

Guidelines for the organiser of National Dialogues

What brings us together – Autumn 2024

It is great that you are involved in organising the national dialogue! Here are instructions and tips for organising the dialogue. Use the instructions and tips and edit them to suit you.

If you have already registered, please update if there are information changes on the topic, time and possible registration address of your dialogues, to kansallisetdialogit@gov.fi. You can check your data from the [list](#) on the event page.

Target group definition, invitation and timetable

The target group may be an internal group within your organisation, it can be a network or a group that aims to reach a wider diversity of participants. Think about the target group with which you need to deepen your understanding of the theme “What brings us together?”. Define the target group according to this. We recommend that 3-12 (in a face-to-face dialogue) or 3-8 (in a remotely organised dialogue) persons participate in one discussion. We do not recommend a hybrid discussion because of its challenging nature. We recommend that the length of the discussion be 2-3 hours.

You should use all the channels you have at your disposal to distribute the invitation. Although the discussion is part of National Dialogues and is on its webpage, it does not mean that participants would automatically come across your conversation. So, spend time calling and inviting people to join. The more personal the invitation to participate is, the more sure you can be to get invited people to attend.

You can easily personalise the general invitation text by changing motivation questions so that they apply to each group or person you want invite. Keep the goals the same for everyone, so that everyone will discuss the same topic. At the end of this section you can find a link to the Timeout tool, where you can find more information about inviting participants.

The invitations depend on who you want to have the dialogue with. If your aim is to attract as diverse a group of participants as possible, you need more time spent on inviting. If you want at least some of the participants to join through open registration, you might need to create a special event site. **If you organise a discussion to which anyone can openly register, please also send a link to us, and we will add it to the discussion list of the event.**

The invitations should be made as soon as possible. Registration can be handled either by using the registration link you have or by requesting registration to you by email. It is good to have the registration date at least five days before the actual dialogue discussion. This way you will get an idea of whether additional invitations should be made, or if for example a reminder invitation is needed or if it is good to call or expand the number of invited persons.

A confirmation message should be sent to those who have registered, and there you can give more detailed instructions and also ask to inform you if they are unable to participate for some reason.

There are numerous forms of invitation. You can make some kind of a general invitation text or event page that you distribute to different groups, for example on social media, by email, on notice boards or personally. You will find a draft invitation below.

It is important to draft invitations carefully even if they are for an internal group, because the invitation encourages to orientate to an equal dialogue even before the person arrives. The invitation

is explained in more detail here: <https://www.timeoutdialogue.fi/tool/inviting-participants/>

Invitation template for inviting participants

You can edit your invitation so that it inspires your target group. [Link to invitation template](#) (docx)

Script of a dialogue

The draft script makes it easy for you to plan your dialogue in advance. The draft script supports facilitation but it is not meant to be distributed to the participants. You can print a finished script for yourself after editing. The wordings of the script are examples. You can edit them to suit the topic of your dialogue and to best suit yourself.

[Draft script for the dialogue](#) (pptx)

[Draft script for the dialogue](#) (PDF)

Introduction

The discussion should be tuned with a introduction. For example, you can use the text below or some other article, news, research, short text paragraph, or other material that touches the topic of your conversation. You can also send it with a confirmation message to the participants in advance. In this case, the participants may have been prepared for the topic already when arriving at the discussion.

Previous National Dialogues have repeatedly highlighted people's observations of deeper divisions in society. It seems that it is difficult for different groups of people to find common factors and ways of encountering each other. Different generations, different cultures, differences in occupations and livelihoods, differences between cities and rural areas, conflicts between minorities and majorities, and divergent political ideologies are at risk of differentiating us from each other.

Instructions for notetaker

Ask the notetaker to write **as accurately as possible what people are talking about – without interpretation and so that no one's name is written down/mentioned**. The notetaker does not have to care about typographical mistakes. All entries in national dialogues are analysed as one big dialogue and the more detailed your entry is, the more useful it is in compiling the summary.

Decide together with the notetaker which one of you will tell the participants what the notes will be used for. Here is a wording you can use for that purpose:

“The notes of the discussion will be used for the resume of the “What brings us together” in the series of National Dialogues reports. The summary will be published for open use. It is also submitted to central, regional and local government administration and decision-making. No one's identity will be revealed in the entries or summary.”

Reporting

Fill in the [reporting form here](#) right away after the discussion and add the notes of the discussion as an attachment.

This is important and we are grateful if we get them as soon as possible because we start drawing up a summary right after the discussion days.

Timeout dialogue - Cards for facilitating a discussion

Download [Cards for facilitating a discussion](#) and use them when you plan your discussions before the event. If you want to prepare even better, read more about the [Timeout tools](#).

Read and keep in mind the ground rules for a constructive discussion. They form the basis for keeping the discussion constructive and it is good to have them visible during the discussion. You can for instance print them. If the discussion is face-to-face, it is a good idea to have the print available in the discussion circle.

[Printable poster](#) (PDF)

Other useful things to remember

- In the face-to-face discussion, make sure that the space or room reserved for the discussion is calm and organise the chairs into a circle. In a remote dialogue remember to test in advance the connections and the platform you use.
- Good dialogue is possible when the group has 3-12 participants in a face-to-face dialogue or 3-8 participants if the dialogue is organised remotely and in addition to these numbers of participants the facilitator (i.e. leader of the discussion).
- The discussion is likely to lead to a deeper understanding of the topic and it is an important opportunity to use in your own organisation's activities and development. If possible, plan and agree before the dialogue to whom you will deliver the content of the discussion and later on the general summary that is published of all the dialogues.
- Please use hashtag **#NationalDialogues** in social media.

It is great that you are participating in the dialogues!

Invitation to challenge your partners and a social media package to help you

If you wish to challenge your networks, partners or others to join us, here is a ready-made challenge message that you can distribute for example by email. [Link to the invitation to challenge](#) (docx)

We have also compiled a small social media package, which hopefully also helps when you communicate about your dialogue. Ready-made templates and instructions can be found in the [Material bank](#).