

Communities of Practice (CoP) in Aurora

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A Guide for Aurora members and Institutional Coordinators

Within the Aurora Universities, Communities of Practice (CoPs) are structured spaces where members from multiple institutions come together around a shared area of professional practice.¹ The purpose of a CoP is to create an ongoing space for mutual learning, experimentation, and innovation across institutions and to live up to and experience the Aurora values Collaboration, Societal Change-Making and Sustainability. Each CoP must be rooted in a clearly defined professional and/or specialised area where members exchange experiences, develop joint initiatives, and strengthen institutional capacity.

By fostering these Communities of Practice, Aurora seeks to create a more interconnected, value-driven, and innovative European higher education landscape - one where expertise is shared, institutional learning is accelerated, and collaboration becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Why create a Community of Practice?

Being part of a Community of Practice offers you a special opportunity of learning with and from like-minded participants, experts and professionals in an informal way, who work in the same field, enriching your knowledge and insights. You want to be part of a Community of Practice, because you have a passion about something, you care about a certain issue or have a particular interest in a certain task or practice.

Furthermore, creating a Community of Practice comes with the possibility of getting more visibility and recognition for what you and we all are doing. Moreover, it may inspire others to enact the Aurora values of Collaboration, Societal Change-Making and Sustainability in their specific domain.

An example could be to create a Community of Practice existing of scientists/scholars and students as well as support staff, who share a common concern, a set of problems or research questions, or an interest in a scientific topic with local communities and other organisations.

How does it work?

To qualify as an Aurora CoP, a group must include active participants from at least three different Aurora universities. While some CoPs may grow out of existing structures, such as work packages or task teams, others may emerge more organically from informal professional networks (for example, among EU grant officers, mobility coordinators, library specialists, permagarden practitioners) or out of student bodies. However, a CoP goes beyond an existing work package team, task team or project, since their members already work together in a structured manner.

¹ This would include for example the participation of students in Communities of Practice, or to have student-led CoPs.

Each Community of Practice must establish a basic governance structure. This includes the appointment of a lead and a vice-lead, both selected preferably for a period of two to three years (or if possible with an overlap of the terms of the lead and the vice-lead to ensure a degree of continuity, and if feasible with the intention of the vice-lead succeeding the lead). These individuals are responsible for coordinating the CoP activities, serving as the main point of contact with Aurora's Institutional Coordinators and Task Team 9.3 Aurora Values. CoPs are formally established for a three-year term, after which they can renew to maintain their status within Aurora.

To remain active, a CoP must organise and document at least one activity per calendar year. This may include workshops, seminars, peer-learning sessions, collaborative publications, or other professional development formats.

Members interested in initiating or joining a Community of Practice are encouraged to consult Aurora Central Office for support in identifying possible partners and drafting a short CoP proposal. The proposal should outline the practice focus, list participating institutions and contacts, propose a first planned activity, and confirm the governance roles (see Sign-up Sheet).

Annual 'Community of Practice Awards'

Participation in a CoP offers members the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from across Europe and beyond, learn from diverse institutional contexts, experiment with new tools or processes, and contribute to the overall mission of Aurora. In recognition of this work, Aurora will launch a **Community of Practice Award** program, tentatively with the first awards to be presented at the Aurora Annual Conference in May 2026. These awards will highlight certain CoPs that have made outstanding contributions to advancing Aurora values in practice, whether through innovation, inclusion, or cross-institutional impact. A separate document sets out the procedure and structure for that.

Aurora Community of Practice – Sign-Up Sheet

Please complete this form to propose the creation of a Community of Practice (CoP) among Aurora Universities. Submit the completed form to Aurora Central Office via this [link](#).