

# Tips for the organiser

National Dialogues, spring 2023

**KANSALLISET  
DIALOGIT**

# Who to invite?

- You can organise a dialogue as part of an already planned event such as a meeting, seminar, gathering or a coffee break. Inform the participants in advance about the dialogue, the theme of the dialogue as well as the objectives for it. Feel free to specify the theme and make it even more relevant from your community's perspective. Should you use the Timeout-method to support the dialogue you can send additional information about the method in advance as well.
- If you are organising a separate dialogue it is good to invest time into thinking about who should be taking part in it. A diverse group of participants can have a significant effect on the depth of the dialogue and on the gained understanding during the dialogue. The diversity of the points of view often times enables access to unexpected insights and bears fruit throughout the dialogue.
- Other times the more suitable approach can be to invite people with similar backgrounds or people from the same organisation. This can be due to a more narrowed down theme that affects a specific target group.
- If you wish you can also use the guidelines of safer space to support the dialogue.
- **Inviting a group of people requires effort and time.** The process may require several emails, phonecalls and direct messages on social media.

# Who to invite?

**These questions will help you get started when figuring out who to invite:**

- The primary target group?
- Who else should be present?
- Who does not usually participate in discussions about this topic and should they be invited?
- To whom is the issue important and why? Who else is interested in this issue?
- Who influences the decisions? Who makes the decisions?
- What bodies should be represented? (The public sector, politics, media, arts and culture, businesses, organisations?)
- Is the dialogue open to everyone or not? Is the dialogue public or confidential? Will the dialogue take place in a physical space or online? How do these affect person's possibilities and willingness to participate?
- Despite a dialogue being open for anyone, it is advisable to invite for example three participants personally who can confirm their participation - to ensure that the dialogue will take place.

# Example of an invitation 1

Hello xxx,

We would like to invite you as a participant to our dialogue. The theme of the dialogue is **What does living in uncertainty mean for the residents in the greater Turku area?**

We are currently living in a time when crises follow each other. Coronavirus, Russia's attack on Ukraine, the energy crisis, inflation, climate change, biodiversity loss, the health and social services reform, concern over young people and older people. In the midst of all of this, we go to work, we live our everyday lives, children are born and life goes on. However, uncertainty has become a prevailing factor in our lives that affects us all in one way or another

What factors cause uncertainty in your life? What is worrying? What will help us cope with everyday life in the midst of uncertainty? Where do we see hope?

**The event will take place on March 3rd at 17-19.30 o'clock** in our organisation's premises. The address is Turuntie 1. The space is free from obstacles. The event is cost free. We will also serve coffee and tea.

It would be a pleasure to have you as a participant. We are keen on hearing your thoughts on the theme. We do not need to resolve anything nor make decisions during the discussion. The goal is to gain deeper understanding of the subject and various experiences related to it.

To achieve the goal we have invited people from different backgrounds. Please note that the discussion is confidential.

You can confirm your participation in the discussion until February 20th: mattiteppo(a)turku.tku

We will be sending additional information to those who have confirmed their participation.

We warmly welcome you!

## **Schedule for the evening:**

17 Coffee and tea

17.30 Dialogue

19.30 Ending

The discussion is part of the National Dialogues that are organised nationwide in Finland under the same theme. A public summary of the dialogues will be compiled and it will be available for everyone to read on the National Dialogues website. The Ministry of Finance will also submit a summary of the dialogues to the central and local government administration. You can read more: [www.kansallisetdialogit.fi/en/](http://www.kansallisetdialogit.fi/en/)

We will be using the Timeout-method to support the dialogue. You can find more information about the method here: [www.timeoutdialogue.fi/](http://www.timeoutdialogue.fi/)

# Example of an invitation 2

Hello team!

During next week's team meeting we will be organising a discussion about **"What does living in uncertainty mean to us in our organisation"**

We are about to begin the work on our new strategy and one of the things that have been in our minds as of late is budget. On top of that there has been talks about the new initiatives that have taken place. Other major topics concerning us directly or indirectly are **X, Y and Z**. So there seems to be quite a few different question marks looming over us currently.

It would be important to hear what kind of thoughts and experiences you have in your mind now as the current climate is what it is. It would be equally important to hear what helps you and us cope with everyday life in the midst of uncertainty.

We do not need to make decisions nor actively seek for solutions.

We will use one hour of our team meeting for the discussion. We can start with the dialogue at 10 o'clock. Feel free to bring your morning coffee or tea with you.

After the discussion we can focus on the things that were brought up during it, and based on that think about what kind of action-, development-, or solution proposals come to our minds. We can then make it a point to revisit these in our next team meeting.

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# Other things related to inviting

- It is advisable to invite 6-12 people (live discussion) or 3-8 people (remote discussion).
- The invitations should be sent well before the dialogue. Approximately one month in advance. It is good to start the invitation process even sooner when you are hoping to get decision makers and/or specialists to attend the dialogue as well. The participation confirmation deadline is good to be set so that if need be you have sufficient time to invite more people. The deadline can be for example one or two weeks before the dialogue. Many participants might be able to commit even on short notice but it is better to take that approach only when the situation does not allow time for a proper invitation process.
- When organising a dialogue as part of an already planned event please inform the participants in advance about the topic and nature of the dialogue so that the participants are fully aware of what kind of a discussion they are taking part in.
- It is important to reserve enough time for inviting participants. Invitations can be sent via email or text message. However the most efficient way to invite is calling. If you wish you can also market the event for example on social media. More tips for inviting can be found [here](#).
- If you organise an event where there is no participation confirmation required, it is recommended that you still invite a few participants to ensure that the dialogue will take place.
- Send a message to all committed participants that you have received their confirmation. You can also use this as an opportunity to tell them when they can expect more information. Send a more detailed description of the occasion along with possible tune in material approximately one week before the occasion.

# Tools for inviting and preparation

[Stages and objectives of the discussion – Start here](#)

[Defining the participants](#)

[Inviting participants](#)

[Venue and practical matters](#)

# Tools for facilitating

You can print out [Ground rules for a constructive discussion](#) and place them at the venue in a way that everyone can see them. When facilitating a remote discussion you can share the ground rules via chat box or make a background image of them.

Take time to go over the [cards for facilitating a discussion](#).



# Tools for recording and wrapping up

**What to do with the insights and what kind of steps to take with the gained understanding?**

[Wrapping up the discussion](#)

[How to ensure an impact](#)

**How to record or summarize the discussion?**

It is advisable that you have someone to record the dialogue. Inform clearly all participants that the discussion will be recorded and how it will be done. The person recording the discussion writes down everything or as much as possible but names or anything else that can reveal a participant's identity. It is also important that the person recording does not emphasize one point of view or said thing over another, but focuses on writing everything down as equally and as precisely as possible and uses the participant's wording. Should something not meant for public such as organisation's internal matters arise in the discussion, it can be left out of the official record.

If it is not possible to have someone record the discussion, the facilitator can try to write down themes that arise during the discussion. To do this you can use for example a notebook or a flipchart. Note that when using a digital device to record you must inform about it in advance to each participant. Take also into consideration that this could have an affect on someones willingness to participate.

# Gathering feedback

**On a scale 1-5 (1 weak - 5 strong)**

How constructive did you find our discussion?

How equal did you find our discussion?

Did you gain a deeper understanding of the topic of the dialogue?

**Answer yes or no:**

Have you participated in similar type of dialogue before?

Did you find participating pleasant?

Did you find it safe to share your personal experiences?

Would you participate again in a dialogue similar to this one?

# To conclude

- Gather anonymous **feedback** from the participants regarding the dialogue. As part of a live dialogue you can gather this by handing out a pen and paper to each participant and have them write down their feedback. In the end of a remote dialogue you can ask the participants to write their feedback either to the chat box or you can ask them to send feedback to you via email. If you want you can also ask feedback regarding the arrangements and facilitating. You can attach the anonymous feedback to the official recording. Make sure that you delete the names of the participants.
- Send a **thank you note** to all participants. You can also highlight some of the essential points that were brought up during the dialogue and share what kind of steps are being taken in your organisation to address and work on some of the themes. On top of that you can inform when the participants can expect to see or hear something concrete such as results or change.
- **Report about the dialogue by filling in the form** in the website of National Dialogues. Attach the record of the dialogue along with the feedback from the participants.

**Thank you for organising a dialogue as part of the National Dialogues!**

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# Tips for introducing the topic (for the organiser or to use with you discussion group)

[How to build resilience](#)

[Empathy vs sympathy](#)

You can also use a current article, the news, research, song or other material related to the topic and use it to introduce the topic of the conversation.