



CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTI-ACTOR DIALOGUE FORUMS

This document provides a set of considerations on how to establish multi-actor Dialogue Forums, informed by the knowledge and data gathered in the CO-CREATE project, from discussions with young people and adult stakeholders about their experiences in the Dialogue Forums, and from executing and evaluating 20 Dialogue Forums.

These insights are meant for youth organizations, policymakers, municipalities, organizations and any other actors interested in organizing a multi-actor and intergenerational Dialogue Forum. The following should be considered in the planning, execution, and follow-up phases.

The CO-CREATE project aimed to educate and empower youth to develop policies that promote healthy food and physical activity environments for young people across Europe. As part of this project, EAT developed a Dialogue Forum model which aims to bring together youth, policymakers, and business representatives, to discuss and refine policy ideas.

1 Meaningful co-creation means collaborating at every step:

involve youth or the target group in the planning, execution, and follow-up of the dialogue. Shared responsibility and decision-making can increase the sense of ownership, accountability, and desire to engage on a longer-term basis, and reduces the risk of 'tokenistic' engagement of youth or other under-represented groups.

4 Sufficient time for all to participate:

giving all participants ample and equal time to be listened to is key, allowing all participants to both contribute individually, and partake in group discussions. A typical dialogue forum will last around 2 hours.

2 Diverse, balanced and adequate representation create equal ownership:

ensure equitable and diverse representation of youth and other under-represented groups at the table. Inviting a range of participants across ages, sectors, ethnicities, genders, socioeconomic status, and geographies promotes a better understanding of the issue from different perspectives and helps reduce tokenism, promote plurality of perspectives, and mitigate power imbalances. Most importantly, engaging the target group (youth) and ensuring broad representation can also increase shared ownership and responsibility for the discussion and outcomes. This diversity can also help bring a systems-level framing to the discussion and allow participants to develop more holistic solutions.

5 Discussion is key, and consensus should not be the goal:

a multi-actor dialogue suggests that you are bringing participants together from different sectors, with different viewpoints. The activities and questions of a dialogue should enable participants to collaborate, discuss, solve tensions, and provide a safe space for debate, without forcing consensus building. Putting participants in a position to compromise on their viewpoint for the sake of consensus decreases desire to engage after the dialogue or support of the idea.

3 Safe, participatory, and empowering dialogues can take place if appropriate measures are integrated:

power imbalances can arise between different groups, for instance between youth and adults or between different sectors, which can create an environment where the feeling of being able to freely speak is compromised. When working with young or disadvantaged people, creating safe space for discussion is key, enabling young people to have a voice. Power imbalance and other risks can be avoided by putting in place frameworks to safeguard against conflicts of interest. These can include ground rules and a code of conduct, a stakeholder risk assessment, equal participation, and representation.

6 Dialogues help facilitate debate and new relationships:

Dialogue Forums create a space where people can connect and build relationships. Effectively building these relationships may help people to remain engaged over the long term. To help facilitate this, a dialogue should allow people to get to know each other on a personal basis, beyond their formal titles (this also helps level the playing field). Be sure to integrate an opening activity that allows participants to understand who they are, what they enjoy doing, and why they've joined the discussion. The dialogue should also carve out time for participants to network, and should provide tools to make it easy for participants to connect afterwards if they wish.

The final open access Dialogue Forum package is available for free download on the [CO-CREATE website](#), on the [EAT website](#) and on the [Healthy Voices website](#).



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