VIRTUAL FACILITATION GUIDE

A GUIDE TO IMPROVE YOUR ONLINE MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS

eurodesk

EDITORS
Audrey Frith
Safi Sabuni
Yurema Pallarés Pla

DESIGN
Sara García Ruiz
Juniper Borisova

ILLUSTRATION
Johana Siendones Gómez,
Stefania Delponte

PUBLISHED BY
Eurodesk Brussels Link

FOREWORD

The pandemic has radically changed our working methods. All of us had to move online to meet and work with colleagues and partners but also to continue delivering youth services. For some, the transition was smoother than for others, depending on the human and technical resources available.

We have all learnt and grown a lot from this experience. Youth information workers, like other professionals, were pushed to digitalise their services at the speed of light. In the case of Eurodesk, as many as 82% offered new activities targeted at young people such as online quizzes, virtual competitions, radio programmes, podcasts, etc. Posting on social media also increased by 60% (see Eurodesk COVID-19 Survey Results, 2021).

The sanitary situation is improving all over Europe, and face to face events are coming back. However, there is a common feeling that the concept of office work has changed irreversibly and new patterns combining virtual and face-to-face environments will certainly be the new trend. This comes with the need to continue testing new methods and tools to enhance both our work environments and services.

Being agile and adapting to changes has never been so important. Eurodesk national coordinators and multipliers are more than ever lifelong learners with their ever-adapting services that follow up on youth trends!

In this guidebook you will discover tips and tricks on how to plan, facilitate and evaluate your online events. It builds from the lessons learnt in those past two years, providing recommendations to organise successful events and proposing a list of tools to support you as a facilitator. It's a great resource for all professionals organising virtual or hybrid events for a youth audience.

Enjoy reading!

Audrey Frith,
Eurodesk Director

ABOUT US

Created in 1990, Eurodesk is a European youth information network specialised in the promotion of international mobility (studying, volunteering and learning abroad) and participation (European youth events, consultations, etc) for young people and those working with them. Eurodesk is recognised as a support structure of the Erasmus+ programme and EU Youth Strategy.

Eurodesk-specific know-how relates to working with young people (informing, counselling and engaging youth), offering a wide range of European opportunities (Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, international programmes, etc.), and delivering strong digital outreach, while being present at grassroots level through a wide and diverse network of local multipliers and ambassadors.

Eurodesk operates at European level with a network of 39 Eurodesk Centres, connecting over 3,000 local information providers (e.g. youth information centres, municipalities, youth organisations, educational institutions) in 37 countries. Eurodesk Brussels Link (EBL) is in charge of coordinating the network.

More on eurodesk.eu

37 COUNTRIES

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Lithuania
- Malta
- Montenegro
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Liechtenstein
- North Macedonia
- Latvia
- Norway
- Poland
- Spain
- Romania
- Serbia
- Portugal
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Sweden
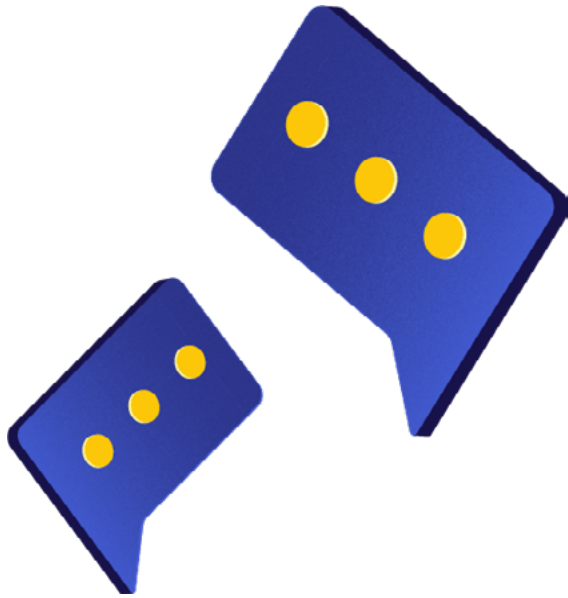- Switzerland
- Türkiye
- Ukraine
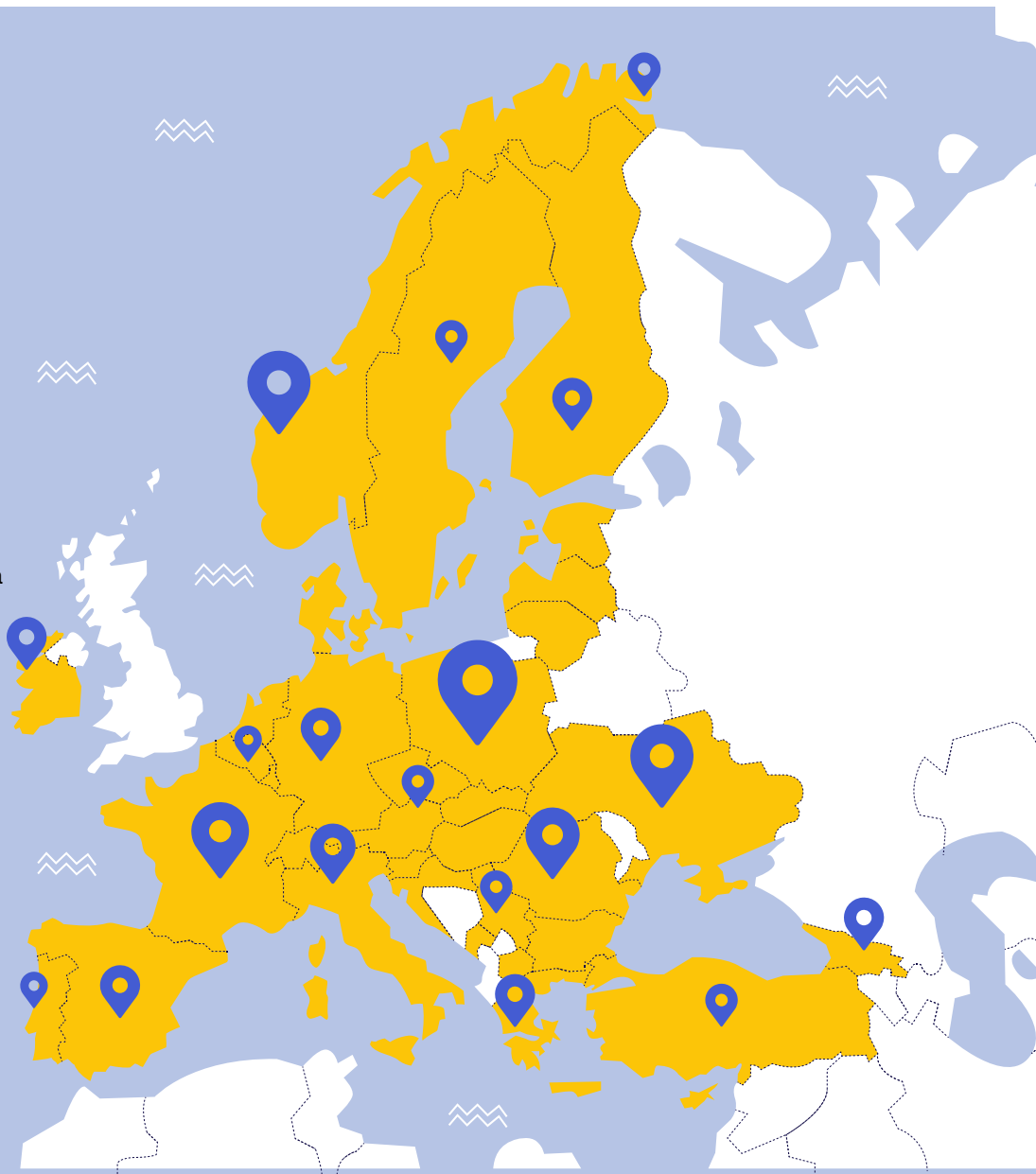
ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

The definition of facilitation is 'to make easy' or 'ease a process'. As a 'Facilitator' you plan, guide and manage a group to reflect on their different actions and meet their objectives effectively. You ensure that the group dynamic evolves and that there is a good participation from everyone involved. The key responsibility of a facilitator is to create this process for the group and ensure that there's an environment where the group can succeed.

If easing this process can be a challenge in physical meetings, it is even more in virtual spaces in which human interactions remain possible but less spontaneous. In this guide we want to provide you with suggestions and resources for how to virtually facilitate your meetings and events online in a dynamic and engaging way. We will take you through every step of a meeting process: before, during and after, and provide you with a toolbox and activities which you can easily implement.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

This will help you to prepare properly for the meeting but also to communicate with attendees in a more efficient way.

Topics

1/ Assemble the team

2/ Set achievable aims and objectives

3/ Choose the right type of event

4/ Design an agenda for an online environment

5/ Create a registration form

6/ Don't forget to conduct a dry run

1/ Assemble the team!

Working together to run an online meeting is way more fun than working alone! Make sure to divide the roles with your colleagues and assign everyone a responsibility area. For instance, you could have one person focusing on Technical support as there might be many tasks to do "backstage" while the meeting is ongoing.

2/ Set achievable aims and objectives

Just like any activity, your aim and objectives should be clear and achievable. Ask yourself *"What do I expect from the meeting?"* and *"Why would participants want to join the meeting?".* Narrow down and decide on what you would like to achieve. Make sure to communicate this so that the participants know what to expect.

For example, if you want to collect ideas, the meeting might be centred around **brainstorming** and the participants should expect to be active, have to talk and be asked questions. On the other hand, if your aim is to **inform**, the participants might only expect to attend and listen or observe, not having to engage too much.

3/ Choose the right event type

Throughout this guide we will equally use the words "event" or "meeting" to refer to a virtual gathering of people for a specific purpose be it work discussion, informative panel, presentation or an informal get-together to cite but few.

Make sure you design your event to accommodate the number of participants you want to reach, brainstorming with 100 people online might require a different methodology than brainstorming with 15 people. These are things to take into account before sending out a meeting invitation or promoting the event. Decide whether the **main aim** of your gathering is to inform and present; discuss and brainstorm; or participate in a team building exercise.

Inform and Present: These meetings are more conference-like, participants join to listen to one or several speakers and a Q&A might follow. These meetings have a low engagement threshold and it is easy for participants to join - not much is expected from them but more of the speakers and organisers.

Discuss and Brainstorm: These meetings depend on the contributions of the group, more focus is put on engaging the participants in a conversation and providing space for sharing opinions. These meetings have a high engagement threshold and participants who join are expected to contribute and be active - the results of the conversation will determine the success of the meeting.

Team building: These meetings focus on getting to know each other, participants who join are curious to network and make new connections. These meetings have a high engagement threshold, although participants are expected to be actively engaged, the success of the team building lies in the hands of the facilitator, to make sure they can open up and connect.

Some longer meetings can combine these types during different sessions, changing methodologies accordingly will help you keep your audience engaged. In such a context, it's even more important to let them know what is expected from them and clearly communicate the schedule and methods that will be followed during the event.

4/ Design an agenda for an online environment

When you decide the aim of your meeting it is important to establish how many participants you will bring together and who you want to involve in order to properly plan your agenda and activities. Here are a few things to always consider:

- **Methodology:** In an online environment your meeting is competing with every other distraction that surrounds your participants. Make the meeting dynamic by mixing the methods and the way you communicate. In Chapter 2 you will find different examples of how this can be done.

- **Duration:** We cannot sit for the same amount of time in an online meeting as a physical one and it also affects our capacity to stay concentrated. Opt for a 1-2 hour meeting and make sure to include breaks, even a 5 min stretcher will have a great impact!

- **Series:** If you need more than 1-2 hours, plan a series of meetings, give them different topics and make sure the agenda is clear for everyone to understand what to expect at what meeting.

- **Timing:** If you are running an international meeting or have participants joining from different time zones, try to find a solution that is good for all. People can usually push their lunch break forward or backward rather than starting earlier or finishing later in the day.

- **Instructions:** Always include instructions for joining the meeting, but also for how the meeting tool works. If you think your audience will need support to use your meeting platform, you can share a link to a short video tutorial on YouTube ahead of the meeting.

- **Inclusion:** Inform in advance if you have any inclusion support foreseen for the event, for example, speech-to-text or captioning service, language translators or interpreters. Those inclusion measures should be clearly visible in the agenda because it will help everyone to feel comfortable.

- **Code of Conduct:** If possible always include a short code of conduct for how you want the participants to interact during the meeting. This can include e.g. the ways of asking questions and interacting with speakers, whether to keep microphone and video on/off, or ways to interact with other participants - always be respectful, be constructive, etc.

5/ Create a registration form that supports you

Make sure to include your agenda when you send out invitations and ask for people to register for the event. This way they know exactly what to expect. Make the registration form simple and don't ask for more information than you need. Here are some key things not to forget:

- **Accessibility:** Don't shy away from asking what participants' needs are, even if your budget is limited, there are many ways to adapt the event for those who might need it.

- **Cancellations:** Inform participants how to cancel their participation if needed, this way you can keep track of the number of participants and you can adapt your agenda accordingly.

- **Topic preference:** If you know that your session will be structured around different topics or breakout rooms, ask participants for their preference. It will be easier for them to engage if they have been given the opportunity to choose their preferences. This will also help you estimate what the main interests are and if needed allow extra time or opportunities to discuss those topics.

- **Recording:** Inform participants ahead of the meeting if you plan to record it. Those who don't want to be seen on the recording can keep their video off or watch the recording back once shared.

6/ Don't forget to conduct a dry run

Regardless of your master experience hosting online gatherings, it is always worth it to run a pre-show test to make sure that everyone knows the agenda and know how to use the features of the platform you have decided to use. This is a great moment for your team and potential speakers to come together as well.

Some more tips:

- Make sure you have a plan B in case your Internet drops (e.g. connecting to another WIFI or connecting through 4G).

- Check your audio settings, if the sound is not good, a microphone is a good investment.

- If you plan to show any videos, download them to ease your connection. This way the video does not have to load.

- Clear your browser of tabs that are not relevant to the meeting.

- Make sure your computer is screen-sharing ready, if you think your screensaver is too private - change it for the occasion.

- If you don't want to show your background, design a virtual background (you can use Canva, for example). It can be as simple as the colour of your organisation with a small logo in the corner.

- Stay in touch with participants ahead of your meeting, send reminders containing some interesting information about the meeting, so as to keep participants excited.

- Put notifications and your phone on silent mode.

CHAPTER 2

RUNNING YOUR MEETING

1/ Before showtime - coordinate with your team

Ready, set, join in! Trust your team with whom you conducted the prior preparation and test for your meeting. Remember to have a test run of your meeting before going live, this will help detect any missing items beforehand and will give you more confidence to host a smooth and successful meeting.

2/ Open the meeting

We all like to start on time. If you respect your participants' time, they will respect yours. Dedicate 10-15min in your agenda where participants can join ahead of the official start, like a small networking, camera and mic check. Be creative with this space, either greet participants as they join, play some music, or share a poll or word cloud for participants to fill in.

Example of questions: *"where are you joining from?", "what's your mood today?", "what's currently on your playlist?"*... Be creative and ask a question that will help you get to know your participants but that you won't need a lot of time to debrief afterwards.

When it's actually the time to start your meeting, allow a few minutes (2-3) for more people to join if you notice that some are missing.

3/ Welcome participants

An online environment makes it more difficult to have a general feeling of the group than being present in the same room. Non-verbal cues are not as easy to read, especially if people have turned their cameras off, therefore it's important to continuously check in with participants. A way to start this relation is in the welcoming part of your meeting.

To start with your meeting, remind everyone how to engage and the code of conduct (example: mute if not speaking, write your questions in the chat, use the raise hand function, thumbs up, etc.)

Don't forget to introduce yourself, your online meeting team and their roles and the agenda - just to make sure everyone knows what will happen and who to turn to in case of questions.

Depending on the size of the group, find a way to allow everyone to introduce themselves. There are different ways of doing this, a classic tour-de-table, a word cloud, a shoutout and more. Find examples in Chapter 4.

If it is a requirement that participants put their camera on, make sure to state this in the registration form and information emails leading up to the meeting. You can never force anyone to put their camera on during the meeting, but don't hesitate to ask politely if they could (e.g. cameras may be off due to technical/connectivity issues).

4/ Manage your time

Estimating how long sessions will take online can be difficult, one thing that is sure, is that it's better to allocate more buffer time than less, and some things just take more time online.

Here are some tips for your time managment:

- Assign one team member the task of keeping track of time, if this is not possible, you can keep a timer on your phone, and, if needed, slightly adjust the time dedicated for each part of the meeting.

- Agree on a sign with team members and speakers for when time is running out/running short. For example, you can write them privately a reminder on the chat.

- If you are heading into a discussion with time constraints, inform the group about that and how you might "cut them short" due to this - it's not personal. Being upfront with it will ease the tension from what some might consider an embarrassing situation.

- Communicate time allocations to the participants so they have this in the back of their minds when they interact with each other.

- Set a timer for breaks, something that informs the participants that the break is almost over, for example play a song that finishes 30 sec before the break is over.

- If possible, don't leave your core activity to the very end, make sure that you have them early on so that you can allocate sufficient time for them.

- Just like physical events, keep in mind when you place activities. Complex discussions at the very start of the morning might be difficult for some, while a long theoretical presentation after lunch might lose the attention of others.

- Consider that the technical things take time - sending people to breakout rooms takes approximately 2 minutes before everyone is situated and has started their discussion. Getting everyone to join a virtual whiteboard takes 1-2 minute before everyone is there. Include these timings when designing your sessions and agenda as they will help you feel more confident when you are actually running the session.

5/ Minimise technical issues

Technical errors can occur at any time, some of them are out of your control, but you can still do some things to ensure that they are to a minimum and plan for what to do in case they occur.

Problems with a presentation? Make sure they are accessible for more people in your team, so if one of you can't access it someone else can display it. Same goes for external speakers, ask them to send their presentations in advance (also ask if they have videos to show, always better to download them in advance and to test the audio).

Is the speaker having problems? Maybe the speaker is not present on time, has problems connecting their sound or connection, give them 1 minute to try and at the same time figure out an alternative, e.g. another speaker goes first, another small agenda point can go before. While plan B is in effect, create a breakout room for the speaker and a team member, so that they can talk and solve the problem.

Participants can't access your link? Check in advance what the sharing settings are of what you are trying to share. Other things you might want to check could be: "Do participants need an account to access the page?", "Is the document you are sharing public?".

Noisy background? Have a headset at hand and don't forget to check the platform settings for entry/exit of audio.

Computer not cooperating? Most meeting tools have the option to call in to the meeting from a phone. These services are usually free and are great options to make sure you can speak or listen in.

Is the wifi connection weak? Always think of a back-up plan. Some suggestions: disable video sharing, share the internet from your phone to your computer, and have the meeting app downloaded on your phone and access the meeting easily from there.

6/ Facilitating different levels of engagement

Depending on your meeting type you may need a more active audience or a more attentive and focused audience. Regardless of your format, there are ways to keep your audience attention and encourage them to engage with the topic.

Some tips:

Include something dynamic every 15 minutes, this can be a change of speaker, a quiz as a part of the presentation, a discussion point or a new agenda item.

Sometimes the chat needs as much facilitation as the spoken-part of the meeting. Encourage participants throughout the meeting to write their questions, comments and impressions in the chat. If possible, allocate one colleague to stay active on the chat and write comments there to get the participants going.

Include different ways of interaction throughout the meeting, some participants are more keen to discuss in smaller groups, some enjoy reflecting by themselves, others might need gamification or physical activities to engage.

Be flexible on participation modes. Shy people may find it difficult to turn their camera on and speak in front of an audience (regardless how big/small), so reassure them that they can use the microphone to intervene or in writing in the chat, if that makes them feel more comfortable. Otherwise, they may simply choose not to intervene at all.

Silence can be good. Don't be afraid of a little bit of silence, this gives the participants time to think before sharing, so ask a question and give them time to figure out their answer. If it's too silent for too long, ask them to write down their answer and share either in a big group or breakout room. Don't ask too many questions at once.

Use icebreakers to your advantage. Icebreakers are usually the fun activities in the meeting, make sure to use them to your advantage, have participants "warm up" by sharing, speaking, and reflecting - organise them to be topic oriented and aligned with your theme.

Low energy demands a break or an energizer. Make sure to include breaks to give everyone the possibility to participate with maximum brain capacity. An energizer is also a quick way to wake everyone's attention with some stretching, movement or mental exercise.

Extra tips:

Efficient Q&As: Put together a speakers list, this can be displayed in the chat or through the meeting tools virtual board. That way, participants know who is next and you can write down the order while others are speaking. You can also highlight when the speakers list is closed if you have a longer discussion ongoing.

No questions to the speakers? Prepare a couple of questions in the team and start off with those if there are no questions.

Too many questions - too little time? Have everyone write the questions in the chat and answer them afterwards.

Organise some kind of evaluation during the meeting to make sure you get feedback on the most important aspects. It can be a short poll right before closing the event, if sent afterwards, the reply rate is likely to be much lower.

Don't end abruptly. Remind participants of follow-up activities (if any), thank speakers, and most importantly participants who took their time to engage with you.

7/ Make the most of your results

You put a lot of effort into hosting an online meeting, so why not make the most of the outcomes. Here are some suggestions of how you can follow up:

If you recorded any parts of the meeting that might be interesting to externals, for example keynote speeches or good practises, cut the video and distribute the short speech in your channels provided that you obtain prior agreement of the presenters.

Publish keynote speeches as articles on your website or write an article on your website capturing some of the highlights of the meeting or perspectives on a topic or discussion.

Collect quotes from the meeting and use them in your reports, publications or on social media.

**Share the material of the meeting** with participants for them to use.

Send a report in the form of a summary of the event to participants and schedule a reminder in your calendar to follow up on commitments or ideas generated during the meeting.

Don't forget the evaluation form - a great way to better understand how you can improve. Participants might provide additional perspectives to what went well/could improve.

CHAPTER 3
TOOLBOX

Apart from the structure of your virtual meeting, it is important to carefully consider which tools you will use. Today many different tools are provided to us, with various functions and costs, therefore it's important to reflect on what you need in order to find one or several tools that can support your facilitation and the various levels of engagement.
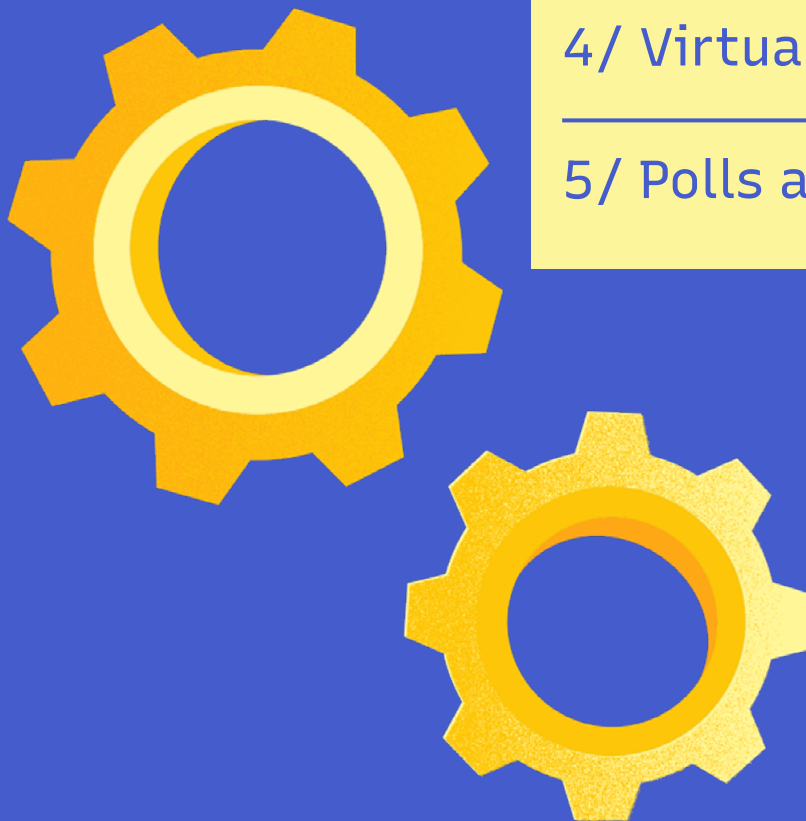
Topics

1/ Meeting platforms

2/ Virtual spaces

3/ Social Media Live

4/ Virtual Boards

5/ Polls and quizzes

> **Tip!**
>
> Most virtual tools provide special rates for non-for profit organisations. Even if it is not explicitly written on the website, always make the effort to send the company an email and ask whether this type of price plan exists - you might just cut your costs in half or even get the tool for free.

1/ Meeting platforms

There are plenty of online meeting platforms: new ones appear day by day and those already existing adapt quickly to users' needs and preferences. Some of the most used are;

- Zoom
- Skype
- Google Meet
- Cisco Webex
- Microsoft Teams
- BigBlueButton
- GoToMeeting

While they serve the similar purpose of gathering people online, there may be different features in each of them. That is why it is useful ahead of your meeting to map out what's the most convenient tool for your event at that moment. Consider what add-ons you would need during your event to make the best choice among available platforms and their cost, if any.

You can create a checklist of what you will need, for example: breakout rooms, recording, file upload, size of participants for free version, text-to-speech caption, digital whiteboard, poll features, participant interaction, or streaming.

> **Tip!**
>
> If you are a member of the Eurodesk Network you are able to host meetings through our Eurodesk intranet by using Google Meets for free. See further instructions in the Eurodesk Resource Folder.

2/ Virtual spaces

If you are looking for a creative alternative to Zoom, Teams or Hangout, how about trying virtual spaces? Hosting meetings through virtual spaces is becoming more and more popular. Bring your participants into a virtual space where they can walk around, access different rooms and easily chat with each other through built-in video conferencing settings.

Once you decide on one of the platforms, make sure you review the security notice and privacy settings. If the platform offers that option, consider access through password.

© GO Europe/Eurodesk Netherlands

Gather.town

Gather is a video-calling space that lets multiple people hold separate conversations in parallel, walking in and out of those conversations just as easily as they would in a physical office or conference space. You can design areas for workshop sessions, host virtual coffee breaks and bring the face-to-face feeling to your virtual meetings either by using ready-made templates or customising your space. Gather is free for up to 25 persons at one time, for larger capacities you can book premium packages of 2hrs, 8hrs, 24hrs and one month.
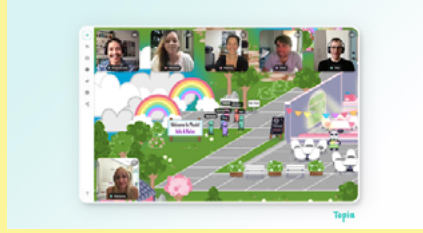
© Topia via Facebook

Topia

Create your world with Topia, another virtual meeting space you can set up to fill the needs of your meeting. In comparison to Gather Town, the owner of the world can customise the virtual space to fit the ambiance and needs of the meeting. Topia is free for up to 25 persons at one time and for larger capacities there are premium packages from one day up to one month.
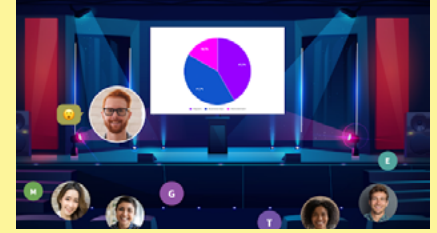
© Spatial Chat

SpatialChat

In SpatialChat you can run an entire online event, from the official part to coffee break, networking and afterparty. SpatialChat lets you change the colours of the space interior so your brand will be recognised at once. It is free for up to 50 participants and three break out rooms. There are premium packages from one day to one year.

3/ Social Media Live

Video is the fastest-growing content-type on all social media platforms and is much more likely to generate conversations and reach wider audiences through shares of users. Going Live is one of the best ways to connect with your followers. It allows you to show a more transparent and authentic side of your organisation - unlike pre-recorded videos. It can however be daunting, if it is your first time. We advise you to start with a small meeting and get started!

Here is a list of the most common platforms where you can host your live and some guides to master it. Other than its features, take into account your target audience - especially age wise - and how popular they are geographically.

Going Live on Facebook: Facebook Live videos are public, and viewers don't need an account as long as they can access Facebook. Users can go live on Facebook from a profile, a Page, a group, or an event. The video can be recorded and stay posted for later access. Here's a complete guide on _how to go live on Facebook._

Going Live on Instagram: One of the best ways to connect with your community. Split the screen and share your Live with a speaker or follower - the opportunities are many to keep it highly interactive, including comments and questions live from your viewers. Read _more tips on how to set up your Instagram Live._

Going Live on LinkedIn: Think of it like Facebook Live, with a more professional twist. Go Live with news that might be important for your sector, to broadcast a new open vacancy or to chat with persons looking for new opportunities. Here is a guide that will _help you with the set up._

Going Live on TikTok: TikTok has become one of the most popular Apps among youngsters and it is purely video-based with durations between 15 seconds to 3 minutes. Creators go Live to share their passions, show off their talents, or just deepen their relationship with their audiences during an ideal duration of 30 minutes. _Here is a step-by-step guide._

Some additional tips for going live:

Promote your Live event

Make sure to promote your Live event ahead of time. Organise a small campaign to let your social media community know when to tune in. If you have a network of organisations, ask them to cross-promote your posts to ensure a wider outreach. You can also promote it afterwards using short clips or screen captures to motivate your audience and others to join in future events. You can also create a hashtag for tagging any posts related to your event.

Figure out the logistics

Some meeting tools allow you to broadcast your meetings to various social media platforms, for example Microsoft Teams and Zoom allow you to broadcast your meeting Live to Youtube, Facebook and other platforms. Figure out your technicalities ahead of time to make the most of your presence in various social media channels.

Get support

It can be hard to keep up with live comments while you are talking. Ask a colleague to log onto the social media you are using and monitor the comments for you. They can write down the main questions to ask on a separate chat that only you two follow (e.g. Whatsapp group).

Optimise your set up

We already mentioned how important a strong internet connection is but there are a few other technical details to consider:

- **Lighting:** Bright, natural light is best.

- **Camera position:** Get close, but not too close. Use a tripod to keep things stable.

- **Camera quality:** The higher the quality, the better! (the rear camera of your phone usually beats the "selfie" one).

- **Audio:** Always do a sound check before going live.

- **Body language:** Face the camera, smile, and relax.

- **Background:** Make sure your surroundings look clean and professional. Include some subtle branding in the background, like a mug with a logo or a poster.

Pro-tip! Always go live with more than one device. You will need one for streaming the video, and one for monitoring live comments or staying in contact with your colleagues.

4/ Virtual boards

Make your brainstorming and session visually attractive by using the support of whiteboards and post-it boards. Some meeting platforms already provide built-in whiteboards, however there are more to consider that might address your needs.

Basic user, easy to manage: *Google Jamboard, Microsoft Whiteboard* and *Lucidspark* - These tools are very basic and intuitive whiteboards that allow you to write, create shapes and use post-it notes, add pictures and documents. It is easy to collaborate with others and especially within teams.

If you want to collaborate in bigger teams, brainstorm, create polls or visualise processes, the following tools have free and paid versions and are great in supporting you in tasks for both small as well as big groups.

Medium difficulty: *Dotstorming* and *Padlet* - Both tools are in essence brainstorming tools that allow you to create mind maps, add collages of ideas and brainstorm in a group. Both tools include the functionalities of voting and commenting on various ideas and have integrated other services such as image search, to support the brainstorming.

Experienced, advanced user: *Miro* and *Mural* - More advanced virtual whiteboards with what feels like an endless amount of space. With these you can create a team and organise a folder of whiteboards for your longer meetings or events. The toolbox of the two tools are more advanced and come with many different templates for group and project work. They also have other services embedded, such as Google image search, Google Suite, Microsoft Teams, YouTube, Slack, Emojis, voting and much more.

5/ Polls and Quizzes

If you are looking for tools to help survey your participants or create a quiz competition, you can either look to your virtual meeting platform and if they offer this feature, explore the virtual boards you might already be using, or turn to one of the following options:

Sli.do and *Mentimeter* - Interactive presentation softwares. Sli.do can be integrated to your Google Presentation while Mentimeter offers you the opportunity to build your whole presentation in the tool. Both tools allow you to collect feedback from your audience through polling, word clouds and other.

Kahoot! - Gamify your presentation. Kahoot allows you to build pop-quizzes, keeps track of participants' scores and announces a winner at the end. A great alternative if you want to gamify your information.

Poll Everywhere and *Vevox* - These tools help you capture audience feedback through live online polling, surveys, Q&As, quizzes, word clouds, and more.

Still eager for more inspiration? *Tech Against Coronavirus* has put together a list of tools for online meetings, project management and group work. TechSoup also provides discounted and free software to NGOs through their *NGO Tech Marketplace.*

CHAPTER 4

ACTIVITIES

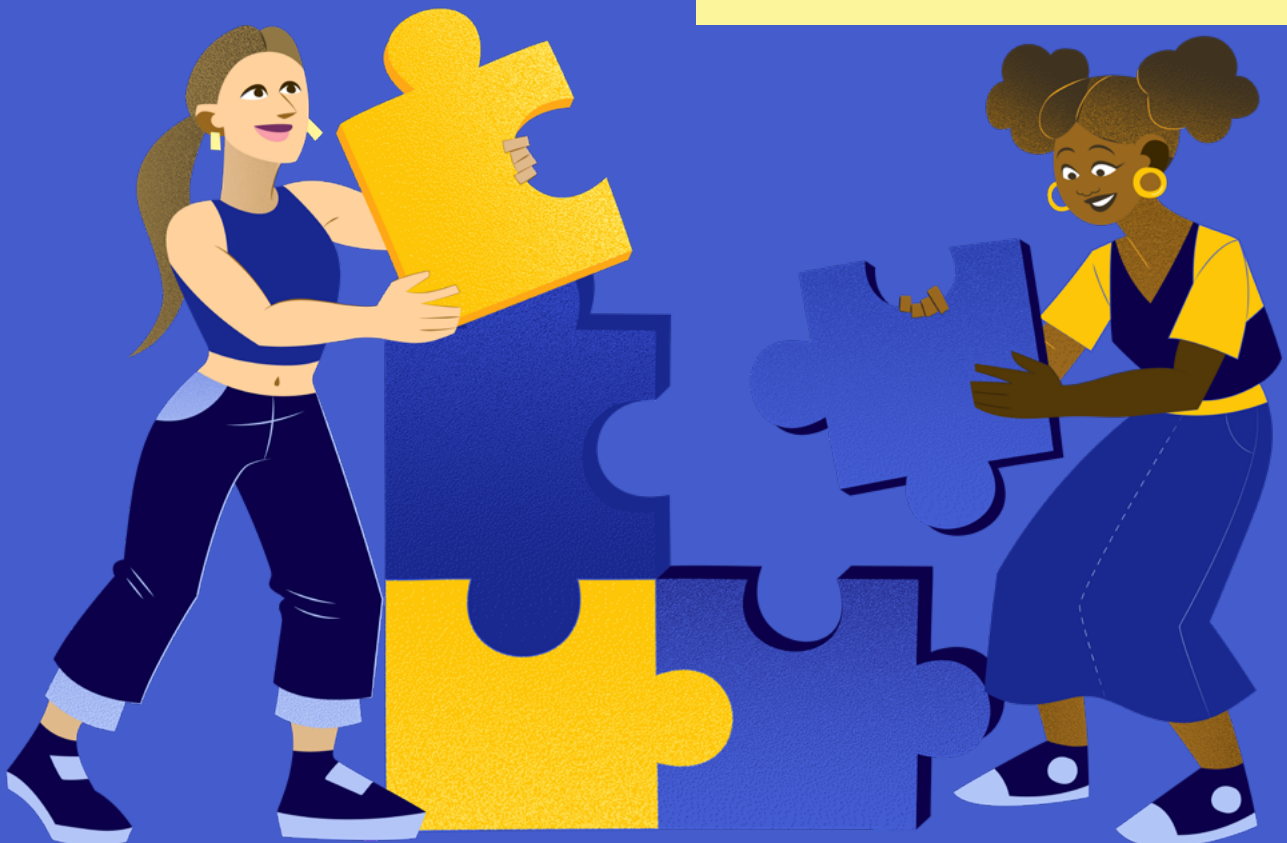We have collected a range of activities that might come in handy for your virtual facilitation.

1/ Icebreakers

Ice breakers and "Get to know each other" - activities serve the purpose of introducing the participants to each other and "breaking the ice". Here are a couple of suggestions that can vary in length and adapt them according to the level of formality or familiarity of your audience and event.

Who is who? ▪*easy* ▪*little preparation* ▪*new people*

Plan a board where everyone can insert a little introduction about themselves. This can be done ahead of the meeting for participants to get familiar with each other ahead of the meeting. Use Padlet or a virtual whiteboard (see above) to create a 'Who is Who' board for your team.

Show and tell ▪*easy* ▪ *little preparation* ▪*new people*

To facilitate this show and tell, you can set a 1 minute timer for participants to find something within arms reach that is meaningful to them or have the participants prepare with something before the call. Each of your team members then has one minute to share about their object, including information like where they got it, why they keep it, and why it is so important to them. This can be done in a big group or in breakout rooms depending on the size of your group.

Note that whereas "Who is who?" and "Show and tell" can be used in gatherings with people who have not met before to get them started and ease their moods, the next alternatives would fit best in a more casual setting or where the majority of participants know each other.

Never have I ever ▪*friendly* ▪*small groups* ▪*medium duration*

Typically a game used at parties, but it can be turned into the theme you are discussing or what you would like to learn from your participants. Everyone starts with five fingers up and loses a point for each of the topics that you have in fact done, so ideally everyone would turn their cameras on. For example, if the statement was "never have I been on an Erasmus+ exchange", then everyone who has been would put a finger down. Have participants share their experiences between each statement - a great way to get to know each other. Depending on the topic you can award a winner based on either the one who has lowered most fingers or least fingers by the end of the statement game.

Ice breaker questions ▪*friendly* ▪*medium duration*

imple questions that allow you to get to know your peers better. For example, you can start a remote meeting by having each attendee share their name, role and what they like to eat for breakfast. Icebreakers are easy to include in virtual meetings and virtual happy hours.
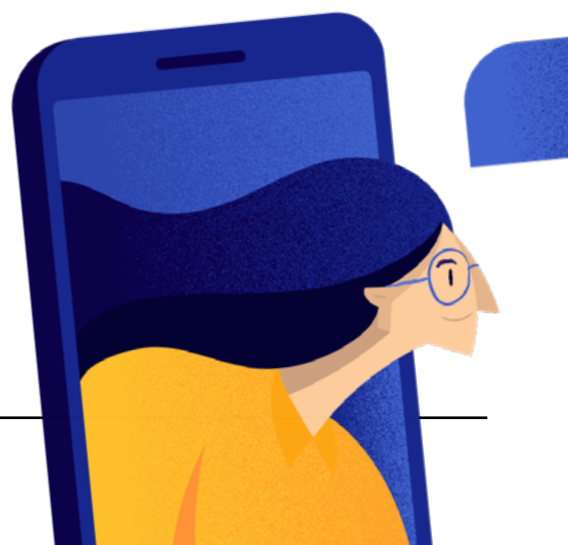
A few tips for running great icebreakers:

- Start with "green level" easy ice-breaker questions. Some of your participants will be nervous to share, and so you can start with simple questions like "dream vacation" or "favourite food".

- Before any person shares an answer, announce who the next few people to share will be. This process helps create order and is especially important for online meetings where you don't have as many visual cues.

- Go first. You can be the first to share as an example to others. By starting, you give your participants a little longer to think about answers, and also model what a great answer can be.

- Keep it short. We recommend no more than 30 seconds per person.

- Find more inspiration for Icebreaker questions at *Museum Hack.*

Something in Common ▪*friendly* ▪*team bulding*

A challenge that encourages your participants to learn more about each other. For this game, assign your participants into small groups and then have each group identify the three most unique things they have in common. For example, a group might find a common love for Shakespeare's Macbeth, experience with childhood violin lessons, or a dislike for chocolate. If you want to do multiple rounds then you can make the virtual activity more challenging by removing broad categories like movies, books and food.

Virtual Open Mic ▪*impro* ▪*flexible duration* ▪*little preperation*

Announce to everyone that they will have about a minute each during the meeting to take the virtual stage. Ask them to find an ice-breaker, write a joke, explain a saying in their language, read a poem, sing a song, play the mandolin - anything they want! Start your meeting with these glorious performances and include one whenever you feel the energy dropping. Make sure to allow ten seconds in between each for some applause. This type of activity can be easier for groups in which most participants know each other already.
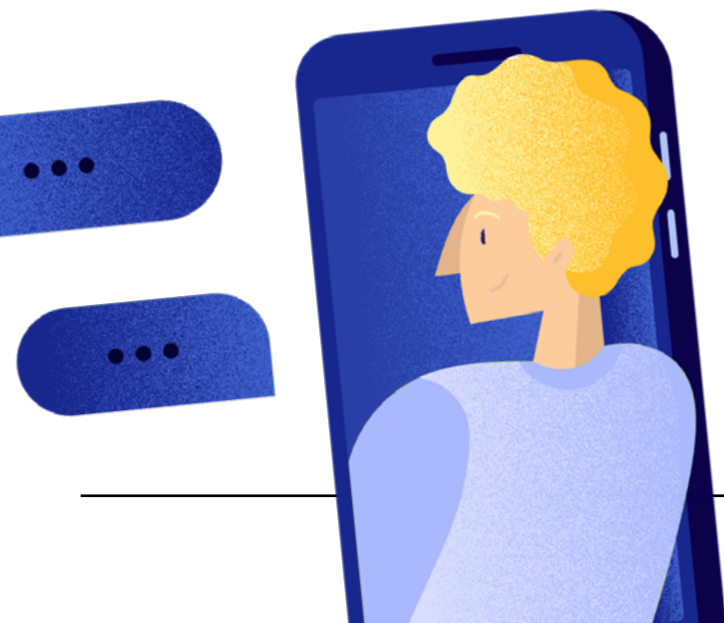
2/ Team building activities

Team building activities are used to strengthen the group dynamic. Depending on the purpose of your training -consider dedicating some time for team building activities. Here is a series of suggestions.

Remote work bingo ▪*core activity*   ▪*medium duration* ▪*thematic*

In comparison to the traditional bingo, this one can span over several days and weeks depending on how difficult the bingo is. Include internal jokes or scenarios you are likely to encounter in an online environment, combine it with your 'Who is Who' board, be creative and may the best person win!

Spreadsheet wars ▪*fun* ▪*requires preperation*

Who can draw the best Spreadsheet Unicorn in 10 minutes? Team up and compete for who can do it the fastest and prettiest. Change the picture to something related to your meeting or organisation. More instructions can be found in *this spreadsheet.*

Did you hear me? ▪*artsy* ▪*fun* ▪*engaging*

Another drawing challenge that focuses on clear communication. You play this game in a virtual conference room, and nominate one person to be the speaker and the rest are artists. The speaker has an image, and the goal is to describe that image in such a way that the artists can draw it successfully. The one guideline is the speaker must only use geometric shapes. For example, you could say "draw a large circle and then five narrow rectangles" but not "draw a sun." By limiting instructions, the speaker needs to exercise extremely accurate communication skills, and the artists need to listen and interpret. This game is a proxy for effective online communication, and is also just really fun.

So you think you know your team? ▪*fun* ▪*medium preparation*

Prior to your meeting or event, ask all your participants to answer three questions, for example...

- If you could eat one food for the rest of your life what would it be?

- If you were a magical creature, what would you be?

- What's your favourite movie?

At the meeting, share the answers and have your teammates try to pair the answers with the right person. Once everyone has guessed, reveal who gave what answer. If the results are interesting/surprising, have your teammates explain – it'll get people laughing and learning more about each other.

Scavenger Hunt •*preparation needed* •*fun*

Nothing brings a team together like a little scavenger hunt: the fun, the interaction, the problem solving, the friendly competition – it's the perfect team builder. Design a virtual scavenger hunt by creating a checklist of things each team has to accomplish - this can be controlled by uploading proof (videos, pictures etc.) in a joint chat, a virtual board (Padlet) or cloud folders.

Examples could be to find exactly the same things for each group, or making a collection of personal things - a competition and a get to know each other activity in one.

- Find the item that makes you feel happy.

- Find an item attached to a powerful memory.

- Find your favourite way to connect to others.

- Find a yellow mug.

You can also challenge them to find a list of items, the first who finds them all can shout out. This will get people moving around.

Virtual Dining and Happy Hour •*fun* •*casual*

Send all of your participants a Happy Hour box packed with goodies they'll enjoy during the virtual get together or invite them to prepare something themselves (e.g. a drink, a meal, etc.) Use a reliable video conference call service and limit guests to 10–20 to boost engagement. Have a variety of ice-breakers prepared in case things get awkward. Experiment with different tools such as *Topia* or *GatherTown* where you can set up the virtual space and participants can chat with each other in large groups or privately.

Virtual Culture Tour •*artsy* •*engaging*

Bienvenue, Willkommen, Dobrodošli. Have your participants plan a cultural tour of their country or city. Combine storytelling and fun activities, such as learning French vocabulary, completing Parisian trivia, preparing a dish or finding their Parisian-self through fun ice-breaker questions. Share insightful stories and connect by interacting and engaging with each other. If you have participants from the same location - you can invite them to prepare something together.

Pair & Share •*breakout room* •*little preparation*

This is a great alternative to the 'turn to your neighbour' kind of exercise. Give your participants a thought-provoking question to think about, then pair them randomly using breakout rooms (check whether your video conferencing tool allows for it). Allow all groups a couple of minutes to discuss the topic before coming back to the main room to share what each pair talked about. This method allows for more intimate conversations among your participants. Introverts will appreciate this, as it feels more comfortable to share something in a pair, compared to the whole team.

EURODESK BINGO

Find someone who is involved in podcast producing	Find someone who was an EVS/ESC volunteer in the past	Find someone who hosted a Eurodesk info stand at a Festival	Find someone who has done a mobility project him/herself outside of the EU	Find someone who is active on Instagram with Eurodesk
Find someone who published last week on the European Youth Portal	Find someone who has fine interviewing skills	Find someone who was involved in the organisation of this meeting	Find someone who knows exactly how many DiscoverEU passess were given in the last call	Find someone who is fed up with Erasmus+
Find someone who would pack in 10 minutes if given a DiscoverEU pass	Find someone who knows very well how to use the Eurodesk Programme Database		Find someone who organised an activity during the Time to Move campaign	Find someone who has lived abroad for more than one year
Find someone who is always keen on participating in team building activities	Find someone who is on top of the latest tech developments	Find someone who places Eurodesk gadgets strategically in their background	Find someone who no longer fits in the age criteria to volunteer in the ESC	Find someone who is new to Eurodesk
vFind someone who has know-how in organising Euroclasses	Find someone who often attends Wednesday Webinars	Find someone who knows by heart the 11 European Youth goals	Find someone who is interested in cultural differences more than in chocolate	Find someone who remembers the old version of the EYP

EURODESK BINGO

3/ Brainstorming & discussion activities

When brainstorming is very important to define the process and what your expected outcome is and if you aim to have a general brainstorming exercise or in various smaller groups to collect ideas later on during the event.

There are several tools that can support your brainstorming. For example, a virtual whiteboard - such as Miro and Mural - allows for co-creation with post-its, notes and drawing and polling and word cloud tools - such as Slido, Mentimeter - help understand preferences or how many times something is mentioned. Padlet and Trello can also be useful tools for collecting ideas, building joint lists or gathering comments.

Here are a few suggestions of activities that you can use as a warm-up activity to your brainstorming or adapt to your own needs.

Speakers' List ▪*little preparation* ▪*easy*

There are several ways to moderate an informal speakers list. Here are some suggestions that are different from the typical "raise your hand". For example, you can ask the participants to pass a virtual token or ball to the next speaker. Other options are going through alphabetical order, indicating the zodiac or birth month in your chat name and take it in that order...
if possible, display the list of participants' names and the order in which they will speak.

Association game ▪*little preparation* ▪*engaging*

Keep the creativity flowing, a great warm-up activity for brainstorming. Have one participant start by saying a word. You can choose a concept and limit the topic if you wish. The next person in the list will have to quickly say a word associated with the first one. The third person quickly replies with a word associated with the previous... and the game continues in this way until you're out of words. If you want to add a gamification element, you can give the participants a matter of seconds to reply and if they take too long, they are "out of the game" - the last one standing will be the winner.

Virtual Where Do You Stand ▪*medium preparation* ▪*fun*

A great activity to get discussion flowing is "Where do you stand". You read out a statement and indicate how participants can show whether they agree, disagree with the statement or are somewhere in between. This can easily be done by using the following approaches:

- Create a space on a virtual whiteboard where you identify the different standpoints (agree/disagree, pro/con, Applies to me/Doesn't apply, etc.) Have each participant create a post-it with their name and for each statement they'll move to the part of the whiteboard they resonate with.

- Use symbols that are available in your meeting tool, e.g. raise the hand if..., or push the Yes/No button, put on/off your camera if..., or raise your coffee cup...

From there, you can ask participants to share their opinions and flow into a smooth informal discussion to get to know each other better.

Virtual Fishbowl *▪requires preparation ▪easy*

One of the greatest ways to have a large group discussion is having a Fishbowl Discussion (also known as Aquarium discussion). The benefit is that it prevents people talking over each other, and allows for multiple talking points to be covered. Whoever sits on the chairs can talk, and wherever someone wants to share their opinion, they change position with another person in the chairs. It gives anyone the opportunity to speak, without feeling pressured to or awkward. This MIRO template by Microverse allows you to set up this physical space, virtually, and gives you the step-by-step instructions as a facilitator.

Chocolate vs Gelato *▪medium preparation ▪fun ▪engaging*

A game where you make decisions collectively as a team. The name is indicative of the "either or" choice you are making. For round one, your team has to decide on whether the world is going to keep Chocolate or Gelato, and the other is to be obliterated from existence. Anyone can advocate for a favourite choice, and ultimately you must have a majority vote to make the decision.

After one option is eliminated, you add a new competitor. For example, the game may become Gelato vs Wine, and then Wine vs Puppies, and then Puppies vs Instagram, and then Instagram vs Email, and similar.

Typically the longer you play, the more intense the conversation gets and the more team members will share their values. The game mechanics are helpful for virtual team building because the initial conversation of Chocolate vs Gelato is low stakes, and it only gradually becomes more personal as you get to later stages.

Critical Thinking *▪medium preparation ▪fun*

Start your online meeting by posing this lateral thinking question from Udemy to the group: "If you were alone in a dark cabin, with only one match and a lamp, a fireplace, and a candle to choose from, which would you light first?"

 Give everyone 30 seconds to choose. Have everyone share their answer on a platform like Padlet, Dotstorming or Mentimeter. Spend about one minute discussing the differences in your answers and what you each learned from one another.

This format can apply to other questions that go along with your theme, for example, "if you were a volunteer in a remote village, and you were given the chance to decide whether living in a local family household who do not speak any language you know, an independent apartment for yourself but without WiFi or a shared apartment with other volunteers, which would you choose?".

Aliens have landed *▪little preparation ▪fun ▪engaging*

Divide the whole team into smaller groups of three to four members. The scenario is, aliens have finally landed on Earth — but they don't speak English. So, each team must pick five symbols or pictures to best describe the organisation, a definition or the topic you are working on - you decide as a facilitator what's most relevant. As the facilitator, check out the images and see if you realise any common themes or symbols. This helps you to understand what the participants feel, defines and or understands about a specific topic.

4/ Energisers

Use these activities to reinvigorate the group you are working with in moments when they need to refocus their attention.

Polls ideas ▪*little preparation* ▪*fun*

Create polls to have participants focus on something different, for example:
- In a Poll: How are you feeling today?

- On a Virtual Whiteboard: What was the highlight of your week? of this training? Draw it!

- In the Chat: Use GIFs to express your mood

- In a Word Cloud: Where are you joining from? What's your favourite emoji? Who would you like to thank? Who's your biggest inspiration?

Virtual Dance Party ▪*friendly* ▪*fun*

One of the quickest and easiest virtual team building activities is the Virtual Dance Party. You can either host your virtual dance as a stand-alone event, add it at the last minutes of your coffee break for those who want, or include it as a quick one-minute stretch during a meeting.

Important: You don't need to bust fancy moves, just turn on a song and move to the beat! Dancing can help cure awkward silences, keep energy high, and inject fun and team building into your meetings. And remember, never pressure anyone to put on the camera - the most important thing is that they feel comfortable to move.

Video-background challenge ▪*requires preparation* ▪*fun*

If you need a laugh, have your participants challenge each other in a video-background challenge. This can take place a bit spontaneously or as an announced challenge ahead of the meeting. Bring your best background forward! Make sure you explain how participants can do this and check that your meeting tool supports uploading of virtual backgrounds.

Count to 20 ▪*little preparation* ▪*fun* ▪*easy*

This activity helps you create focus and listen actively. The idea is to count to twenty out loud, one person at a time. Anyone can start counting and a different person always has to follow. If two or more people say the same number out loud at the same time, you have to start all over again. The idea here is to get aligned, watch your colleagues closely and look out for subtle hints like inhales or little movements that reveal whether someone is about to speak. For this icebreaker, it's essential that everyone has their cameras and their audio on. This is one of the more difficult activities but the group will feel very accomplished once they've reached twenty.

Design this activity to the number of your team, just make sure everyone can speak at least once.

REFERENCES

37 Best Virtual Team Building Activities for Remote Teams in 2022, Jesse Sussman, Museum Hack, February 2022. Accessible: https://museumhack.com/virtual-team-building-for-remote-teams/#online-office-games

7 Lateral Thinking Questions to Promote Out-of-the-Box Thinking, Udemy Editor, last updated June 2021. Accessible: https://blog.udemy.com/lateral-thinking-questions/

35 Best Icebreakers for Your Virtual and Hybrid Meetings, Katy Mrvova, Sli.do blog, September 2021. Accessible: https://blog.sli.do/virtual-icebreakers/

25 Virtual Team Building Activities Remote Teams Love in 2022, Peter Banerjea, Time Doctor. Accessible: https://biz30.timedoctor.com/virtual-team-building/

57 Fun Virtual Team Building Activities, Games, & Ideas To Boost Remote Employee Morale In Online Teams For 2022, Ashley Bell, Snacknation. Accessible: https://snacknation.com/blog/virtual-team-building/

List of 500+ curated products by Tech against Coronavirus. Accessible: https://techagainstcoronavirus.com/

Going Live, TikTok Creators Portal. Accessible: https://www.tiktok.com/creators/creator-portal/en-us/what-to-know-about-live/going-live/

How to Use LinkedIn Live: The Complete Guide for Marketers, Alice Fleerackers, Hootsuite, August 2019. Accessible: https://blog.hootsuite.com/linkedin-live/

Instagram Live: A Step-by-step Guide for Businesses, Jillian Warren, LaterBlog, September 2021. Accessible: https://later.com/blog/instagram-live/

How to Use Facebook Live: The Ultimate Guide, Sophia Bernazzani, Hubspot blog, updated December 2021. Accessible: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/facebook-live-guide

How to go Live on Twitter to Connect With Your Followers, Kristi Hines, Hootsuite, updated May 2020. Accessible: https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-go-live-on-twitter/