



**O-CITY PROJECT**

**MODULE IV.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**



Erasmus+

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## 1. Lesson Document

### Lesson 1 Topic 5 Conversation

#### **Efficient meetings: preparation**

##### **Introduction**

Communication usually goes through conversation. Conversation is an exchange between two or more people in which ideas are expressed, or information is given thanks to coming and going of interlocutors' inputs.

In a professional context, meetings will be one of the major frameworks used for conversation, serving the purpose of establishing new professional contacts, seeking for collaborators for a creative production, or for the presentation of results achieved. Meeting is a planned occasion when people come together to discuss something. It offers the possibility to structure the conversation within a defined framework.

However, setting a meeting is not enough to communicate effectively. It can even be perceived negatively, when it comes to mania for making never ending meetings that don't reach any conclusions. Whatever being the purpose of the meeting, a preparation work will be fundamental to ensure it reaches its objectives.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Set up the basis of efficient meetings.
2. Prepare meeting preliminary communications.

In this lesson, we will learn how to use different tools and tips that will help us to set up efficient meetings where people have a clear objective and good conditions to come to results.

##### **1. Set up of the date, place and participants.**

You have a topic to be discussed that requires the set-up of a meeting. The first thing to do will be to invite participants and set up a date and place.

Asking recommendation about a specific technology or programme to someone who has no idea about it probably will not help. Also, choosing adequately the participants to the meeting will provide efficiency at the time of achieving results. Select only people that are affected by the objective of the meeting; you will avoid losing attention from participants that feel unconcerned and create distractions. People that are effectively concerned or affected by the topic will help you to go to the point.

Once you have selected the participants to the meeting, you will need to set up a place and a date. For the date, you should make sure to choose one when all the participants you need are available. Tools such as Doodle are often used in professional frameworks to ask about participant's availability. You can easily create a short formula and send it to your participants so they will choose among different dates, so you can set the one that fits most participants.

The place might be virtual, thought of as a video call application, or on site. In any case, make sure that the place offers the facilities and degrees of confidentiality you need for the meeting to develop under good conditions.

Prior to the meeting, do not forget to send to participants indications on how to reach the place of the meeting, for instance with a map with clear indication to reach the place, or a link to the application in the case of a virtual meeting. You might also make sure that the participants have your contact details so they can reach you in case of problems while intending to reach the place. You will avoid delays at the beginning of the meeting, and it will help you to keep with your timing.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/zceI0ftblcM>

## 2. Preparing a meeting agenda

Preparing a meeting agenda is fundamental if you want participants to be prepared and avoid wasting time and getting off-tracks. An effective agenda will set clear expectations about the meeting and it will help the participants to the meeting to get prepared for the discussion, thus easing the conversation to go along and achieve results. It will also help you to stay focused during the meeting and to monitor timing.

Here are some recommendations about the set-up of an effective agenda

- Start the agenda by a brief introduction about the topic to be addressed and offer the possibility to open the agenda to further points if requested by participants prior to the meeting.

- Set the objective of the meeting: either you want to display information, seek for inputs, or take a decision, telling in advance what your expectations from the meeting will fix the objective to be achieved.
- If several topics are to be discussed, set up priorities in the agenda items.
- Give time for presentations and discussions. For this, you should make a realistic estimation of the time needed to discuss each topic, and it will give you an idea of the total amount of time needed for the meeting.
- If the objective of the meeting is to take a decision, propose a decision-making process. After the discussion, you might for instance propose a vote if people do not find a consensus, so you put a limit and discussions don't last forever.
- Think about giving an eventual break if the meeting will last for more than 1 hour and a half, so people can refresh their mind.
- And of course, don't forget to remind the agenda the date and place of the meeting, with indications to reach you in case of problems!

### **3. Communicate with the participants to the meeting and display previous information.**

Once you have the agenda ready for the meeting, it is important to share it with the rest of participants, so they are informed about the objectives of the meeting and can prepare their respective contributions.

In addition to the agenda, it would be a good idea to provide any other relevant information or documentation that will be needed for the meeting. Thus, you might send working documents, but also presentations if any, in advance, so people are already aware of some of the contents that you will discuss. In this case, make sure that you send the documents long enough in advance so participants to the meeting are given a margin of time to effectively go through this documentation.

You can also ask participants for prior preparation/contributions so they can share their ideas / work in a proper way during the meeting, making the discussions more fluid. Those might be for instance:

- Giving the opportunity to review the agenda and add new points in it if needed
- Reading documentation related to the topic to be discussed and prepare notes
- Prepare and answer to a specific question to be discussed
- Prepare a presentation with specific inputs

If you are going to meet people for the first time, a good practice will be asking to each one to prepare a short presentation to introduce themselves, eventually getting inspired by ice breaking start (see Topic 4 - Lesson 4)

## Conclusion

Having a good preparation before a meeting is not only cosmetic, it will put all the participants in a positive disposition toward the activity to take place, but it will also enable to set up clearly the objective and prepare the discussion to come, so increasing the chances to achieve efficient results.