



# Practicing User Involvement

An Organisational Roadmap for Social Service Providers



# Imprint

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## AN INVITATION TO READ

# Dear Reader,

Welcome to the SEMPRES Organisational Roadmap for Social Service Providers – an invitation to take user involvement in social service design and delivery seriously and implement it in your organisation. This roadmap addresses leaders of organisations in the social sector and was prepared by the partnership of the EU-funded project SEMPRES (Social Empowerment in Rural Areas). For us and for our partners, empowerment and user involvement are a philosophy and an inspiring frame for working with service users, social service providers, stakeholders and decision makers. The empowerment concept is closely linked to participation, ownership, recognition, sharing and democratisation – values which are at the heart of the work which the SEMPRES partners carried out in micro-projects, networking and advocating.

Initiating, designing and delivering services with, rather than for, service users, as practiced by SEMPRES, is an innovative approach in order to improve services and to meet as yet unmet service demands. The experiential knowledge of service users is a valuable asset which is urgently needed if we want services to be universal, accessible, affordable, sustainable and of a high quality – the kind of services we would wish for when in need of help ourselves, no matter if we live in a rural or urban area.

But what is more, the approach to work with, rather than for service users addresses all of us working in the field of social service provision, not only because we strive to provide better and more targeted social services, but also because it brings us closer to a more inclusive society.

Implementing user involvement as an organisational principle is a complex task and requires a lot of communication and commitment and the willingness to walk off the beaten path. We hope that this roadmap provides inspiration and guides you on your way.

I am very honoured and privileged as the Lead Partner of the SEMPRES project to invite you to explore all the SEMPRES project outcomes – in addition to this roadmap there is also the SEMPRES Empowerment Handbook for social service provider staff, the SEMPRES Guidebook for Empowerment Training, the brochure presenting our micro projects and the Policy Recommendations.

I hope that reading and working with the roadmap and exploring more of the SEMPRES products will invigorate and motivate you in your work – perhaps as much as engaging with user involvement has done for our own work.

Sincerely yours,  
Heiko Naß  
Landespastor  
Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein

*SEMPRES aims to equip social service providers in rural areas of the Baltic Sea Region with better tools for service innovation. These tools are based on the idea of empowerment and service user involvement, which means that their purpose is to give people in rural areas – especially those belonging to vulnerable groups – a better say in their future and to strengthen their ability to become involved in social innovation processes.*



Source: Malin Lindberg, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

## Introduction – Empowerment and social service leadership in rural areas

Social service providers have always been challenged to review and revise their role in their region and in the social economy. They have to reflect on their attitude towards stakeholders and service users, and their current services. External constraints, such as altered tenders and decreasing financial allocations, are often a trigger.

In **rural areas**, on which the SEMPRES project focused, there are additional factors for social service providers to take into account: demographic changes which lead to a shift in age structure, an infrastructure geared to a mobile population and the centralisation of services in regional centres, which in turn requires mobility of service users, to name a few.

These developments affect not only the terms under which social service provision is organised, but also the **living conditions** of inhabitants of rural areas who must adapt to a changing social environment. **Those who are disadvantaged** for various reasons face a greater risk of exclusion and they often need support from social service providers. SEMPRES has therefore focused its activities on disadvantaged groups as the service users.

**Leaders of social service providers** are challenged to adapt to the above-mentioned socio-economic developments in order to be able to continuously provide **high quality services**. SEMPRES believes that empowerment is a helpful concept to meet the requirements of social work in rural areas. **Empowerment** means supporting people or groups of people to take control over the factors which affect their lives. The service users themselves define the problems they want to solve. Social service providers willing to empower their service users must trust them and view them as experts in their own life circumstances.

**Involving service users** in developing new ser-



### Social economy

comprises organisations such as cooperatives, non-profit associations, foundations and social enterprises which aim to provide social services to individuals or groups of individuals. It focuses on social problems to be solved through a wide range of activities, products and services.

vices (co-creation) or reviewing existing ones is one way to empower disadvantaged groups. At the same time, this approach may lead to social services that are more targeted, of a higher quality and are more sustainable. Moreover, it can help social service providers to manage resources more efficiently and add to their competitiveness. This realisation has led some countries in the Baltic Sea Region to stipulate the involvement of people who need social welfare services in the provision of these services (*Cf. Estonia, Meddar/Puhn, 2010: 6ff*).

Empowerment and user involvement require **supportive organisational framework conditions** such as negotiation and decision-making processes that take the results of service user participation seriously and combine them with the possibilities of the organisation and the environment. This requires sufficient time, money, flexibility, appropriate qualifications of employees, mental resources such as patience, frustration-tolerance and sometimes the courage to depart from familiar methods, even where the concrete results are not always predictable.

**The organisational roadmap addresses leaders of social service providers** and describes how

*“The future belongs to rural areas. But no-one in Germany seems to know this. Politicians should put their words into action and make rural areas more attractive and valuable. Empowerment and freedom of choice should replace remote and external control.”*

*Daniel Dettling, Leiter des Berliner Büros des Zukunftsinstituts*

<https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article162598346/Dem-Leben-auf-dem-Land-geht-die-Zukunft.html>, 5.3.17, last retrieved 08.10.18 (translation: SEMPRES, Nicola Wilton)



## Social services

are services provided by society to people who are particularly vulnerable or who experience difficulties. The services cover areas such as individual and family care, support for people with disabilities, care for the elderly, support for migrants, ex-offenders and unemployed, to name a few. Social services can be provided as public, private and civil society initiatives. The services can be established as short-term and long-term activities.

## A service user

is somebody who makes use of social services in their daily life. In the SEMPRES Project, the service users that we work with are single parents, families with low incomes or children with special needs, older adults, people with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, people with addictions, ex-prisoners and the long-term unemployed, as well as (young) refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. (Lindberg 2018).

user-driven service development can be implemented within organisations of social service providers – public, private or third sector actors. Applying co-creation principles in service development and design has been the focus of all practical work in the SEMPRES project, and therefore this is also the focus of this roadmap. There are, of course, other aspects of user involvement in organisations that we touch upon in passing. If you want to learn more about these please have a look at our literature suggestions.

SEMPRES invites you to gather new experiences and review old ones. It's about challenging your own organisation but not overextending it. Move forward in manageable steps. We assume that you are open to meet this challenge – otherwise you would not have read this far.

Applying this roadmap entails the positive experience of orienting organisational development processes towards the principles of action learning. This means – on the basis of problem analysis and target setting – constantly reflecting on the concrete steps being implemented and then deriving the next steps. The focus is on learning through real-time challenges and own experience.

This has multiple benefits as the process can be promptly adapted to the experience gained. Reflecting on the steps taken enables learning processes within the organisation and among employees which can help to consolidate the results of the project. The experience of the employees can be used within the organisation beyond the project.

The roadmap is to encourage you, as a leader, to tap into the wealth of resources which the SEMPRES project has collected. We suggest 5 steps which you, as a social service provider, can use to move towards increased service user involvement:

**STEP 1** invites you to **explore the concepts** of empowerment and action learning. It introduces you to the most important aspects underlying the approach of the SEMPRES project.

**STEP 2** describes several points for you to **discuss and decide** in your team. Empowerment and service user participation correspond to both an individual attitude and an organisational culture that enables the involvement of service users. This requires a number of decisions that influence the self-image of your own organisation. It is important to gain the approval and support of your employees and stakeholders. It also includes a self-assessment of your organisation to develop favourable conditions and deal with disabling conditions. The result of Step 2 should be the deciding factor for whether you want to take the next step: to carry out a pilot project with which you can gain initial experience.

**STEP 3** focuses on how you can **support your employees** once you have decided to conduct a pilot project for service user participation. Empowering service users is hard to imagine without first empowering your employees. Special challenges arise in personnel management as well as in organisational and process management.

**Step 4** describes possible ways to **assess the outcomes** using criteria that you and your staff developed in Step 2. Reflecting on experiences offers many opportunities to learn about the concrete processes of the pilot project and also about your organisation in general.

**STEP 5** gives tips on how to **scale success and carry on with the project** of integrating empowerment practices into the organisation's work. It is important to reflect on the learning process and to integrate new knowledge into your organisation and use it for new projects or your everyday tasks.

## How to use this guide

The word “roadmap” suggests that there is a clear, linear and more technical path leading directly to the aspired goals. Actually, neither empowerment nor the organisational developments of the social service providers are linear. They are social processes which require feedback loops and decisions between alternative steps that are neither wrong nor right.

For this reason, the sections of the organisational roadmap, although they build on each other, they can also be read singly: you can select the specific sections you are interested in.

In this organisational roadmap leaders and interested readers find:

- **Arguments** for why it is necessary to rethink the role of service providers in the social economy and descriptions of the relevant background and principles underlying the concepts of empowerment and service user involvement in social service innovation.
- **Helpful steps** showing leaders how to promote and support the implementation of a user driven project.
- A **framework for the evaluation** of the project and criteria for scaling the project.
- **Tools, such as** helpful descriptions of methods and templates, which support the implementation of service user involvement.

If you wish to deepen your knowledge and insight into empowerment and related issues, please also see our other project outcomes:

- The **Empowerment Handbook** guides staff of social service providers in the practical application of service user involvement and equips practitioners with methods and tools to involve users in the process of developing or changing social services.  
[www.sempre-project.eu/handbook](http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook)
- The **Guidebook for Empowerment Training** describes training modules that were jointly developed and piloted in several SEMPRES partner regions. It can be used for in-house training and education of future social workers in empowerment.  
[www.sempre-project.eu/training](http://www.sempre-project.eu/training)



### Social service innovation

is the development of new or improved public services to better address social needs (e.g. increased user-friendliness and efficiency). It often implies new or improved ways of designing and delivering services through, for example: greater involvement of service users; empowerment of service through more information, knowledge, recognition and a greater voice or power; transformed social and power relations among service providers and users, and so on. (Lindberg 2018)

- The **Policy Recommendations** guide policy-makers aiming for a reliable, affordable and accessible service infrastructure in rural areas.  
[www.sempre-project.eu/recommendations](http://www.sempre-project.eu/recommendations)
- The **Micro Project Brochure** presents the various co-creation projects that were developed at the local level by the SEMPRES partners. Micro projects are service user-driven projects that aim to improve the living situations of members of disadvantaged target groups by delivering previously unavailable social services.  
[www.sempre-project.eu/micro-projects](http://www.sempre-project.eu/micro-projects)
- The **website** offers information, documents and links related to empowerment and service user involvement. You will find more tools and examples of organisations which apply service user involvement in our resource centre.  
[www.sempre-project.eu](http://www.sempre-project.eu)

In all products we are guided by the fundamental principle of empowerment: you and your team know best how far you want to and can go. It's up to you – we just contribute with the experience that we have gained in SEMPRES.

*And now, let's start with Step 1: Explore the empowerment concept.*



# STEP 1

## Explore the empowerment concept

### 1.1 EMPOWERMENT AND THE ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGE

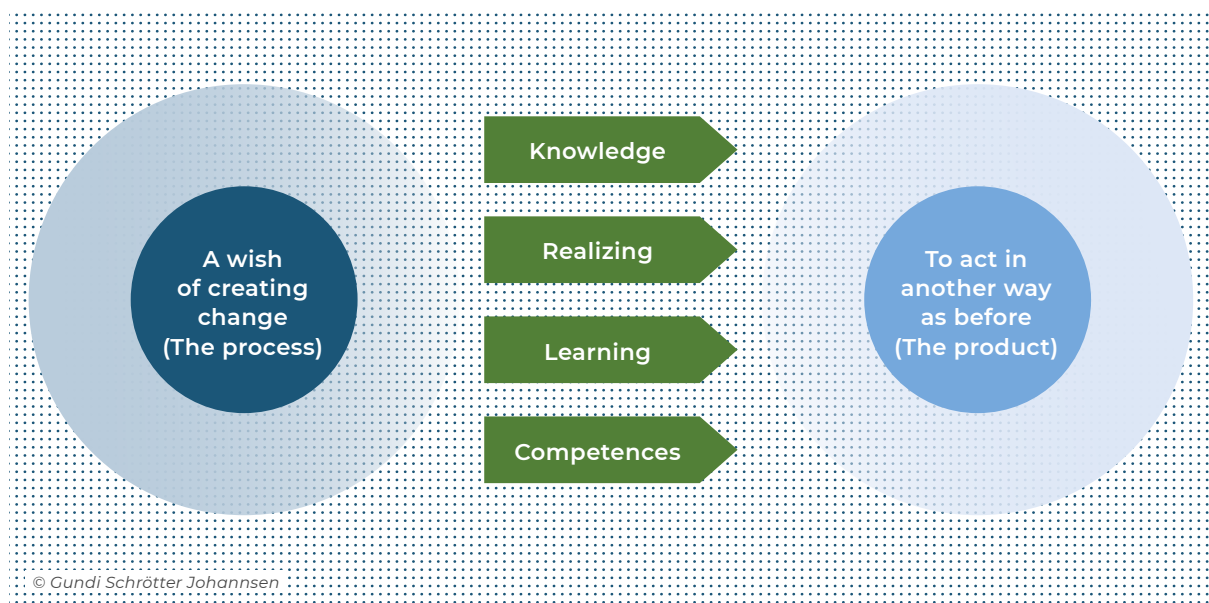
Societal and demographic challenges, exacerbated by welfare cuts, have driven social service providers (whether public authorities, welfare organisations, NGOs or social enterprises) to reassess their situations and their strategies for the future. In remote regions that are not well connected to urban centres and strongly affected by demographic change, the social service infrastructure is often poor and is deteriorating further. The basic hypothesis of SEMPRES is that empowering users of services will help to improve social services in these areas.

User involvement in the service design process has been widely promoted as a central approach in the social service innovation paradigm, for its potential to play a key role in adapting in a quicker and more flexible way to changing demands and in making social services more effective, inclusive, efficient and sustainable (Copus et al., 2017).

For the purposes of SEMPRES, we define empowerment as a process that enables service users to develop their confidence and innate potential and to build the capacity to take control of their lives and circumstances by playing an active part in the design and delivery of social service solutions.

Empowerment starts with people’s wishes, needs and dreams to make a change in their lives. In order to support people to act in a different, more liberating way, service providers must build an environment based on opportunities for increased knowledge, self-realisation, learning and competencies, and they must have the professional courage to work in an open and unpredictable way. Empowerment takes service providers and everybody else involved on an open-ended journey – a challenge in itself.

#### Empowerment – an open process of change



## 1.2 EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organisations play an important role in our everyday lives. They frame our life (education, health, work etc.) and in modern societies they are often regarded as instruments to solve problems (*Pohlmann, 2016: 13*). Social service provision is tied closely to organisations, which are usually the means by which such provision is delivered. Financial pressures and new management ideas around centralising, scaling up and growth have impacted on social service providers, often leading to them becoming uniform with strict hierarchies and disempowering regimes for staff and service users. Each organisation is “unique with its own culture, environment and web of living individuals” (*McMillan in Beresford, 2016: 340*). Organisational cultures and their values form systems of belief that attach meaning to the work delivered by staff and the services received by users. These belief systems support socially accepted, taken-for-granted concepts of “users” that are often deficit-orientated and manifest disempowerment regimes. Such organisational belief systems have developed over many years and shape the identity and behaviour of staff and users, and are therefore very resistant to change.

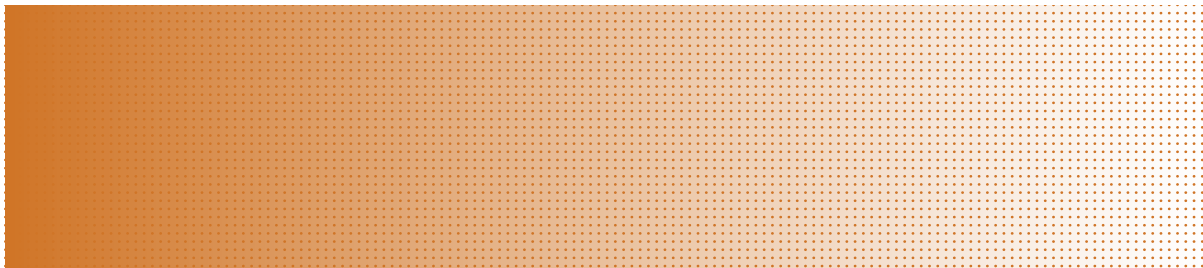
But environmental pressures (demographic, financial, political etc.), increasingly self-assertive service users and a growing number of user-led organisations underline the necessity for change. One element of change can be seen in professional and user collaboration. The weaving of user involvement, experience and knowledge into service design and delivery demands that staff and management engage in critical reflection in order to establish participatory and empowering organisational structures. Service users not only articulate critiques of existing organisational practices but also offer their solutions to overcoming barriers faced by collaborative approaches.

Collaborative practice changes the role and perspective of staff and management, enriching

rather than diminishing their professional identity. Supported by “experts of experience”, social service provider staff extend their task portfolio (becoming facilitators, mentors, supporters and so on) and acquire new or deepen existing competencies (communication, networking, cooperation, critical reflection). In order to accommodate empowered staff, organisational set-ups need to be reviewed: empowerment needs to be embedded in structures, processes and practice (*Laloux, 2015: 139; Theunissen, 2009: 96*). For instance, organisations, including service providers, have to rearrange their workflows, reallocate their resources, create spaces for critical reflection and dialogue, initiate communities of inquiry and rethink decision-making processes (*Reason & McArdel in Cummings, 2008: 123–135*).

Thus, power, which is usually connected to hierarchies and management, becomes less relevant or even redundant. Theunissen agrees with Lenz’s view, that empowerment is a professional practice which is ready to give up its traditional hierarchical, paternalistic dimension of work for the processes of bargaining and negotiating, joint explorations and discoveries (*Lenz 2002, quoted from Theunissen, 2009: 29*). Professional expertise understood as the only way of knowing and the right way of designing and delivering services becomes obsolete. In their reflections, Beresford (*2016: 341*) and Laloux (*2015*) doubt that empowered social practice can thrive in traditionally organised organisational formats. They argue for more diversity in organisational forms, which may lead to a growth of empowered and empowering organisations.

When involving service users in design processes of services, service providers may expect better results that show, for instance in innovative service approaches, improved efficiency of services and resources and services which accommodate the needs of service users in a more specific way.



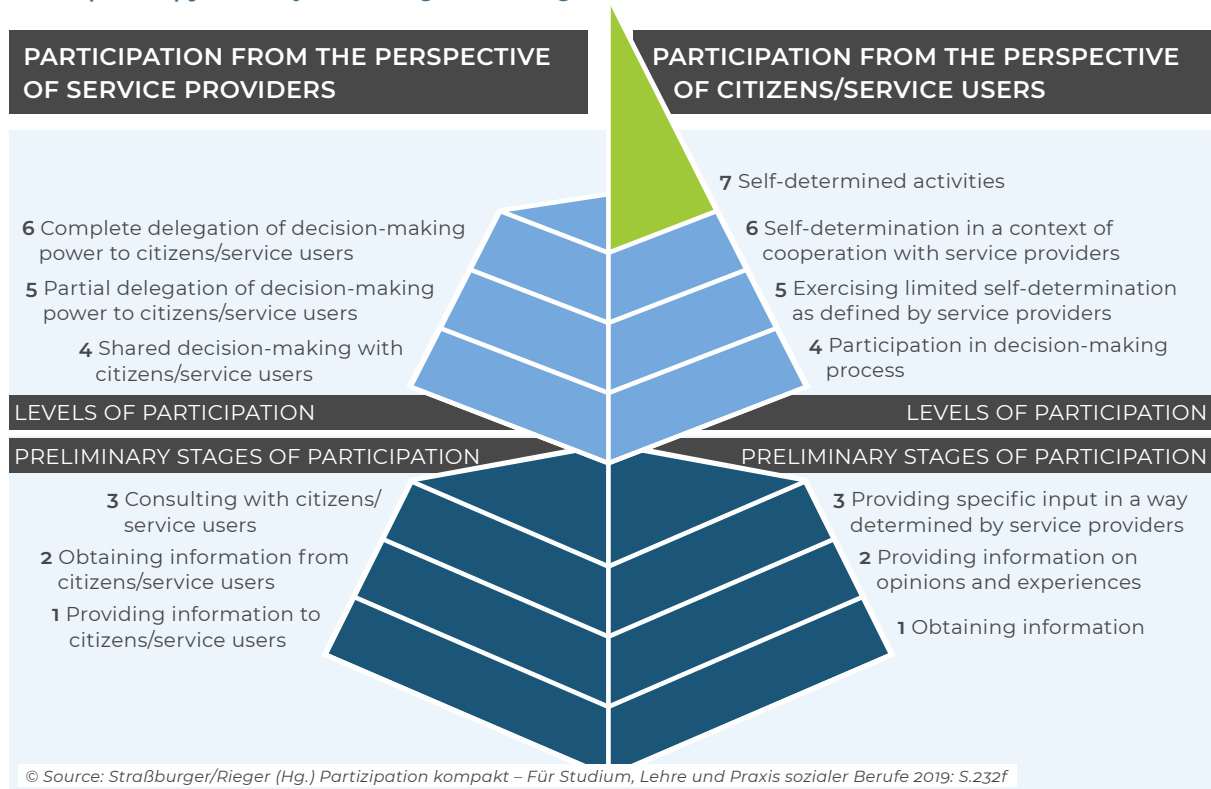
### 1.3 EMPOWERMENT AND THE LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT

One aim of empowering service users is to motivate and support them in becoming involved in the social service provider’s processes. But what exactly is meant by “to become involved”? Involvement can vary considerably and organisations must decide to what extent they want their service users to participate. A helpful model is the “pyramid of participation” of Straßburger and

Rieger (2019) which describes the different levels of participation of citizens and service users. They explain the levels both from an institutional-professional perspective and from the perspective of citizens/users.

The pyramid of participation contains the following levels:

Participation pyramid by Straßburger and Rieger



This model can be applied to the participation of employees in the decisions and processes of the organisation. It therefore also describes the extent

to which leadership promotes or hinders employee participation and thus also the opportunities for empowerment within the organisation.



### 1.4 LEARN TO EMPOWER – THE APPROACH OF ACTION LEARNING

Empowerment concepts are closely linked to learning processes and experiences. Service users need to learn how to use and improve their skills and raise their voices. Employees of social service providers must learn how to effectively

initiate and organise empowerment processes. And leaders of social service providers should learn how to capitalise on user involvement and empowerment by making it part of their organisational culture and practice.

The concept of action learning corresponds very well with the empowerment processes and action learning becomes a way of working with empowerment in practice. Both approaches have a common key principle: the focus is on lived experiences and concrete problems and challenges of the participants.

Action learning is – similar to empowerment – an approach that is characterized above all by attitude. People learn best when the learning content has a concrete relation to their life and when they do things concretely. Action learning is not a technique that is applied in a standardized way. It can take a variety of forms. That's why defining action learning is not so easy. But there are some common key elements (cf. Pedler and Abbott 2013: 9).

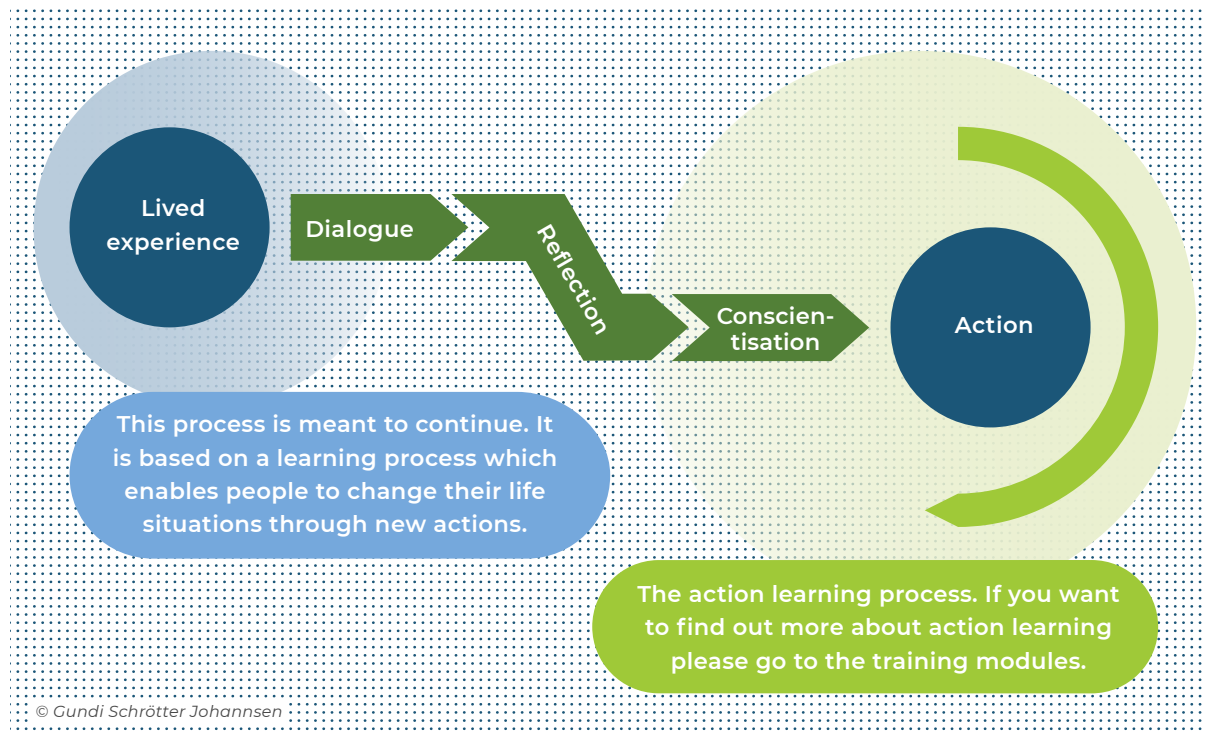
Participation is voluntary. The participants work on their own tasks, problems, projects or challenges. The exchange with others helps to gain new insights. That's why small groups – so-called “sets” – of 6 to 8 members are formed. They help each other to think about the respective topics, support the development of ideas for actions and reflect together on their experiences. Between the various meetings of the set, the members take action and consciously perceive the resulting changes and effects.

A facilitator helps the group to work and learn together. The facilitator is an external or internal person who is responsible for the action learning process and for creating an environment that enables learning and reflection. It is possible that the facilitator also takes on the tasks of moderating the meetings.

An action learning process begins with the problem definition and the needs analysis. There are usually three workshops (at the beginning, in the middle and at the end), between which the project is worked on or the actions are implemented (cf. Zuber-Skerritt 2002).

During the session, each member has time to present his or her project, problem or task and the actions he or she has taken. The presentation usually includes an overview of the experiences since the last session, a presentation of current issues and challenges and an agreement on future actions (cf. Morrison 2017).

Action learning was used as an overarching support framework for carrying out the activities in the SEMPRES project by several project partners and could be a relevant approach to use in other projects and contexts. Action learning supports both individual and organisational learning. To find out more about action learning see the SEMPRES Guidebook for Empowerment Training ([www.sempre-project.eu/training](http://www.sempre-project.eu/training)).





## STEP 2

# Kick-start and discuss the idea of service user involvement in your team

The previous chapter included an overview of the empowerment concept and service user involvement. We highlighted the elements that were particularly important to us in the context of SEMPRE and that became significant during implementation. We assume that you now have an idea of why service user participation might be relevant in your context.

You are now invited to take the next steps in your organisation. This means **sharing ideas and discussing concepts** as well as checking whether you and your employees want to gain initial experience with service user involvement by setting up a pilot project.

Empowerment means not only methods but, more importantly, attitude. Therefore, you need

to **convince your staff**, and possibly also other stakeholders, from an early stage. It is very important to gain their approval to ensure the success of service user involvement.

At the same time, this step helps you build up the framework for your own pilot project and thus coordinate the change ahead. This means sharing the vision and plans for change, helping your staff imagine the challenges and changes and **designing your structures and processes** so that changes can take place.

A good starting point would be to hold a workshop covering these different phases. The following table provides an overview of the phases, followed by some tips on how to carry them out.

## TEAM-ENGAGING WORKSHOP (PROPOSAL: 3–4 HOURS)

Share the idea	Discuss the implications	Prepare the implementation	Decide what to do
<p><b>Why are we here today?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the idea came from.</li> <li>• Why you think it is relevant to your organisation.</li> <li>• What you want to get out of the workshop: test the idea and find out if it is workable.</li> <li>• Process of the workshop.</li> <li>• Questions?</li> </ul> <p><b>What is empowerment?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More detailed introduction to the concept.</li> <li>• Questions from participants to understand the concept.</li> </ul>	<p><b>How does the idea resonate?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial reactions of your team?</li> <li>• What are any previous experiences with empowerment and service user involvement?</li> </ul> <p><b>For what challenges could service user involvement be a solution?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges to your organisation.</li> <li>• Is user involvement obstructive or conducive to this?</li> <li>• What are the implications? Is it worth a try?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Can we make it work?</b></p> <p>Play through one or two scenarios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What goals could be achieved by involving service users?</li> <li>• What level of involvement is possible and reasonable?</li> <li>• What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats?</li> <li>• How could you make it happen?</li> <li>• What would it take?</li> <li>• What would that mean for your work?</li> <li>• Can you make it work?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Should we move forward?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you move on, which areas should you focus on? By when? By whom?</li> <li>• Who needs to be involved and how?</li> <li>• What do you, as staff, need?</li> <li>• What are the criteria for a successful pilot project?</li> </ul> <p>Summary of actions and session close-out</p>
Documentation and evaluation of the workshop			

*In the Appendix you will find more information including a timetable and tools for the execution. The time you will need depends on the level of existing knowledge and attitude towards service users, user involvement and empowerment, and it depends on the joy of discussion in your team.*

## 2.1 SHARE THE IDEA OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES

**a In preparation** for the workshop ask yourself the following questions: How will your staff react to the empowerment concept? Will there be support or resistance? Which arguments could be convincing? What are the benefits to your staff? What information should your employees receive along with the invitation? Open communication and transparency are important conditions for winning your staff over to the project idea and making them the owners of the processes that follow.

**b Be transparent** about where you got the idea from and why you think it is relevant for your organisation. What are the problems that could be solved by involving service users?

**c Present the main features** of the empowerment concept and service user involvement to

your team. An overview can be found in Step 1 and more detailed information in the SEMPRES Empowerment Handbook ([www.sempre-project.eu/handbook](http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook)).



On the SEMPRES website you will find some slides that will help you to present empowerment and service user involvement.

[www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources](http://www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources)

**d Underline your personal vision** and the fundamental goals you associate with this concept. At the same time signal openness for the discussion that will follow.

**e** Be aware of any **difficult or non-negotiable conditions** for implementation, but be confident that you and your staff can handle them.

If there are restrictions (it is possible that employees will mention them later), this does not mean that user participation is not possible. Rather, it is a question of checking whether these obstacles can be overcome or bypassed. It is therefore important not to stop at what your organisation does not have or can't do, but at what it has and what could support your project.

**f Present the process** you want to go through with the workshop.

**g** Perhaps your staff thinks that the concept of empowerment means turning a big wheel. For

the following intermediate steps, it might be a good idea to **take small but meaningful steps**.



### Possible restrictions may be related to:

- Resources available, such as staff, finances, time ...
- Opportunities for employee participation in decision-making
- Statutes/tasks of the organisation agreed with clients/funders/ ...
- Possible scope of user involvement
- Your network in your area
- Other ...

## 2.2 DISCUSS THE IMPACTS OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES

The aim of this step is to **establish a common understanding** of empowerment in general and to gain agreement for further work on the topic. Change and innovation can only succeed if the staff who will be responsible for the implementation regard themselves as owners of the process.

There are some **challenges for you as a leader**: you have to provide the space for open discussion and at the same time promote the involvement of users. It takes time to build an atmosphere of trust that allows true feedback and an open discussion. But too much time for discussion is associated with the risk of talking things up and giving too much room for resistance. You need good time management skills and a good discussion struc-

ture. Because of these challenges it could be helpful to work with an (external) moderator who may also be familiar with the empowerment approach (you can find a list of experts on the SEMPRES website, [www.sempre-project.eu/experts-network](http://www.sempre-project.eu/experts-network)).

**a Ask for initial reactions** from your employees to get a feeling of the general mood. How do your employees feel about the idea of service user involvement? What are the initial thoughts of your staff about your idea (consent and objections)? To get a brief impression and to avoid long discussions, you can use alternative methods like the SEMPRES Thermometer to help obtain a versatile and differentiated picture of the assessments of team members (see Appendix, Tool 2.3).

“During the empowerment training we found that it was a challenge for some of the participants to work with empowerment-based service user participation. Success also meant that their processes and methods could be standardised. But empowerment-based participation meant experimenting and sometimes failing. It showed us how important it is to have space to experiment and to interpret ‘failure’ differently.”

*Anette Nielsen, Lector, University College South Denmark*





Be aware that the implementation of the empowerment approach and of service user involvement refers to the self-image of your employees. Some of your employees may appear to be against empowerment and service user participation. But their reaction is often related to their (previous) experiences as professionals in social work. In order to understand what touched your employees, it is important that they feel free to express their scepticism about empowerment and the involvement of service users. You can encourage them by listening actively and asking appreciative questions. Express your willingness to understand.



Some rules to create open discussion and appreciative communication (Tool 2.2)



TIP: Do not process the objections at this point, otherwise you will get lost in details. It is more important to get a feeling for the attitude behind the idea of service user involvement.

Our appeal to want to understand your staff does not mean that you don't challenge them to re-think their position and reflect critically on it. We all have basic assumptions which we are not necessarily aware of, but which shape our daily work and attitude: about service users, about participation, about our professional roles and about the challenges facing the organisation. It is important to identify and critically question these assumptions. This requires trust and the serious will to understand.



### From our experience, objections to service user involvement often relate to:

- Resources of money and time, which are usually scarce.
- Previous experiences of staff members with differences in what they have learned about empowerment and what was (not) possible in practice.
- Frustrating experiences with service users who (apparently) cannot be sustainably motivated.
- Frustrating experiences with rigid structures and decision paths in their own organisation.

**b** Now you can go into detail and **discuss the concrete impact** on your organisation if you implement the empowerment approach and involve your service users.

Helpful questions could include: What challenges does our organisation have to deal with? In what way can service user involvement be obstructive or conducive? For which challenges could the involvement of service users become a solution? For which challenges is it not a suitable solution?

**c** To gain the agreement of staff it is important for them to be able to discuss **the implications for their own work** and for the team. At this point, the discussion is more general and related to the



self-image of your staff. In the next section the discussion should be connected to hard facts like time, workload, qualifications, finances, etc.



**TIP:** Point out that they will discuss concrete implications for the usual work in the next step on the basis of scenarios.

#### **d Summarize the discussion and move ahead.**

Section 2.2 focused on the challenges of your organisation and the experiences and opinions of your staff. Finally, you can draw conclusions from your discussion. What are the implications of the findings? The overall question is: Is it still worth a try?

## 2.3 PREPARE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT

You now have an idea about what your employees think about the empowerment concept and everyone has shared their views about service user involvement and the possible impact for your organisation. You have exchanged existing experiences. We assume that you and your staff have come to the conclusion that service user involvement is worth a try.

So far the focus has been on a more general assessment of user involvement and the possible impact of the implementation of the approach on the organisation and the work itself. Now it is about the **practical effects**, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks that would be associated with a concrete project.

This is an important step before starting a pilot project. **Playing through a future project** can give the employees who will later be responsible for the concrete project a feeling of security. And that, in turn, is an important factor in radiating security to the users. This also includes thinking about what your service users gain from their involvement.

The goal of this step is to describe as concretely as possible what kind of service user involvement

you and your team want to have in your organisation and in what way.



You will find helpful tools in the Appendix (Tool 2.1 and Tool 2.3).

#### **a Play through a future project with the help of scenarios**

The starting point of a scenario is the first idea for a pilot project. Service user involvement can be very diverse and hence there is a multitude of possible pilot projects that you could develop and implement:

- Planning a joint leisure event for your staff and service users.
- Involving service users in participatory needs assessment.
- Development of ideas for new products or services (co-creation).
- Joint implementation of these ideas, with service users eventually assuming ownership of the process.
- Establishing a regular meeting point for service users (not limited to members of disadvan-



“In our experience, the main benefits of including the service users are their increased capacity for self-expression and increased self-esteem; their increased trust in service providers and local authorities; their improved ability to cope with personal problems; their increased participation in social life and, of course, an improvement of the service itself with a better understanding of service users' needs.”

*Avo Üprus, Foundation for Social Action (ÜTSA), Estland*

tagged groups) – this could even involve renovating a vacant location in a collaborative effort.

- Setting up a group of service users that regularly gives feedback to your work (sounding board).
- Formulating a mission statement together with service users.
- Allowing service users to participate in management bodies.

This list is far from complete and you and your staff could surely come up with even more creative ideas. As you can see, the possible actions can belong to all the different levels of the **pyramid of participation** (see Step 1.3) and you don't have to (and probably should not) start with the highest levels right away.

The partners of the SEMPRES project have focused on involvement in the development of new service offers and the improvement of existing offers, as well as on setting up networks and groups of service users. Actions that change processes or structures within the organisation have not been part of the project activities.



The Swedish Involvement Model (IMO, in Swedish DMO: Delaktighetsmodellen) is a good example of the improvement of internal structures and processes through user involvement. IMO creates an equitable and participatory dialogue between staff and service users. One effect is a better mutual understanding of how both groups experience the work and cooperation in the organisation. This results in suggestions for change – often of a simple nature such as improved information about plans and actions in the organisation.

<https://delaktighetsmodellen.se/dmo-in-english/>



At SEMPRES, we called our local pilot actions “micro projects”. Some of these micro projects resulted in newly established social enterprises or cooperatives that offer a particular service. In other projects support groups and networks of service users were set up that develop their own agenda and activities. You will find some examples on the SEMPRES website:

[www.sempres-project.eu/micro-projects](http://www.sempres-project.eu/micro-projects)

**b** If you have chosen one or two ideas for a pilot project, you can **play through** what the involvement of the service users means. If your team is large enough it could be helpful to work in two or more groups.

The tasks for the workgroup(s) are:

- To formulate the goals that should be achieved by involving service users.
- To think about which service users you want to reach and how.
- To describe the benefits for those involved (organisation, staff, service users, stakeholders).
- To describe the type of involvement (level of participation).
- To work out the strengths and weaknesses of the intended project as well as the associated opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis).
- To identify experience and knowledge of empowerment and service user involvement that already exist in your organisation.
- To describe the steps to implement the project.
- To derive the necessary resources like time, finances, qualifications, support, leadership.



For some of these tasks you will find tools in the Appendix.



Several SEMPRES partners have carried out SWOT analyses before deciding on a project to implement service user involvement.

For example, the Estonian SEMPRES Partner, “Foundation of Social Action” (ÜTSA), for their project with offenders and ex-offenders, established the following:

- **Strengths:** Services are in better accordance with target group's needs; trust and understanding between service provider, stakeholder and service users is increasing.
- **Weaknesses:** Time-consuming; inclusion and involvement problems; administrative obstacles; prejudices; additional work needed.
- **Opportunities:** Fresh approach to problem-solving; leaving aside everything that is not absolutely necessary; focus on what is most important; improve quality.
- **Threats:** Risk of conflict; causing offence; service users may stop using services



TIP: It is not necessary to work through the intended projects down to the smallest detail. It is rather about getting an idea of whether participation can work at all and what impact it could have on your organisation, the employees and the service users.

**c** The groups report the outcomes of their group work and the team discusses the results under the guiding question: **What does this mean for our work?**

**d Brush against the grain:** Take the perspective of your service users and ask yourself how your previous results affect them. Will they feel like

they have been taken seriously? Are their needs really the focus of attention?



TIP: To get an idea about what service users might think about involvement projects, read *Peter Beresford (2013): Beyond the usual suspects. A practical guide towards inclusive user involvement.*

At the end of this phase, you will have a good idea about the potential of involving service users. Now is the time to discuss and decide the strategic and practical issues.

## 2.4 DECIDE WHAT TO DO

Together with your team you have discussed the basic aspects of the empowerment concept. You have developed one or two scenarios and worked out goals, benefits and important conditions for service user involvement as well as some actions to implement a pilot project.

**a** Now you and your team will be able to **summarise the results** of the previous steps and answer the following questions:

- Do you really want to implement service user involvement and carry out a pilot project?
- How do you describe the problem that service user involvement could solve?
- What is your main goal in implementing service user involvement?
- Up to what level do you want to involve service users? (See Step 1.3)
- What are the desired effects that you and your team expect from service user involvement? These effects will be the basis for the evaluation of a concrete pilot project (see c.) and for Step 4 (Assess the outcomes).
- How do you want to inspire service users and which service users should be involved? What about other stakeholders?
- Who will work on the concept further and how will tasks be allocated?
- What will your staff need to make the project a success (time, qualifications, decisions, etc.)?
- Do you want to involve a trained and experienced person who knows the empowerment methods and tools? You will find some references to experts on the SEMPRES website ([www.sempre-project.eu/experts](http://www.sempre-project.eu/experts)) or on the SEMPRES partner websites.
- How do you want to design the process?

“At the beginning of SEMPRES, we conducted a stakeholder and network analysis. We were very surprised at the variety of potential partners. We were able to develop a strategy for how to make this network usable for our service users.”

*Maike Hagemann-Schilling, Kirchlicher Dienst in der Arbeitswelt der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Norddeutschland, SEMPRES Local Empowerment Network in the County of Plön, Germany*



**b** Before you start with the real project, decide **who needs to be involved and how**.

It makes sense to carry out a stakeholder and network analysis. Within the environment of your organisation and in the field in which you place your service offers, who has what kind of demands on your organisation? Who has what kind of competencies and resources available that could be of use in this context? How do you communicate with your stakeholders? How can you convince them to support your idea?

This analysis helps you find the right arguments to convince your stakeholders to accept the empowerment approach. You will be able to identify network partners who can support you or your service users during the process and in the implementation of your plans. It is important to find partners and stakeholders of mutual interest in meeting the needs of a specific service user group. All stakeholders should have something to gain from cooperating.

Stakeholders are not only important partners for the concrete project, but also for the successful development of the entire organisation. Because of this, stakeholder analysis can also be a part of the organisational management (see Step 3.2). You will find a tool for a stakeholder analysis in the Appendix (Tool 2.6) and a template on the website: [www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources](http://www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources)

**c** **What are your criteria for success?**

Evaluation of the project occurs not only at the end of the project (see Step 4: Assess the outcomes), but is part of reflecting loops. But what are the criteria for success?

These could include:

... at the service user level:

**... at the service user level:**

- The growing extent of self-management of the service user.
- Their subjective assessment on whether they have been involved in a participatory way.
- The measurable improvement of living conditions of the service user. (What indicators could there be for this? Maybe social activity, ability to keep promises and take responsibility for certain tasks or own actions, employment or employability, voluntary work, etc.)
- Satisfaction of the service user. Note: dissatisfaction does not have to be a sign of failure. Participation also means moving out of the comfort zone and becoming active. However, some users may expect others to work for them. In this case, dissatisfaction can be a positive sign. This means that you should listen

carefully to what lies behind dissatisfaction or satisfaction!

**... at the organisational level:**

- Strengthened own capacity.
- The cost of resources (time, finances, man/womanpower, material ...). Note: the costs are not necessarily bad and it is not always compulsory to reduce costs. Costs are also an expression of investments whose results will be visible in the future.
- Contribution to the objectives of the organisation.
- The development of new methods for social providers.
- The implementation of new service offers that are actually used.
- Shift from reactive to more preventive social service provision.
- Satisfaction of staff and/or you as a leader.
- Satisfaction of the stakeholder.

**... at the societal level:**

- Publicity effects.
- Influence on society (improved socio-economic conditions, social economy and quality of life).
- The perception of social responsibility by the various actors.

Some of the outcomes may be short-term while others may have more long-term effects.



### The European Platform for Rehabilitation listed the following conditions for successful social innovation:

- Increase the quality of life of service users/beneficiaries by strengthening outcomes;
- Empower service users/beneficiaries;
- Make services more accessible to service users;
- Overcome sectoral boundaries in the context of a holistic approach;
- Involve the participation of service users;
- Have potential to be scaled up;
- Respect ethical principles in order to ensure that the human rights and dignity of social service users are guaranteed respected and promoted;
- Be sustainable and cost effective."

(EPR 2012: 6)

You will find more (or different) success criteria and, for each, criterion indicators.

NOTE: the project you think would most likely fulfil the success criteria does not necessarily have to be the best project. Maybe you and your or-

ganisation would learn more if you took the risk of unfulfilling the criteria. The **courage to experiment** and to leave familiar paths and the willingness to be surprised by the service users can also be valuable criteria for the success of the project.

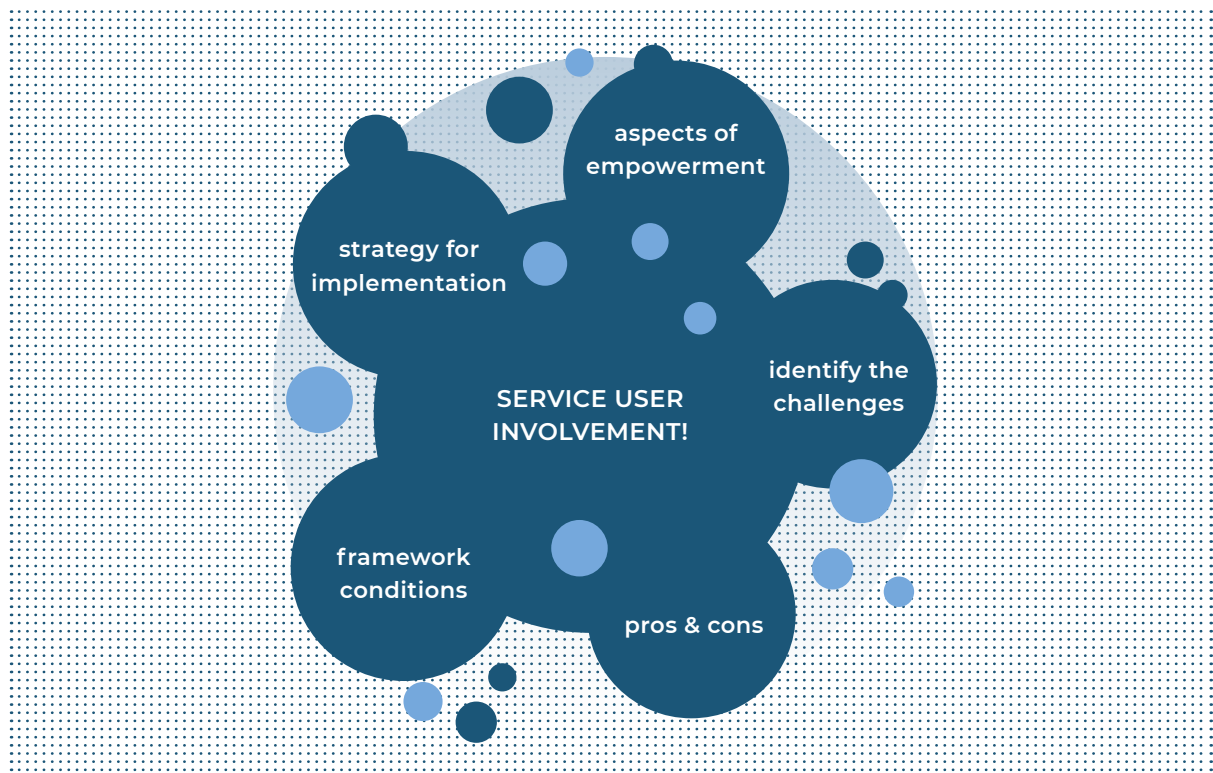


## 2.5 DOCUMENTING AND EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP

In the workshop, you and your team discovered and discussed different aspects of an empowerment approach. You weighed the pros and cons and, using a scenario, you assessed whether service user involvement would be a sensible approach for you as a social provider. You have analysed beneficial and obstructive conditions in your organisation and described the necessary framework conditions for the implementation of service user participation. In other words: you have learned together and you have taken an important step towards capacity building. It is important to document the results and les-

sons learned from this workshop. When you and your team evaluate the project you have now decided on, you will come back to these results. Have you achieved what you aimed for? Was your organisation able to handle the work well? What worked and what didn't? In Step 3 you will specify the criteria for a well-functioning service user involvement. But more than this, you will get some hints and suggestions on how you and your team could set up a pilot project and how you, as a leader, can support your team. Now you have a good basis to go forward and start with a pilot project!

### The Elements of Step 2





## STEP 3

# Get going: Implement a pilot and manage the process

At the end of Step 2, you and your team made the decision to implement a service user-driven pilot project. You described the framework conditions and carried out an initial analysis of the obstructive and conducive circumstances in connection with the implementation of service user involvement in your organisation. You have formed a project group that will now take the next concrete steps.

If you decide to involve service users in needs assessment, service development and service design, or if you want to support service user groups in setting up organisational and management structures, you will find a lot of practical tools and recommendations in the SEMPRE Empowerment Handbook ([www.sempre-project.eu/handbook](http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook)). To support the necessary learning process, the persons responsible for the qualification of your employees and internal or external trainers, will find information and assistance in the SEMPRE Guidebook for Empowerment Training ([www.sempre-project.eu/training](http://www.sempre-project.eu/training)).

In this chapter we would like to present **some challenges** your organisation and you, as a leader, face when working with empowerment processes, as well as some principles of sound process management and leadership that apply to all types of pilot projects involving service users.

From the beginning we would like to emphasize the following important aspects:

- From this point on, work is essentially about **project planning** as you and your employees know it. But your usual practice will now be enriched by the constant change of perspective from the service users' point of view. Be prepared to **critically question your assumptions** about the service user's needs, attitudes and skills!
- Decide **where and how you want to involve** the service users. Which service users would you like to invite? How can you motivate them to participate in your pilot? How can you support them so they can participate? Maybe there are parts of the process that you don't

want or can't involve service users in? Critically question this assessment and the assumptions behind it.

- Remember that we are talking about service users who come from marginalized groups or need special support for various reasons. They need a high degree of **security and trust** to become involved in such a project. If your organisation has a very clear idea of how it wants to proceed, and if the framework conditions are helpful, then you can convey this sense of security and enable trust.

**Language**, for example, is one of the framework conditions. Technical language and the use of internal abbreviations are not helpful. It's a challenge to use a language that is understandable for the service users.

**Professional standards** also need to be reviewed. Some may meet a high professional standard but could deter service users. It is necessary to find ways to ensure quality on the one hand, but do not deter service users on the other.

- Empowerment of service users is very closely linked to the **empowerment of your employees**. Your employees also need assurance and trust that you, as the leader of the social service provider, will support the pilot project and help shape the framework conditions within the organisation. This includes reviewing current organisational structures and processes and adapting them where necessary to enable your employees to develop their own ideas, take responsibility for the project and involve service users seriously. Only with empowered employees is it possible to empower service users.
- Process management in an empowering organisation is a challenging task due to simultaneous **bottom-up and top-down** processes that you must reconcile.

Empowering the team means working with bottom-up processes. Even if you initiate these processes as a leader, the team members need space to act, to control their processes and to make decisions within the project.

At the same time, you have to cope with your function as a leader applying top-down management. This means you need to be aware of risks and challenges that could impact the



The Denkfabrik – Forum für Menschen am Rande (forum for people at the margins of society) organised a study on long-term

unemployed non-voters. The long-term unemployed were already involved in the initial workshop on the development of the questions and the interview guidelines. They conducted interviews and took part in the evaluation of the survey. In the sociological summaries, they ensured that the background experiences of long-term unemployed were adequately integrated and that the personality of the interviewees and their biographies did not disappear behind sociological data and characteristics. The publication of the study resulted in contacts between long-term unemployed non-voters and politicians.

<http://www.studie-nichtwaehler.de>

implementation process. What challenges can your organisation manage? Which organisational changes would be necessary? What risks do you want to take as a leader?

- It is important to **communicate the plan**, the objectives, the benefits and the process within the organisation. For strategic reasons, it makes sense to inform other stakeholders in the early phases of project development, for example directly after the workshop. They need to know that if service users are involved in the development of service offers and their needs are at the centre, the project could take surprising turns. It resembles an experiment and the team needs the confidence to use this experimental space without having to achieve a specific result.

The following section deals with the personnel and organisational management requirements for empowerment and describes the process management that accompanies the implementation of a pilot project.

Let yourself be inspired, take what you think is important and stay true to the empowerment concept.



### 3.1 PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP

It is not self-evident that your employees have the necessary skills to empower your service users and to implement service user involvement. That's why employees need **ways to learn** about it. Empowerment and user involvement should therefore be one of the focal points of **personnel development**. There are several ways of **offering learning experiences**. In SEMPRE we promote action learning because it's very closely linked to the practical work and enables a timely reflection of the experiences (see Step 1.4).

Use the SEMPRE Guidebook for Empowerment Training and choose the relevant tools from the modules to support the action learning process. You, as a leader, have to design the organisational framework and ensure that your employees can actually implement the learning and work process. Therefore, it makes sense to **take part in the training**, at least in the planning and kick-off seminar when team members are introduced to the method, and also during the mid-way and final seminars, when participants meet to reflect their practical actions and evaluate the process. If you reward critical thinking and evaluation, you will get a lot of valuable advice for the capacity building of your organisation.

At the final conference of the SEMPRE Project, participants developed further ideas that can **support a change of attitude**. Offer your employees the opportunity to get involved in other organisations that already practice user involvement. Conversely, an employee from the other organisation could come into your organisation and report on their experiences. Maybe it is possible to accompany a service user in his or her daily life and thus learn about their daily challenges (but discuss ethical implications beforehand). These are also opportunities for you as a leader.

It can be very rewarding to engage with **leadership cultures** that value and promote employees' autonomy, creativity and self-management skills.

Probably the most far-reaching approach of **co-operative leadership** is the democratic leadership style. But it is not necessary to fully implement this very innovative and far-reaching approach of modern leadership in order to become an empowered organisation. Cooperative leadership, which gives employees the freedom to carry out their projects in a self-determined manner, can also be expressed in your everyday leadership activities:

- Together with team members, develop and clearly describe the goals and tasks of the project team.
- Create an atmosphere of trust and respect and base your leadership on partnership.
- Share all information related to the project.
- Motivate your team to have new experiences and make space for experimenting.
- Do not interfere without being asked and stick to the agreements on tasks, competencies and responsibilities.
- Make time for reflection and join in on the reflection. Give appreciative feedback if desired. Ask good, critical questions that are both appreciative and far-reaching.
- Accept feedback loops. Sometimes it seems like a step forward and two steps back. But feedback loops are important for reviewing the project and planning the next steps.
- When the team talks about problems, avoid enforcing your own solution ideas: support the team in developing their solutions.
- Reward critical thinking and exploration.
- Check your attitude and your messages.
- Be ready to learn and acquire new skills and insights by reflecting on your own actions, by the

"It made me think how terribly bureaucratic our language is and how demanding it is to make mutual communication understandable."

*Tuula Löf, social instructor of migrant services, City of Kokkola, Finland*





For some years now, “democratic leadership” has been discussed in companies. In this context you can gain numerous ideas for the leadership culture in your organisation and discuss them with your team. As an introduction, for example, it is worth listening to and seeing lectures by Frédéric Laloux on the internet and reading his book “Reinventing Organisations” (this has been translated into several languages). (Laloux 2014).

experiences of your team, by studying further literature or listening to experts’ lectures on the Internet. In other words: participate in the action learning process in your organisation.

- It might be helpful to look for an external person who can support you through knowledge about empowerment and cooperative leadership, through their own experiences, as an interlocutor for your own reflection, etc.
- See empowerment and action learning as a part of your organisation’s personnel development.

All this can be summarised by the model of action leadership, which Zuber-Skerritt describes as “actively creative, innovative, collaborative, shared and self-developed in partnership with others. It involves taking responsibility for, not control over, people through networking, and orchestrating

human energy towards a holistic vision and an outcome that best serves the common interest.” (Zuber-Skerritt 2011: 7)

The further you go, the more the **question of power** arises. Some leaders may believe that empowering users means that they should give up power and lose control of the organisation. That is not what empowerment means in this context. It is misleading to think that power given to service users or staff is power that you as a leader lose. It is much more about exercising power and control in another form. This includes creating free spaces that allow employees and service users to gain control over the things that concern them directly. The essence of empowerment is to **combine different competencies** in order to improve life and work situations. Empowerment helps organisations to better reach their goals. It does not mean disputing respective competencies. Your competence is to lead the organisation according to the organisational goals and possibly also according to funding guidelines. The competence of the service users is the knowledge around their own life situation. The competence of your employees refers to specialist knowledge and methodological competence. The challenge for leaders is to network these different competencies in order to successfully implement service user involvement.

This also means **trusting your employees** to take over tasks such as meeting planning, moderation, documentation/evaluation and steering the pilot project.

If you want to implement empowerment in a



### The German “Institut für inklusive Bildung”

(Institute for Inclusive Education) “develops and realises educational offerings carried out by and with people with disabilities. As qualified educational specialists they communicate the lives, needs and specific visions of people with disabilities. The team creates awareness for (future) teachers, specialists and managerial staff on an equal level.” (<https://inklusive-bildung.org/en>)

### The Swedish Involvement Model

(IMO, in Swedish DMO, Delaktighetsmodellen) is a method for creating an equitable and participatory dialogue between groups of people. The purpose is to empower people with a ‘weak voice’ to be heard, become involved and to experience self-determination in matters of concern to them. It has been developed in organisations for social care and support, mainly involving users with disabilities, elderly people and the staff. It can also be used in another context. ... All group meetings are led by two IMO guides, facilitators, who are neutral to the participants. They work in pairs or as a team if a user-facilitator is included. They all have a short training in leading such groups. (<https://delaktighetsmodellen.se/dmo-in-english/>)

sustainable way, it could be helpful to **relate the personnel development in your organisation to the service users**. On the one hand, this means supporting them in their personal development and qualifications so that they dare to become involved. On the other hand, you can train and use

them as trainers for your employees, for other service users or for the employees of other organisations. They can also assume the role of co-moderators for processes in the project.

## 3.2 ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

You probably won't have the opportunity to increase your staff headcount to implement service user involvement and carry out an empowerment pilot project. For this reason, the **distribution of work** in your organisation needs to be examined. Where can you find additional personnel capacity? Can you change priorities – at least for a while – to enable staff to become engaged with the pilot project? The main task of management is to make the necessary resources (budget, time, personnel capacities, qualifications, tools) available – how will you achieve this?

The attitude of leaders and staff of social service providers is a decisive success factor for service user involvement. But the attitude in an organisation and the organisational culture cannot be separated from the **structures and processes in the organisation**. A hierarchical structure that gives employees little room to make their own decisions cannot respond flexibly to the needs and goals of service users and thus prevents them from experiencing themselves as self-effective. Rigid processes that cannot respond to surprising turns in projects prevent the organisation from truly responding to service users' needs. The empowerment of service users is hardly possible without an empowered organisation. The self-critical reflection of processes and structures is an important step on the way to service user involvement. Which processes and structures have proven themselves and are conducive, which can be supplemented and which are possibly obstructive and would have to be changed?

**Relations and exchanges with stakeholders** are also important success factors. Stakeholders are organisations or individuals who are interested in what the organisation is doing and can influence the goals, resources and actions of the organisation.

Therefore, an **analysis of external networks** can be important for the development of the organisation. Helpful questions are:

- With which other organisations or persons are there connections and what is the importance of user participation for this relationship?
- What knowledge, influence and network do they possibly have?
- How can this relationship be used for the organisational goals or how can possible resistance be reduced?
- Which of these network partners are stakeholders and should be informed as a matter of priority?
- Who in their own organisation maintains this relationship (formally or informally) and could address this organisation or person, inform them and win them over to the project?



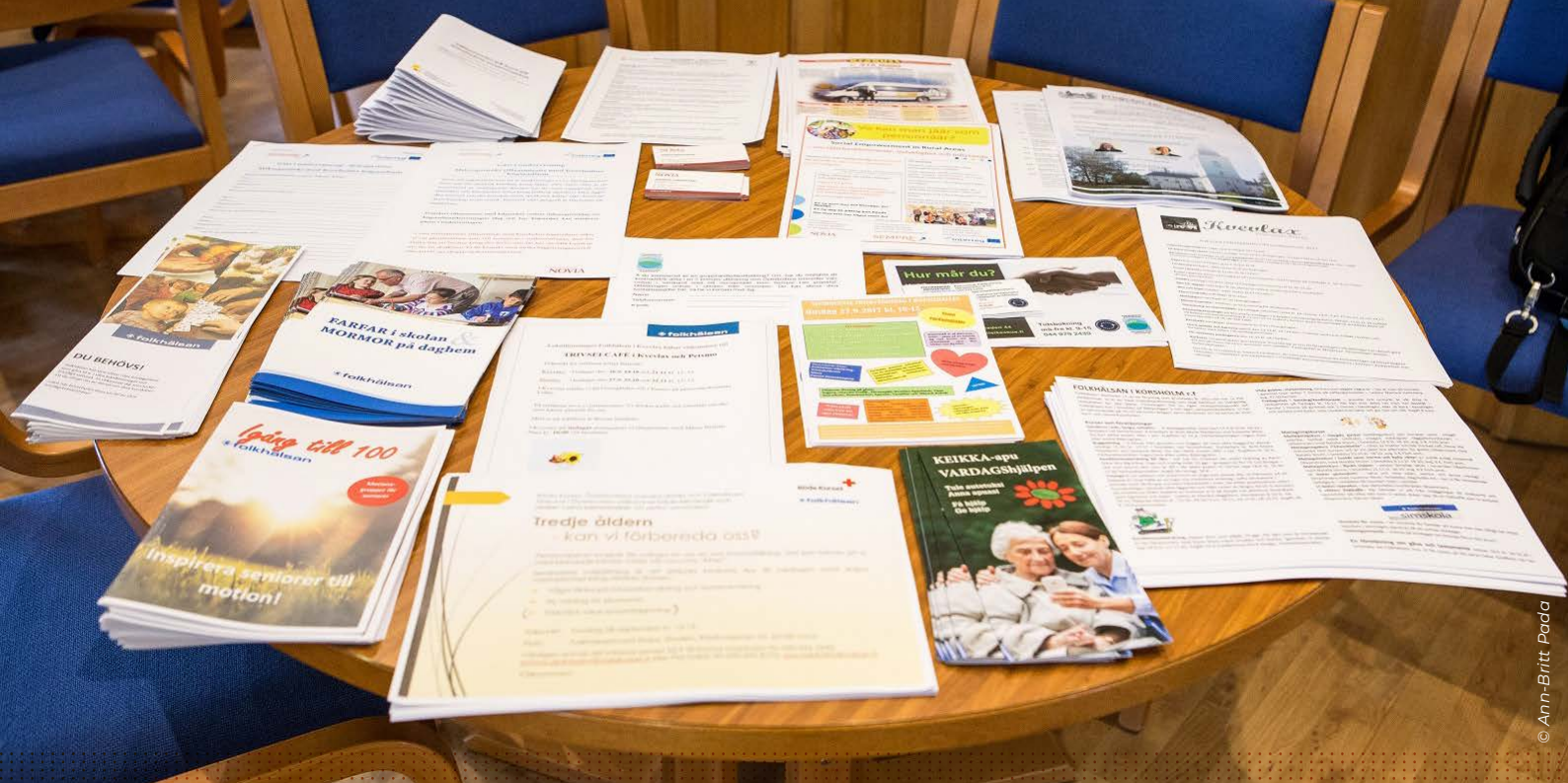
In the Appendix you will find a template for a stakeholder analysis (Tool 2.6)

Some examples are intended to illustrate the importance of external network and stakeholder analysis:

- It is conceivable that the needs and expectations of the service users exceed the **possibilities of the organisation**. On the one hand, this means that the organisation should be aware



The external network includes, for example, competitors, cities and municipalities, public authorities, politicians, mayors, suppliers, service user organisations (advisory boards, associations, etc.), local associations, others.



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of its limits and should deal with them in a transparent manner. On the other hand, this underlines the importance of networking in the region, e.g. with other social service providers who might be better able to respond to the needs and objectives that service users identify in the needs' assessment.

- The success of social innovations often depends on the **openness of the environment** for these innovations – whether it is about new or changed products and services or about new organisational forms for the users (up to social enterprises). The better and earlier one's own network and stakeholders are informed about the project, the more likely this openness will be. In addition, the networking of stakeholders with

their different experiences and knowledge can initiate new partnerships and new innovations.

- To be innovative means to be open to experiments, to allow failure and to learn from failure. However, the **failure of a project** can have massive negative consequences for the organisation as a whole if stakeholders are not informed about the background. In particular, funders and contractual partners must become familiar with the concept of empowerment and user involvement at an early stage and can thus better assess the significance of the individual project for the overall context. Their trust in the organisation provides scope and flexibility and thus provides security for employees and users.

### 3.3 PROCESS MANAGEMENT – IMPLEMENTING THE PILOT

You and your team have a common vision of service user involvement and of the goals associated with it. You know the rough framework for a service user-driven project. Now the task is to go into more detail and to **implement a concrete project**.

The next sections will give you a brief overview of the most important steps for implementing ser-

vice user involvement. If you can, make use of an external facilitator or coach so that you can concentrate on the contents of the process. The next three steps are based on the phases of the action learning process (see step 1.4).

### 3.3.1. Problem formulation

Your starting points are the actual problems or challenges you are dealing with in your organisation and the difficulties your service users are facing in their living circumstances.

Problems and challenges could be identified through **need assessments**. You can find several tools for this in the SEMPRE Empowerment Handbook, e.g. descriptions of future workshops, backpack methods, focus group interviews ([www.sempre-project.eu/handbook](http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook)).

The real challenge is not merely identifying the problem to be solved by service user involvement, but rather the ongoing questioning of the problem. **For whom is it relevant?** Will it be relevant for the service users, the organisation or both? Is the problem one that your employees have always wanted to solve? Or is it a problem that allows service users to take a completely different path from the one you considered?

This point is essential if you want **to win over the involvement of your service users**. Their needs must be at the centre of the project. If service users realize that their own needs are subordinate to the interests of the organisation, then your project will not be successful.

Your team can avoid this trap by questioning itself and allowing feedback loops. This can be the task of a moderator or the facilitator (see Step 1.4)

### 3.3.2. Taking action

By focusing on the pilot project for service user involvement, your staff can apply project planning methods and methods as presented in the SEMPRE Empowerment Handbook.

Important steps are:

- Define roles in the project (including roles of service users).
- Design a project plan including a timeline; think of documentation and evaluation.
- Identify possible obstacles, find solutions.
- Reduce weak points, build up strengths, seize opportunities and minimize risks.
- Identify resources needed and compare with existing resources (financial, time, man/womanpower, qualifications, organisational resources such as IT and administration, mental resources, social resources such as networks, etc.).



#### SEMPRE used different methods to reach service users:

- Articles in the regional newspaper.
- Leaflets displayed in doctors' surgeries, public libraries, the town hall and other places visited by users.
- Service users and stakeholders who act as multipliers.
- Social workers/employees of other organisations who have contact with the same service user group.

- Determine communication strategies within the team and between the team and yourself as leader.

One of the main goals of service user involvement is to reach those who have not been reached through previous service offers. The users you already know are not necessarily your target group. This does not make the **selection of service users** for the pilot project easy. How can you attract potential service users to the pilot project?

The implementation of user participation is not a single action, but a series of actions that follow each other. It makes sense to take one step at a time and constantly check how things can continue. Involving service users also means being surprised. Surprising twists, (apparent) dead ends and other challenges should be reflected on early so that the work process can be adapted. That's why we promote the approach of action learning. It includes regular reflection of the actions.

### 3.3.3. Reflection loops

The evaluation of a project doesn't only take place at the end of the project. It is just as important to **reflect on the ongoing progress** of the project and the actions taken:

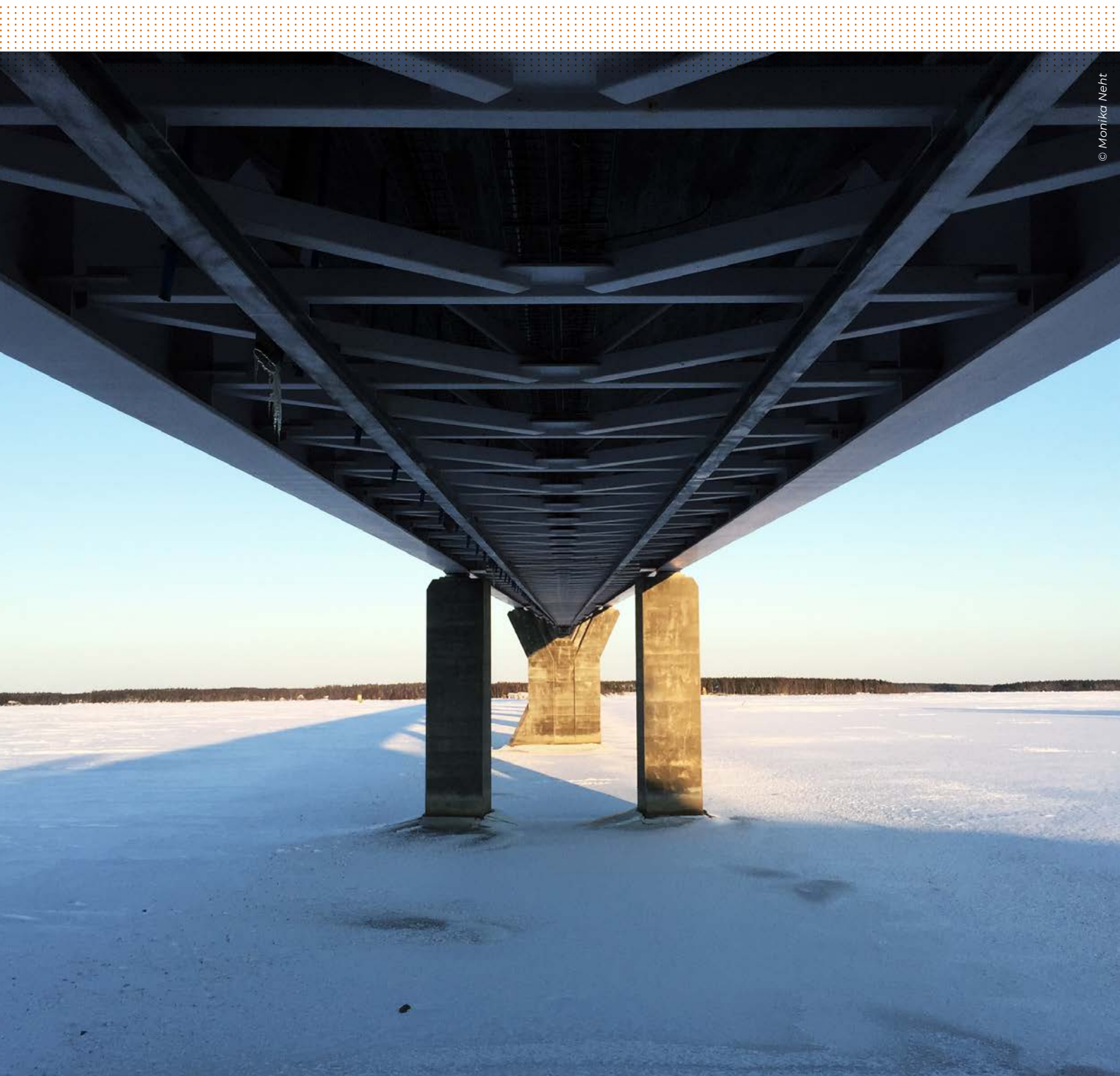
- What barriers/obstacles have been encountered so far?
- What kinds of challenges have you and your team faced?

- What has worked well and what hasn't with respect to:
  - service user involvement
  - the organisation
  - the stakeholders
  - the local society level
  - training and knowledge
  - socio-economic conditions
  - other aspects

After these observations have been analysed, you should adjust your organisation in response to the needs you identified during the observation. The reflection loop ends in new actions or the

continuation of previous ones.

Reflection does not only refer to the steps in the concrete project. In order to make the experience gained useful for the organisation and the next project it is important to reflect on what the participants have learned. The **learning effect** depends on whether the experience gained is appreciated in each case. If it didn't go so well or even failed, there were usually good reasons for it, which could give valuable hints for the further work. Therefore, the Appreciative-Inquire Method is a good tool for the reflection loops (see Appendix: Tools for Step 4, external tools).



# STEP 4

## Assess the outcomes

Your staffs have done a great job in implementing a pilot and your organisation has gained new experiences in working with your service users. Now it is important to **evaluate the results** and draw conclusions from them, so that you can decide if and how you want to proceed.

There is an enormous amount of assessment questions one could ask to evaluate the pilot. But keep in mind that the time and motivation of your staff and service users to answer questions is limited. Therefore, it is very important for you to carefully consider what the **purpose of the assessment** is and what you want to find out. Try to focus on the most important questions and carefully select the assessment tools that best fit to your objectives and the respondents. Depending on how far along you are in the process of implementing user involvement in your organisation, your interest may be in the short-

term outcomes of a pilot project or in the long-term effects of changing organisational practices. Similarly there are many different perspectives to take into account: Engaging in empowerment and user involvement affects the service users, but also your team, your fellow leaders and eventually the structures of your organisation as well as local community and external stakeholders. In fact, a pilot might be assessed very positively by the service users and rather critically by user staff – or vice versa.

The following chart shows the **different levels of assessments**, the time perspective and examples of possible criteria for success. The chart may help you in identifying the outcomes you are most interested in and prioritising and planning your evaluation activities. We recommend that you go back to Step 2.4 c and check what criteria for success you defined before starting the pilot.

Level of Assessment	Time frame		
	short term		long term
societal		<i>final support</i>	<i>legitimacy</i> <i>democracy</i>
organisational	<i>staff</i>	<i>attitudes</i> <i>leadership</i>	<i>decision making</i> <i>processes</i> <i>structures</i> <i>culture</i>
service users	<i>well-being</i>  <i>motivation</i>	<i>self management</i>	<i>satisfaction</i>
possible tools	group interviews focus groups After Action Review (AAR)	workshops questionnaires	cost-benefit analysis

There is a wealth of **helpful tools** to evaluate a project and draw conclusions for future work, and the tools mentioned in the chart are merely suggestions. SEMPRE has collected some tools and applied them in the project. In the Appendix we list some of the tools that have proven themselves in practice.

Before you evaluate your results, describe the **purpose of the evaluation**. Otherwise, you may

be tempted to collect a lot of information that is not useful. In addition, a survey of service users or stakeholders that does not lead to any conclusions visible to them can cause frustration and demotivation towards further participation.

This also includes the question of **how to communicate the results**. In terms of empowerment and participation, a presentation and discussion with stakeholders and service users is an obvious option.



If the assessment is to support positive change, then **you should appreciate** both what went well and what may not have gone so well. There are always good reasons for what has happened and what was developed. Find the good you can get out of it. There are methods to do this, such as the “appreciative inquiry” (see Appendix, Tools for Step 4).

Appreciation is the basis for trust and openness. If you have confidence in the ability of your service users and stakeholders to give you helpful feedback and thereby support your organisational change, then you will also be able to win the trust of users and stakeholders.

An appreciative assessment involving users and stakeholders forms the basis for further cooperation between you, as managers, employees, stakeholders and service users and a trusting relationship between you and your staff, between staff and between staff and service users. In this way, you can take on increasingly complex tasks. Whichever method of evaluation you choose, the following questions may help you to carry out the assessment.

- **What are the results of the evaluation of the pilot project?** Your staff should evaluate the outcome of the concrete pilot project during

“After all the messages from service users and social service providers, we drew the conclusion that it is vital to have service users in all the stages of planning and providing of services. The next step could be a project where service users are co-teaching in some modules for social work training and also with social providers when they plan and provide services. Co-teaching is a model for future service providers on how they could co-operate with service users (experts by experience).”

*Kati Turtiainen, University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, Finland*



the project, preferably together with the service users who participated. There will be some valuable aspects for the assessment of service user involvement in your organisation.

- **How has service user involvement affected your organisation?** In which way did service user involvement affect the processes, structures, resources, cooperation and leadership within your organisation? What are the impacts on the staff? How do they evaluate the results?
- **What has changed in your organisation?** What is the difference between the start of the pilot project and the end? How do you evaluate this? How can you ensure change that you evaluate positively?
- **What are the effects outside your organisation?** How was your network affected? What do your stakeholders think about the project and how do they evaluate the outcomes? Has society recognized and appreciated what you have done? What are the impacts on society and on

the service users who didn't participate in the pilot project? This means that you can distinguish the effects at an individual, team, organisational, group of service users and society level.

- **Can you identify short-term and long-term effects?** It can be difficult to establish a link between the project and the results over a long period of time. There is rarely a monocausal relationship. The impact depends on various factors and conditions (Cf. *EPR 2012, p9*).
- **What causes these effects?** Did you do something differently than before? Did you apply new methods? Did your staff learn something new, and if so, how? Did the training result in any additional effects? Did your organisation gain new knowledge that changed something?
- **What surprised you?** In Step 2.4 we suggested that the willingness to be surprised by service users could also be a valuable criterion for the success of the project. Did you observe or experience something that surprised you?

"The micro project WIRkstatt – this is more than an idea. We don't just want to change something, we also do it! As for many others who are involved in this project, my way is paved with obstacles. The constant fight for the smallest things involves a lot of energy. Such experiences shape our lives! When others are motivated to change something in their life situation and to see light on the horizon again by the work in the WIRkstatt, then we have achieved a lot."

*Jens Theede, member of "WIRkstatt", the micro project of the KDA Nordkirche, Local Empowerment Network Plön, Germany*



"We were surprised about what the life of refugees and asylum seekers looks like and what they expect from us (understanding)."

*Tuula Löf, social instructor of migrant services, City of Kokkola, Finland*





მარტვილი - მარტვილის მთიანეთი  
MARTVILI - MOUNTAIN REGION  
46 MILLION KM

კიევი - თავისუფლების მოედანი  
КИЇВ - МАЙДАН НЕЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ  
1295 km

ბაქო - ქალწულის კოშკი  
BAKI - MAIDEN TOWER - 697 KM

კეიპ ტაუნი - თეიბლ მაუნტინს  
CAPE TOWN - TABLE MOUNTAIN - 8735 km

ისფაჰანი - იმამის მოედანი  
ISFAHAN - IMAM'S SQUARE - 1325 KM

## STEP 5

# Reach out & keep the momentum

It is the nature of new ideas that they are both exciting and scary. Holding onto the excitement, however, is a real challenge. Examples abound where, despite its benefits, innovation has struggled to take a hold. But there are ways to cope with the concerns that come with new ideas and keep the momentum going. That is why the roadmap focuses not only on setting up empowerment projects, but also on how to make them sustainable. In this spirit, the final chapter of the roadmap explores a number of strategies and examples that will help you and your organisation continue to innovate and strengthen your social services.

- **Co-create the journey**

Although most people don't seek out change, the thing they definitely don't like is "being changed". Empower your staff. Get them involved early on in the innovation process and keep their involvement going throughout the journey. After all, this is the concept of empowerment you want to implement.

- **Reflect on your own role.**

Keeping the team together and ensuring momentum on any given project is a key for a leader to ensure reliable social service provision. A good starting point from which to reflect on the role of leadership in social innovation is the book of Frederic Laloux: "Reinventing Organisations" (Laloux 2014).

- **Start by taking responsibility for the outcome.**

Momentum begins with leaders showing

enthusiasm and confidence in the project's chances of success. Be consistent in communicating your message.

- **Look for external insight.**

Mentors are an excellent source of guidance, often being the most open and providing you with unfiltered views. Identify a few people who you trust to help you move your organisation forward. Consider drawing from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

- **Learn.**

Make sure you consider learning and development options for yourself. Don't forget to consult the resources available through the SEMPRE network ([www.sempre-project.eu](http://www.sempre-project.eu)).

- **Get connected.**

Link yourself and your organisation with the best in the field. There is a vibrant network of empowerment practitioners. You can also link into the existing SEMPRE network or simply create your own network and start a movement drawing from your own contacts and resources.

- **Take a long-term view.**

Over time, as your organisation progresses with empowerment experience, there will be a moment where you should consider scaling your successes. Scaling is a critical shift in your ability to make a difference, and one that will have implications for your organisation. Pilot first, and then plan for the next step. That's the idea.

"We have built trust among youth and working with new projects, discussing new ideas and searching for solutions, we are trying to pilot an extremely new idea at a local level which is to create a place for socialization and employment (training) for socially disadvantaged groups in Liepa and the surrounding area."

*Selga Skrastīņa, NGO "Save the Children", active in SEMPRE LEN Liepa, Latvia*



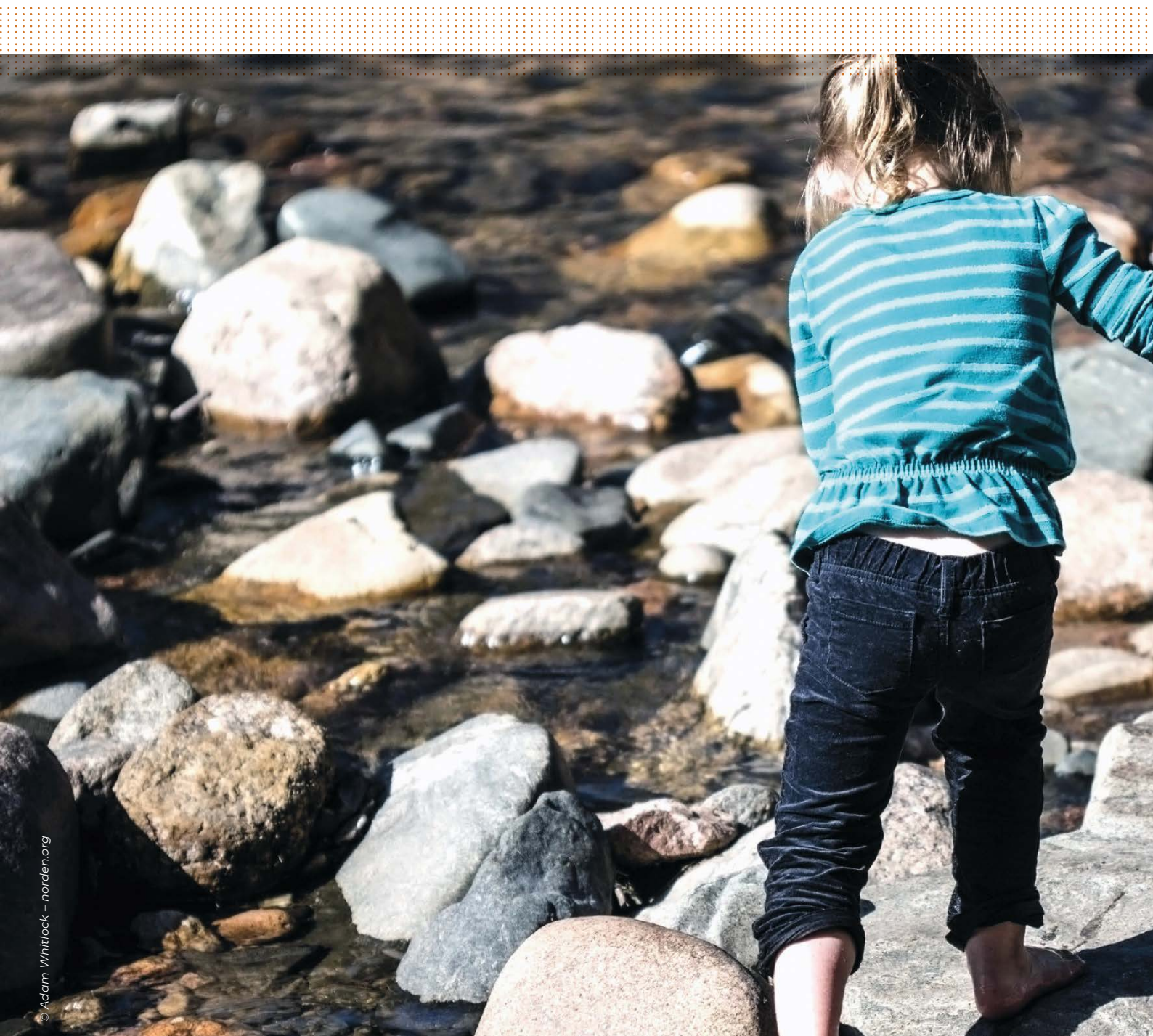
At first people may ask: why you are doing it? Later they want to know: how did you make it happen? Persistence is probably the one answer more than any other one could give in this situation. **As Einstein said:** "It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."

So where do we go from here? **Explore for yourself!** We consider the Organisational Roadmap as just the beginning of the journey. There is more useful material that the SEMPRES project has produced to help you along the way. A comprehensive overview of all resources can be found in the annex and on the SEMPRES website.

*We wish you every success! Let's stay in touch!*

### Try this resource to get a head start:

- PATRI Framework for Scaling Social Impact  
"A step by step guide leading Social Entrepreneurs and their consultants through the journey of scaling: From making the initial decision through to implementation."  
*(Tayabali 2014)*





Fruit bags produced by the Tailor Cooperative in Norrbotten, Sweden

## Appendix

# Tools

In this appendix you will find a number of descriptions of methods that can be helpful for implementing empowerment and user participation. For Step 2 (Kick-start and discuss the idea) we have developed a workshop that contains several methodological notes that are presented in detail here.

Some additional methods and tools are described on the Internet in detail and are application-oriented, so that we have not provided our own description. We give short hints and refer to the sources on the Internet. This applies in particular to Step 3 (Get going) and Step 4 (Assess the outcomes), but also partly to Step 2.

The SEMPRE Empowerment Handbook ([www.sempre-project.eu/handbook](http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook)) not only contains helpful tools for the implementation of service user-oriented projects but, as a whole, it is a helpful tool for the organisational accompaniment of the implementation of user involvement. This also

applies to the SEMPRE Guidebook for Empowerment Training ([www.sempre-project.eu/training](http://www.sempre-project.eu/training)).

### TOOLS FOR STEP 2: KICK-START AND DISCUSS THE IDEA OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR TEAM

- **Tool 2.1:** The Team-engaging Workshop
- **Tool 2.2:** Small guide: How to create an open discussion
- **Tool 2.3:** The SEMPRE Thermometer to capture the mood
- **Tool 2.4:** Group Work I: For what challenges could service user involvement be a solution?
- **Tool 2.5:** Group Work II: Working with scenarios
- **Tool 2.6:** Stakeholder analysis
- **Tool 2.7:** The Design Star for decisions
- **Tool 2.8:** Tools from external sources – Force Field Analysis, SWOT Analysis, Logical Framework Approach



## TOOL 2.1 THE TEAM-ENGAGING WORKSHOP

**Time required:** 3-4 hours or more

**Participants:** staff members, social workers in your organisation, stakeholders

**Who do this:** moderator will direct it, staff members work on it

**Material and setting:** a bigger room, space for two groups  
notebook, projector, flipchart, at least 2 pinboards, materials for moderation such as pens, cards, paper, ...

### THE GOALS OF THIS TOOL

- to obtain the agreement of the team to implement a pilot project to involve service users.
- to discuss the main aspects of the empowerment approach.
- to collect arguments for and against the involvement of service users.
- to analyse the organisation for obstructive and conducive conditions.
- to take the first steps towards a pilot project.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER

#### Invitation to the workshop:

You, as the leader, invite your employees to this workshop. The invitation contains the topic "The Empowerment Concept – Implementation of Service User Involvement" and, if desired, your reasons and goals for the workshop and the importance of involvement. You decide whether participation is voluntary or not.

#### Preparation for the workshop:

- Agreement with the moderator: if you would like to work with an internal or external moderator, the goals, processes and methods must be agreed in good time.
- Your personal preparation is important. Which aspects of the empowerment approach do you want to highlight? How do you want to justify your interest in empowerment? Why do you think empowerment and user involvement are relevant for your organisation? What are your goals? What do you expect from your employees during the workshop and beyond? What is your strategy to convince your employees?
- If you want read background information such as the SEMPRE Empowerment Handbook to get ideas on what your employees can do, and the SEMPRE Guidebook for Empowerment Training to get an idea of what your employees can learn and how to organize the learning processes.

**Instructions for the moderator** of the workshop (leader, staff member or external moderator):

- Build an atmosphere of trust that allows true feedback and an open discussion.
- Keep time planning in mind, structure the discussion, define when what is to be discussed at which point during the workshop. Avoid talking things up.
- Try to understand what touched the participants. Motivate them to express their scepticism about empowerment and the involvement of service users. Listening actively and ask appreciative questions.
- Some of the employees may appear to be against empowerment and service user involvement. But "resistance" is often related to previous experiences and refers to the self-image of professionals in social work. Be open to understand the reasons. Do not evaluate this attitude.
- Challenge the participants (including the leaders) to rethink their position and reflect critically on it.

### Execution of the workshop

The steps for executing the workshop are found in the following table.

Further advice for the workshop units can be found in Step 2: Kick-start and discuss the idea of service user involvement in your team.

You can download this table and adapt it to your own needs: [www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources](http://www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources)

The time information is for orientation only. The time required depends on the level of existing knowledge and attitudes towards service users, user involvement and empowerment and it depends on the joy of discussion in your team.

### TEAM-ENGAGING WORKSHOP (PROPOSAL 3-4 HOURS)

Share the idea (25 min.)	Discuss the implications (60 min.)	Prepare implementation (90 min.)	Decide what to do (30 min.)
<p><b>Why are we here today?</b> (10 min.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the idea came from.</li> <li>• Why you think it is relevant to your organisation.</li> <li>• What you want to get out of the workshop: test the idea and find out if it is workable.</li> <li>• Process of the workshop.</li> <li>• Questions?</li> </ul> <p><b>What is empowerment?</b> (15 min.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More detailed introduction to the concept.</li> <li>• Questions from participants to understand the concept.</li> </ul>	<p><b>How does the idea resonate?</b> (15 min.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial reactions of your team?</li> <li>• What are previous experiences with empowerment and service user involvement?</li> </ul> <p><b>For what challenge could service user involvement become a solution?</b> (45 min.)</p> <p>Brainstorming in the plenary: Identify the challenges to your organisation (10 min.). Detailed discussions in pairs or small groups (20 min.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is user involvement obstructive or conducive to this?</li> <li>• What are the implications? Is it worth a try?</li> </ul> <p>Report out to plenary, conclusions (15 min.).</p>	<p><b>Can we make it work?</b></p> <p><i>Group activity:</i> Play through one or two scenarios. (45 min.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What goals could be achieved by involving service users?</li> <li>• What level of involvement is possible and reasonable?</li> <li>• What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats?</li> <li>• How could you make it happen? Next steps.</li> <li>• What would it take?</li> <li>• What would that mean for your work?</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary:</i> Report your findings and discuss: Can you make it work? (45 min.)</p> <p>Brush against the grain: Take the perspective of your service users and ask yourself how your results affect them.</p>	<p><b>Should we move forward?</b> (20 min.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you move on, which areas should you focus on? By when? By whom?</li> <li>• Who needs to be involved and how?</li> <li>• What do you need as staff?</li> <li>• What are the criteria for a successful pilot project?</li> </ul> <p>Summary of actions and session close-out. (10 min.)</p>
<p>Methods: plenum, presentation, questions of understanding.</p>	<p>Methods: plenum, moderated discussion, group work</p>	<p>Methods: group work, plenum, moderated discussion.</p>	<p>Methods: plenum, moderated discussion.</p>
<p>Resources you could use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SEMPRES Empowerment Handbook for background information.</li> <li>• The SEMPRES Guidebook for Empowerment Training for ideas on how to work with empowerment and action learning.</li> </ul> <p>You can download these resources: <a href="http://www.sempre-project.eu/results">www.sempre-project.eu/results</a></p>	<p>Resources you could use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small guide: How to create an open discussion? (Tool 2.2)</li> <li>• SEMPRES Thermometer to capture the mood. (Tool 2.3)</li> <li>• Group Work I: For what challenge could service user involvement be a solution? (Tool 2.4)</li> <li>• Alternative Group Work I: Force-field analysis tool. (Tool 2.8, external link)</li> <li>• Tools from the SEMPRES Empowerment Handbook like the “Problem Tree” for finding needs and problems. (<a href="http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook/resources">www.sempre-project.eu/handbook/resources</a>)</li> </ul>	<p>Resources you could use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group work II: working with scenarios. (Tool 2.5).</li> <li>• SWOT Analysis. (Tool 2.8, external link)</li> <li>• Empowerment Handbook for ideas on how to perform service user involvement. (<a href="http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook">www.sempre-project.eu/handbook</a>)</li> <li>• Guidebook for Empowerment Training for ideas on what to learn for implementing empowerment/service user involvement. (<a href="http://www.sempre-project.eu/training">www.sempre-project.eu/training</a>)</li> </ul>	<p>Resources you could use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder Analysis. (Tool 2.6)</li> <li>• The Design Star. (Tool 2.7)</li> </ul>
<p>Documentation and evaluation of the workshop (15 Min.)</p>			

## TOOL 2.2 SMALL GUIDE: HOW TO CREATE AN OPEN DISCUSSION

**Time required:** ./.

**Participants:** ./.

**Who do this:** leader or moderator

**Material and setting:** communication rules on A3-paper or flipchart

### THE GOAL OF THIS TOOL

- to create a trusting atmosphere for staff to say what they think and to express what they feel about the topic.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER OR MODERATOR

When you start the workshop:

- be prepared and clear in your messages.
- remember communication rules, if there are any in your organisation.
- agree on rules if you don't have any yet, for example:
  - No mobile phones during the workshop.
  - Anyone can speak without being interrupted.
  - Listen to each other and treat each other respectfully.

When you lead the discussions:

- Ask if you have not understood something or if you are not sure what is meant. It is helpful to repeat what has been said using one's own words to make sure that you understood what was meant ("I understood you that way ...", "I hear that ...").
- Encourage participants to ask questions if they

do not understand something.

- Try to understand the other person's point of view. Ask them so that you can learn more from the participants ("Tell me more...", "What do you mean by ...?").
- Motivate participants to share their positions and interests (especially the more quiet and silent participants).
- Give participants silent time to think and to develop their own ideas.
- If you, as a leader, moderate the workshop, express your own wishes and feelings and encourage the participants to do the same.
- Value the contributions of the participants.
- Invite them to consider opposing perspectives or other views. Appreciate opposite or different views.
- Encourage them to look at things critically and express criticism in an appreciative way.
- Encourage them to look imaginatively into the future and express things, even if they are not yet fully thought through – this is the only way ideas can emerge.
- Visualize important arguments, common and different views and decisions.



## TOOL 2.3 THE SEMPRES THERMOMETER TO CAPTURE THE MOOD

**Time required:** 10–20 minutes

**Participants:** staff members and may be stakeholder

**Who do this:** leader or moderator

**Material and setting:** an open space or a bigger room

### THE GOAL OF THIS TOOL

- to gain an initial insight into the mood and viewpoints of the participants of the Team-engaging Workshop.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER OR MODERATOR

You as a leader or a moderator read a statement for the group. Participants can then take a stand on the claim by placing themselves along an imaginary line on the floor. The different ends of the line represent different extremes, as in a thermometer. For example, if one end represents “I totally agree” then the other end represents “I do not agree at all”. The space between these is a diminishing scale between the two views.

#### Execution of the SEMPRES Thermometer:

Give the instructions to the participants. Remind them that no response is right or wrong, but should reflect the participants' opinions. This is a snapshot. No one is fixed in their position.

Read a statement and give the participants time to place themselves along the “thermometer”. When everyone is ready, ask them to turn to their closest participant and discuss why they are where they are. After a few minutes you can open up the discussion and allow those participants that want to, to share their thoughts. It's okay for opinions to change during the process.

#### Suggestions for statements:

- All service users (regardless of ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, gender and gender identity) carry knowledge that is important for the development of a social service.
- Service user participation is always beneficial.
- I do not have preconceptions regarding service user needs.
- I do not have preconceptions regarding service user abilities.
- It belongs to my professional self-conception that I know the needs of the users.
- I am in a position of power when I meet the service users.
- By making our organisation aware of differences connected to identity and vulnerability and different power positions between our organisation and service users, we can create more equality and empowerment.
- Service user involvement challenges our organisation.
- Service user involvement changes our organisation.

It is, of course, possible to make up and use your own statements and replace the suggested ones with your own.



## TOOL 2.4 GROUP WORK I: FOR WHAT CHALLENGES COULD SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT BE A SOLUTION?

**Time required:** 20-30 minutes

**Participants:** staff members

**Who do this:** moderator or leader will direct it, staff members work on it

**Material and setting:** a bigger room, space for two groups, flipchart

### THE GOAL OF THIS TOOL

- to work out the practical meaning of service user involvement for your organisation.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEADER OR MODERATOR

Your organisation faces several challenges. You may have mentioned some in your introduction to the workshop (tool 2.1). What contribution could service user involvement make in dealing with these challenges? Is it conducive or obstructive? What can you do to make it supportive? There is not so much time to perform the task. This helps participants concentrate on the essential aspects.

#### Instruction to the plenum

Collect the main internal and external challenges which your organisation must deal with. Think about trends in society or in rural areas, requirements of stakeholders, changing service descriptions, changes that affected your service users, lack of specialists, internal processes or structures, etc.

Prioritize the challenges according to the criteria of importance in your organisation. This can be, for example, the influence on the available means, on the quality of the services, on the support of the staff or in the local environment, etc. Depending on the size of your team, choose three to five challenges and work further in groups with each group working on one or two challenges.

#### Instructions to the group

- Discuss whether service user involvement is obstructive or conducive to successfully meeting the challenges. Place the challenge on a scale from -5 (very obstructive) to +5 (very conducive).
- How can you reduce the degree of obstruction? How can you increase the degree of conduciveness?
- Come back to the plenum, present your results and record the scale in a common template.
- A final question in conclusion: is it worthwhile to continue to work with service user involvement?





## TOOL 2.5 GROUP WORK II: WORKING WITH SCENARIOS

**Time required:** minimum 1 hour

**Participants:** staff members

**Who do this:** moderator will direct it, staff members work on it

**Material and setting:** a bigger room, space for two groups  
flipchart, 2 pinboards, materials such as pens, cards, paper ...

**Other sources:** scenario planning tool, [www.mspguide.org/tool/scenario-planning](http://www.mspguide.org/tool/scenario-planning)

### THE GOAL OF THIS TOOL

- to work on the following tasks in a very practical way:
  - To create a common view of the future.
  - To identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats for the implementation of service user involvement.
  - To look for possibilities to reduce weaknesses and threats, to secure the strengths and to strengthen the opportunities.
  - To derive concrete steps to do this.

NOTE: working with scenarios is usually work that lasts several hours or days. Here we propose a very short version.

### INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEADER OR MODERATOR

- Explain the meaning of working with a scenario. Scenarios help to describe future situations. They prevent discussions on only a theoretical level but link the discussion very closely to the current and future conditions in your organisation. You can deduce hypothetical consequences and necessary conditions of service user participation and describe essential decisions. In this way you can create a common view on how service user involvement could develop in the long term.
- Introduce the task. One or two groups should be working on the task. They should describe:
  - The scenario they choose (which group of service users, what are they to be involved

in and to what extent, which impacts are targeted, who will work on it ...).

- The internal and external framework conditions that seem necessary for success (resources, support, training, agreement of stakeholders, readiness of service users, external network, supportive leadership ...).
- How to deal with strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- Which steps are required.
- What this means for the current and future work.
- Which decisions are necessary (by whom).

In order to describe the scenario and the framework conditions in a very concrete way it is helpful to describe them in the present tense, as if the service user involvement has already been implemented.

- Invite your team to get involved in this task. You know how to motivate your team!

### Instructions for the group

Each working group has about one hour to do the task.

Participants can use the template for scenarios and should record the results on one or two flipchart sheets.

The results will be presented to the plenary. The other group can ask questions. After both groups have presented their results, the team discusses the conclusions from the results. Can it work? What does this mean for the work and for the team? What is to be done?

### Template for working with the scenarios

The template contains possible answers to stimulate ideas. You can draw the chart as a template for group work on flipcharts (without examples).

#### SCENARIO: WE INVOLVE OUR SOCIAL SERVICE USERS IN DEVELOPING A NEW SOCIAL SERVICE.

##### 1. Identified problems

- Knowledge about empowerment isn't available.
- No experience with user involvement so far.

- Scarce resources (time, money).

- Consent of stakeholder

- Failures are risks for the organisation.

- Finding service users.

##### 2. Ideas for solutions

- › Read literature or the Empowerment Handbook.

- › Put it into practise.
- › Search for the best practise.
- › Be ready to take risks.

- › Apply for funding.
- › Change the workflow.
- › Begin small.

- › Inform stakeholders (our goals, best practice, our expectations, their benefits).

- › Get backing from leaders and stakeholders.

- › Network, public relations ...

##### 3. Steps for implementation of solutions:

- › Read the Empowerment Handbook: define time slots.
- › Develop steps for implementing service user involvement.
- › Reduce work on task xy to increase capacity for the empowerment project.
- › Do a stakeholder analysis (Tool 2.6) to find arguments that reach the stakeholders.
- › Find service users who are willing to involve themselves and to convince other/new service users. Distribute information sheets, e.g. to doctors and counselling centres.
- › Do a needs assessment with service users.

##### 4. What do we need for this and what is the meaning for our work?

- › Time.
- › Decisions of leaders or management to do this and to reduce other tasks.
- › Backing from colleagues and/or relief from tasks.
- › Training.

You can download this template: [www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources](http://www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources).

## TOOL 2.6 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

**Time required:** 20 minutes

**Participants:** staff members

**Who do this:** moderator will direct it, staff members work on it

**Material and setting:** template (download: [www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources](http://www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources))

### THE GOALS OF THE TOOL

- to identify the relevant stakeholders of your organisation such as other social service providers, public authorities, NGOs, enterprises,

important opinion leaders, knowledge multipliers in the municipality or county where your organisation is located.

- to check whether they can be convinced and involved in implementation of service user involvement.
- to check whether they can provide knowledge and expertise and help communicate the project.
- to establish important contacts early in the project lifetime and build up strong communication and cooperation networks.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- Collect the names of the persons or organisations that could be important for your organisation and the project “service user involvement”.
- Form groups for further work, decide which

group will work on which stakeholders.

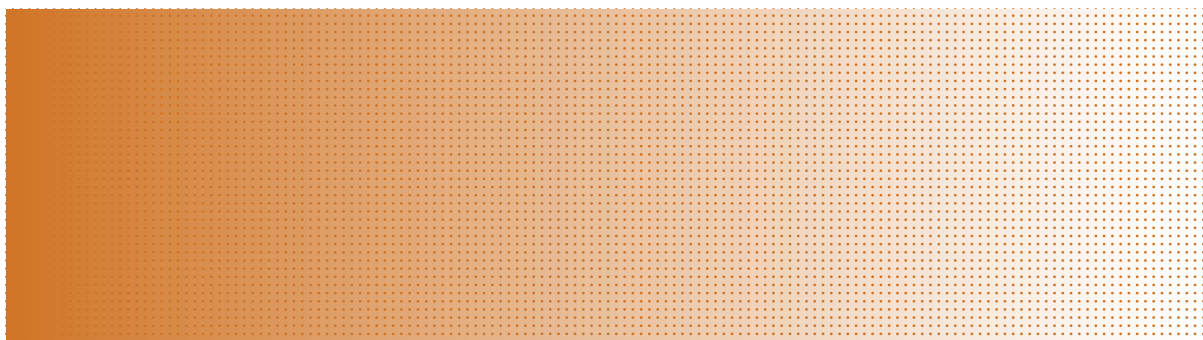
- Analyse your stakeholders on the basis of the following questions:
  - Give a short description of the organisation or person (what are their tasks? target group? function?).
  - What interests and goals could they have in the project?
  - What resources could they bring in?
  - What could their role in your network be?
  - Who is the contact person (on both your side and theirs)?
  - Other comments?

**An example** (you can download this template: [www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources](http://www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap/resources)):

### STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS FOR (NAME OF YOUR ORGANISATION)

service user group(s): *Please enter the service user group(s) targeted by your organisation*

No.	Stakeholder	Description	Aim/ interest	What resources can they bring in	What could their role be?	Contact	Comment
Example 1	Swedish Unemployment Agency	Provides jobs to unemployed people	Reduce unemployment (costs for unemployment)	Knowledge about service user preferences and suitable communication channels	Mobilizing service users	For us the regional unemployment center, for service user the local unemployment office	
Example 2	Municipality/administration	self-explanatory	Reduce exclusion and costs for exclusion	Adjusting legal framework	Mobilizing service users	Town hall, department of social affairs	
Example 3	Ms. Smith	local politician	publicity	political influence	political support	her office	friend of local VIP
Example 4							
Example X							



## TOOL 2.7 THE DESIGN STAR FOR DECISIONS

**Time required:** minimum 1 hour

**Participants:** staff members

**Who do this:** moderator will direct it, staff members work on it

**Material and setting:** place for two groups  
flipchart, 2 pinboards, materials like pens, cards, paper ...

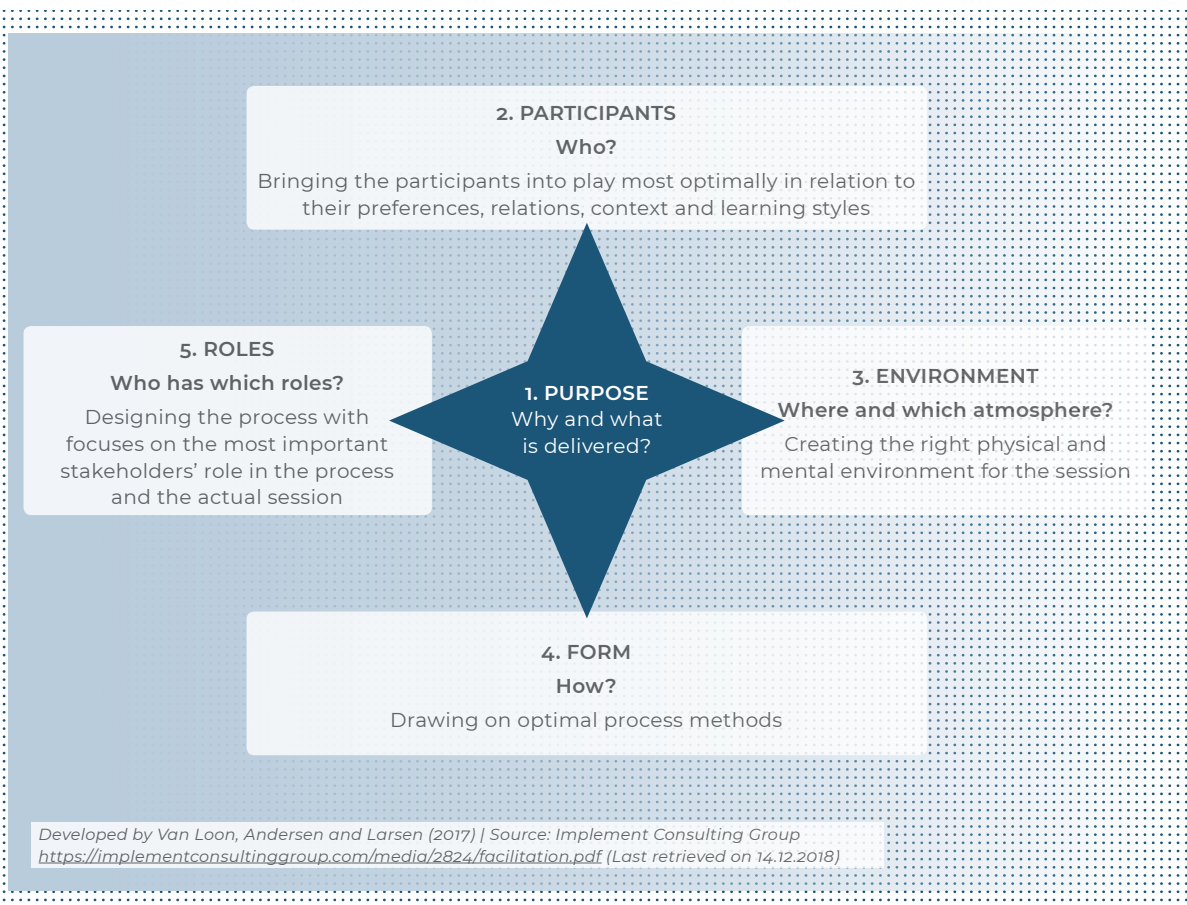
**Sources:** • the Design Star is developed by:

- Larsen, Line; Van Loon, Cecilie; Horn Andersen, Henrik (2017) Facilitation – create results through involvement, Djøf Forlag, Denmark
- Larsen, Line; Van Loon, Cecilie (without year): Facilitation, An article of inspiration, tools and tips for how to create more dynamics, ownership and qualified results in group processes through intentional design.
- <https://implementconsultinggroup.com/media/2824/facilitation.pdf> (Last retrieved on 14.12.2018)
- read more: [www.sempre-project.eu/training](http://www.sempre-project.eu/training)

### THE GOALS OF THE TOOL

- to take you through the first steps to plan your pilot project.
- to help you to define the framework for your pilot project.
- to lay the foundation for a script for the pilot project.

### The Design Star





## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE DESIGN STAR

### 1. Consider the purpose of designing your pilot project.

Questions to answer in relation to the purpose might be:

- Why are we planning this project? What shall it contribute to?
- Which results should come out of the project?
- How do we know we have reached our purpose?

### 2. Decide who should participate in your project.

Questions to answer in relation to choosing participants might be:

- Who needs to participate to reach our purpose?
- What characterizes these people regarding knowledge, practice, and relations?
- What preferences might the participants have?

### 3. Decide where to complete the project and which physical framework creates the best conditions for the project.

Questions to answer in relation to planning the environment might be:

- How do we create the best physical framework for the pilot project?
- How do we prepare the participants so they are

mentally set before the pilot project start?

- Which instruments do we need to support the purpose of the pilot project?

### 4. Decide the form of the project.

Questions to answer in relation to planning the form of the project might be:

- Which methods might help our participants to reach the purpose of the project?
- How do we create a safe and energetic project environment where the participants are motivated to take part?
- How do we ensure a varied process within our timeframe?

### 5. Decide who has which roles during the project.

Questions to answer in relation to deciding roles might be:

- Who has the knowledge we need to bring to the project of service user involvement?
- How can we engage the people we need to realize our project?
- Who will be the best host and facilitator?

*After working through these questions, you are ready to create a script for your project.*

## TOOL 2.8 MORE TOOLS FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

Name of the Tool	Description from provider
<b>Force Field Analysis</b>	<p>“Force Field Analysis was created by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. (...). The idea behind Force Field Analysis is that situations are maintained by an equilibrium between forces that drive change and others that resist change (...). For change to happen, the driving forces must be strengthened or the resisting forces weakened.” <i>(mindtools)</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm">www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm</a> (incl. video) <a href="http://www.mspguide.org/tool/force-field-analysis">www.mspguide.org/tool/force-field-analysis</a></p>
<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	<p>“A SWOT analysis is a well-known strategic planning tool to discover weaknesses and strengths of an individual, group or organisation, and to identify both potential opportunities and threats. A SWOT analysis (...) can be an effective way to review strategies participants are developing, or to evaluate a particular activity implemented. The tool helps participants be realistic about what they can achieve and where they should focus” <i>(mspguide.org)</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.mspguide.org/tool/swot-analysis">www.mspguide.org/tool/swot-analysis</a></p>
<b>Logical Framework Approach (LFA)</b>	<p>“The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is an analytical process and set of tools used to support objectives-oriented project planning and management. It provides a set of interlocking concepts which are used as part of an iterative process to aid structured and systematic analysis of a project or programme idea.” <i>(http://www.evropa.gov.rs/Evropa/ShowDocument.aspx?Type=Home&amp;Id=525)</i> Note: the SEMPRES Partners used the first three steps of the LFA: analysis of the project’s context, stakeholder analysis and problem analysis.</p> <p><a href="http://www.evropa.gov.rs/evropa/showDocument.aspx?Type=Home&amp;Id=525">www.evropa.gov.rs/evropa/showDocument.aspx?Type=Home&amp;Id=525</a> (very detailed description, 41 pages) <a href="https://sswm.info/planning-and-programming/decision-making/planning-community/logical-framework-approach">https://sswm.info/planning-and-programming/decision-making/planning-community/logical-framework-approach</a> (short description)</p>

## TOOLS FOR STEP 3: GET GOING – IMPLEMENT A PILOT AND MANAGE THE PROCESS

For this step we didn’t develop our own tools or templates because you can find a lot of helpful information and tools in two other products of SEMPRES:

- The SEMPRES Empowerment Handbook with tools for implementing and conducting a concrete service user involvement project ([www.sempre-project.eu/handbook](http://www.sempre-project.eu/handbook)).
- The SEMPRES Guidebook for Empowerment Training that describes the approach to action learning and offers training modules. ([www.sempre-project.eu/training](http://www.sempre-project.eu/training)).

### TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP, HERE ARE REFERENCES: FRÉDÉRIC LALOUX

- Reinventing Organisations: A Guide to Creating Organisations Inspired by the Next Stage in Human Consciousness  
*(English edition, publishing house: Nelson Parker, 2014)*  
This book “is written for people (founders of organisations, leaders, coaches, and advisors) who sense that something is broken in the way we run organisations today and who feel that

something entirely different is called for... but wonder what that might be."

([www.reinventingorganisations.com](http://www.reinventingorganisations.com))

available in: English, German, Swedish, Polish, Russian, Danish and other languages.

- Reinventing Organisations: An Illustrated Invitation to Join the Conversation on Next-Stage Organisations (*English, publishing house: Nelson Parker, 2016*)

**ON YOUTUBE:**

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxGGkrtKZaA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxGGkrtKZaA) (7 Minutes)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcSo4BI2sbk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcSo4BI2sbk) (app. 1:40 hours)

**ORTRUN ZUBER-SKERRITT**

- Action Leadership: Towards a Participatory Paradigm (*Springer, Dordrecht, 2011*)





## TOOLS FOR STEP 4: ASSESS THE OUTCOMES

Name of the tool	Description from external sources
<b>Appreciate Inquiry</b>	<p>“Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to organisational change which focuses on strengths rather than on weaknesses – quite different to many approaches to evaluation which focus on deficits and problems.” (<a href="http://betterevaluation.org">betterevaluation.org</a>)</p> <p><a href="http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry">www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry</a> <a href="https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu">https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu</a></p>
<b>After Action Review (AAR)</b>	<p>“Organisational learning requires continuous assessment of organisational performance, looking at successes and failures, ensuring that learning takes place to support continuous improvement. The <b>After Action Review</b> (AAR) is a simple option for facilitating this assessment. It works by bringing together a team to discuss a task, event, activity or project, in an open and honest fashion.</p> <p>The systematic application of properly conducted AARs across an organisation can help drive organisational change. As well as turning unconscious learning into tacit, it helps to build trust among team members and to overcome fear of mistakes. When applied correctly, AARs can become a key aspect of the internal system of learning and motivation.</p> <p>There are many different ways to conduct AARs. The simplicity at the heart of the tool means there is much potential to experiment with the process and find the right ways that will work best with the group and the work item under review. The whole process should be kept as simple and as easy to remember as possible.</p> <p><a href="http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/after_action_review">www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/after_action_review</a></p>
<b>Exit Interviews</b>	<p>“Exit interviews provide an opportunity for the service user to feedback their views on a service they have just used and to review how effectively their needs were met. It is usually facilitated by staff from the service. (...) It would be beneficial for service users and staff to work together to draw up a structured exit questionnaire. Check with a wider representation of service users that the questionnaire makes sense and is accessible to all.”</p> <p><a href="https://www.feantsa.org/download/participation_toolkit_english_final_2013-2-17759063145615739680.pdf">https://www.feantsa.org/download/participation_toolkit_english_final_2013-2-17759063145615739680.pdf</a> page 21f.</p>
<b>Focus Groups</b>	<p>“A focus group is a research method in which a specifically selected group of people can be asked about their opinion on a particular topic. Questions and specific discussion points are raised in an interactive group setting, and members of the group are encouraged to talk freely. Ideally a focus group works best with a minimum of 4 people and a maximum of 12 and will last 1–2 hours. (...) Try to ensure that participants are representative and have the relevant experience required to make up the desired target group. When advertising, organizers should clearly state what the subject of the focus group is and who would be suitable to take part.”</p> <p><a href="https://www.feantsa.org/download/participation_toolkit_english_final_2013-2-17759063145615739680.pdf">https://www.feantsa.org/download/participation_toolkit_english_final_2013-2-17759063145615739680.pdf</a> page 33f.</p>

## TOOLS FROM THE INTERNET

On the Internet you will find some helpful compilations of tools. It is worthwhile to browse through these and try one or more of these tools.

- **The MSP Tool Guide:** Sixty tools to facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships.  
[www.mspguide.org/tools-and-methods](http://www.mspguide.org/tools-and-methods) (Last retrieved on 25.01.2019)

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- **Reflection Methods.** Practical Guide for Trainers and Facilitators.  
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[www.mspguide.org/sites/default/files/tool/reflection\\_methods\\_january\\_2018\\_print\\_o.pdf](http://www.mspguide.org/sites/default/files/tool/reflection_methods_january_2018_print_o.pdf) (Last retrieved 25.01.2019)

- **Participation Toolkit** (25 tools to help facilitate participation in your service, easy to use fact-sheets).

[www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2013/10/19/participation-toolkit-get-a-different-resultget-people-participating?bcParent=27](http://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2013/10/19/participation-toolkit-get-a-different-resultget-people-participating?bcParent=27) (Last retrieved on 25.01.2019)

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## THE SEMPRE PARTNERSHIP

- 1 Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein (DE)
- 2 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany (DE)
- 3 Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein (DE)
- 4 Novia University of Applied Sciences (FI)
- 5 Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius (FI)
- 7 Diaconal Centre Liepaja (LV)
- 8 University of Latvia (LV)
- 9 Lutheran Diaconia (LT)
- 10 Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EE)
- 11 Foundation for Social Action (EE)
- 12 The Foundation for Lifelong Learning PERITIA (PL)
- 13 Coompanion Norrbotten (SE)
- 14 Sunderby Folk High School (SE)
- 15 University College South Denmark (DK)
- 16 Nordregio (SE)
- 17 Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (LV)



● EU Member States  
● non-EU States

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Action Leadership: Towards a Participatory Paradigm.  
*Springer, Dordrecht*

Would you like to involve your service users in the development of new products or in the further development of existing ones? This roadmap provides information and suggestions on how social service providers can integrate an empowerment approach into their organization and support their employees in the implementation of a pilot project in a spirit of partnership. This roadmap builds on three years of cooperative work in the transnational project SEMPRE.

