and the other women will remain here to debrief. Then we'll all get together.

We ask everyone in the room to accept a ground rule of confidentiality – you can share the lessons you learn from this session, but please do not link information to the person who said it.

The facilitator interviews the panel, using the Three Questions

- What does it mean to be in the category of “women”? How do you perceive to live with this identity?
- What is difficult or challenging about it?
- What would you like other participants to know in order that they could work with you better or be more supportive?

Take your time. Feel free to ask follow-up questions – not to probe, but simply to support them to say what they want to say. You may need to remind the speakers to share from their personal experience: statistics and generalizations are not part of this exercise (at least not at this point).

The male facilitator goes with the men to debrief:

- feelings (name some feelings to get the men to acknowledge that they are not robots)
- surprises, new information, things I knew but didn't know as fully
- reflections on my own relationships with women
- changes I might like to make in my behaviour

The female facilitator stays with the women to debrief:

- feelings. If you aren't getting much of a response, try: “What was challenging about that?” “What was satisfying about that?”
- surprises, things to think about in a new light
- reflections on the process of telling men what it's really like
- concerns about re-uniting with the men. Reminder them if there is a ground rule about asking permission before disclosing what was said. Explain the rationale for this rule (see the paragraph under What these formats have in common).
- explain what will happen when men return to the classroom.

(Male and female facilitators will need to leave their groups from time to time to do a check-in on when to bring the two groups back together.)

When everyone is back together, explain the ground rule: what supports maximum learning from this exercise is that the men can only bring up something they heard from the panel after asking permission from the sister who said it.

Do a go-round, in a standing circle, and ask each person to share just one sentence: “One thing I learned from this exercise.” When the first person in the circle forgets to say “I,” remind them: “One thing I learned from this exercise.”

Source: [https://www.trainingforchange.org/training\\_tools/fishbowl-panel-and-speak-outs-three-listening-exercises/](https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/fishbowl-panel-and-speak-outs-three-listening-exercises/)

2. phase - open discussion. The trainer will open the discussion on how the lines and intersections of social power and privilege (gender, ethnicity/race, age, ability, class and other social status and ascribed characteristics) can play out in SSE initiative/organization. During the discussion participants will try to figure out how to work with privileges and power and answer following questions:

- How to counter the imbalances of power and social privilege (e.g. boys tend to be socialized into being more assertive...)?
- How to accommodate differences stemming from people’s social and cultural characteristics?
- How to include those who tend to be excluded from participation (e.g. women, people from minorities/people of colour, introverted people and the like)?

**Meta comment:** Can be used as a part of Inclusive decision-making and Active listening modules. The trainer should be familiar with the concepts of power and social privilege and the intersectionality.

**Indoors preferably**

**Materials needed:** None. But one male and one female facilitator is needed

### **3.5 Different Meetings for Different Purposes**

**Goal:** The participants will learn in what situations/instances do we need to organize a meeting, Similarities and differences of different types of meetings - the first and subsequent meetings of an SSE initiative (establishing an initiative, running an organizational meeting, neighbourhood forum, debriefing and the like). It is also important to bear in mind that in some cases you don’t have to organise a meeting and some decision can be made without it.

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people

**Method description:** 1. phase - work in groups. The participants will be divided into groups (4-5 people). They will try to answer the question when an initiative or organisation has to or does not have to organise a meeting, and what types of meetings they know. After 10 minutes they will present the outputs from the group discussion to the others. The trainer will collect the ideas.

2. phase - debriefing: the trainer summarizes the collected ideas and complements and/or make corrections based on the theoretical background of the topic

**Indoor and outdoor**

**Materials needed:** Flip-chart, markers and beamer

### 3.6 Active Listening

**Goal:** For facilitators but also democratic meeting participants it is crucial to listen to the others in order not to misinterpret other people's arguments and intentions. It is also important for people to learn how to talk at the meetings and deliver their message in the way that it will be clear and intelligible.

**Duration:** 30 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people (manageable to 50)

**Method description:** 1. phase - work in pairs. The participants are divided into pairs and the trainer gives them instructions:

- Person A talks about positive experiences of working in groups or teams. Allow 3 min.
- Person A talks about challenging experiences of working in groups or teams. Allow 3 min.
- Switch speaker/listener. Person B talks about challenging experiences. Allow 3 min.
- Person B talks about positive experiences. Allow 3 min.
- Give pairs a few minutes to talk freely and go to debrief.

2. phase - debrief. The trainer invites people to talk about the experience. He can ask the question: How was it for you?

(Source: <https://app.sessionlab.com/sessions/yrfDE8?tab=info#l2Sx4Q>)

**Indoor and outdoor**

**Materials needed:** None.

**Further resource:** the project publication *Soft Skills for a Better World*, chapter: Learn to Listen before You Speak <https://www.socioeco.org/hati-SOS>

### 3.7 Facilitation in Practice

**Goal:** The participants will have a chance to compare how the discussion with and without facilitation goes, and be a part of a real facilitated discussion in practice. They will have a chance to experience the difference through a simulated role-play script.

**Duration:** 100 min.

**Group size limit:** 20 people

**Method description:** role play game in two parts. The participants will be divided into two groups of 10 people and work in parallel in 2 break-out rooms.



### 1. part - discussion without facilitation

**Roles:** 8 people get roles in the discussion, 2 are observers with different points to observe (temperature of the discussion, non-verbal communication, power balance, i.e. who speaks the most, interruptions, and the like)

**Process:** The trainer explains the story: There is a cooperative with 10 000 Euro capital, and strongly needs more people to the working group of community outreach. The rule is each new member must contribute EUR 1000 to the shared capital. There are currently two applicants: one is a middle-aged - expert in community organizing who has capital but whose inflexible schedule (other work-related and family obligations) prevents her from attending weekly meetings, which would disrupt the organisation's stable decision-making system. The other aspirant is a young and enthusiastic university student who cannot contribute capital, but has plenty of time and is willing to learn anything.

The task is to discuss which one to take on for the co-operative.

### 2. part - facilitated discussion

After 30 minutes of discussion, the trainer stops the debate and explains the principles of facilitating a democratic meeting. The participants will again be divided into 2 different groups and the discussion is then restarted with but this time with facilitation (the facilitators will be picked for each group).

3. part - debrief. At the end of the exercise, whoever wishes to do so will report on their feelings, experiences and what the difference was between the two debates. At this point, the observers also say what dynamics they observed in the two different debates from their point of view.

### **Indoor and outdoor**

**Materials needed:** Papers with the description of the roles, chairs, flip-chart, markers, 2 separate rooms (if the total is 20 participants)

## **3.8 Facilitating Meetings**

**Goal:** The session will focus on 4 areas of meetings facilitation skills

Before the meeting: Preparing the meeting and yourself - what to keep in mind

During the meeting: Setting up the rules for discussion and communication; Find or assign the people for key roles; Key facilitating skills; Facilitation techniques and facilitating large groups,

What is good facilitation: What does a facilitator have to keep in mind?

Troubleshooting/Facilitating challenging situations: How to handle difficult people, disagreement and conflict

Through the World Café method they will have a chance to provide their own inputs (also build upon the knowledge already gained throughout the course of the training) and come up with their own “tool-kit” of skills.

**Duration:** 120 min.

**Group size limit:** 20-25 people

**Method description:** 1. phase - world café. The participants will be divided into 4 groups of 4-5 people. Each group will sit at the table with one facilitator and one of the above listed topics. After 10 minutes, people will move to another table. Each participant should visit each table.

2. phase - each facilitator will present the output from the world café

3. phase - debriefing. The trainer will start the presentation which will consist of 4 parts with subsequent discussion on each topic.

The trainer may prepare the presentation and checklist using the following resource:  
<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilitationmeeting>)

**Indoors preferably**

**Materials needed:** flip-chart, markers, chairs and table, beamer

**Meta comment:** The trainer will utilize ideas already gathered and addressed in the previous part of the training such as Setting up the rules, What makes a Meeting Un/Successful, What Makes a Meeting Democratic and Inclusive, Facilitation in Practice

It may be useful to keep all visual materials (such as flip-chart papers) visible through the whole duration of the training as reference points of already covered issues and themes

## **Useful resources** (only in English)

<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk>

<http://rhizome.coop/resources/#facilitation>

<https://neighborhoodanarchists.org/facilitation>

<http://rhizome.coop/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/intro-mainstreammargins.pdf>

<https://roarmag.org/author/spadework/>

[https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/inclusive\\_meeting\\_guide\\_final\\_1.pdf?m=1617641674](https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/inclusive_meeting_guide_final_1.pdf?m=1617641674)

<https://app.sessionlab.com/sessions/yrfDE8?tab=info#I2Sx4Q> (facilitation for beginners training template - a step by step guide)

some tips and ideas to ponder on how to make meetings more inclusive for introverts  
<https://www.parabol.co/blog/inclusive-meetings-introverts/#why-inclusive-meeting-culture>

Power Dynamics: The Hidden Element to Effective Meeting

<https://interactioninstitute.org/power-dynamics-the-hidden-element-to-effective-meetings/>

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This module is part of the Soft Skills Training for the social solidarity economy initiatives and organisations developed within the project Hard Times – Soft Skills. All other related materials can be found at the address: <https://www.socioeco.org/hati-SOS>

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