



D4.1 MANUAL FOR VIRTUAL INTERACTION





Editor:

Eva Janebova, Ph.D.

Co-authors:

Eva Janebova, Ph.D.
Gabriela Méndez

Contributors:

Lucy Roberts
Katherine Wimpenny, Ph.D.
Sanna Ruhalhti, Ph.D.
Javid Jafarov
Patricie Kyslíková
Berna Yüner, Ph.D.
Naomi van Stapele, Ph.D.
Anita Gulczynska, Ph.D.
Dominika Kopčíková
Lucija Vihar

Layout

Nuša Karo

Copyright

(C) 2026, Yourope

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International



••• Post Bellum

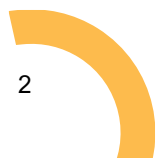
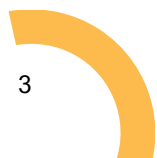




Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	5
1.1 Introduction to the Manual.....	5
Pedagogical Section 1	6
Technical Section 2.....	7
1.2 Mapping out of the YOUROPE Project Virtual Space	8
Visual Overview of the Virtual Collaboration Ecosystem	8
Modes of Interaction in YOUROPE.....	8
Chapter 2: Pedagogical Approaches to Virtual Interaction.....	10
2.1 Democratic Dialogical Engagement.....	11
2.1.1 Democracy and Digital Equity.....	11
2.2 Recommendations for Ensuring Equity in Professional Learning Environments	13
2.3 Ensuring Inclusivity of All Partners	15
2.3.1 Inclusive Co-construction through Using Dialogical Methods	15
2.3.2 Didactical Tips for Practicing Inclusivity through Dialogue Activity	17
2.3.3 Using Inclusive Language	18
2.4 Working as a Partner Learning Community.....	20
2.4.1 Why Professional Learning Community.....	20
2.4.2 Defining the Term: Partner Learning Community.....	21
2.4.3 Design Principles of a Blended Partner Learning Community.....	21
Chapter 3: Facilitating Virtual Partner Community	28
3.1 Structure of Virtual PLC Meetings.....	29
3.2 Using Icebreakers in Meetings	31
3.2.1 Activities to Build Connection.....	33
3.3 Reflective Exercises	37
3.4 Celebration Channels in Teams.....	39
Chapter 4: Cross-Workpackage Collaboration.....	40
4.1 Facilitation of Cross-WP Collaboration.....	42
4.2 Facilitating Cross-WP Asynchronous Collaboration	46
4.3 Setting up Cross-WP Collaborative Initiatives	50
4.4 CLRA COILS	51
4.5 Transnational Youth-Empowering Conversations	53
Chapter 5: Virtual Spaces within Individual WPs.....	56





5.1 WP1: Designing Virtual Space for Virtual Coordination of Tasks, Quality Assurance, and Key Deadlines	58
5.2 WP2: Supporting CLRA with a Virtual Democratic Learning Space.....	60
5.3 WP3: Building a Virtual Space for European Policy Framing and Grassroots Survey.....	62
5.4 WP4: Designing A Virtual Space for Facilitating the Partner Learning Community	63
5.5 WP5: Designing A Virtual Space for Cross-National Sessions with Policy Makers	64
5.6 WP6: Designing A Virtual Space for Dissemination and Branding	65
Chapter 6: Using Microsoft Teams for Supporting Virtual Collaboration	67
6.1 Setting up Microsoft Teams.....	67
Using Channels on MS Teams	68
Storing and Accessing Files	69
6.2 Onboarding and Training Colleagues to Use Virtual Spaces	71
Chapter 7: Ethical Considerations in Virtual Spaces	72
7.1 Core Principles of Integrity in Digital Work	72
7.2 GDPR-Aligned Virtual Collaboration	74
7.3. Data Privacy and Protection	75
References	78
ANNEX.....	80
Manual for Virtual Interaction Checklist.....	80
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	80
Chapter 2: Pedagogical Approaches to Virtual Interaction.....	81
Chapter 3: Facilitating Virtual Partner Community.....	82
Chapter 4: Cross-Workpackage Collaboration	83
Chapter 5: Virtual Spaces within Individual WPs.....	84
Chapter 6: Using Microsoft Teams for Supporting Virtual Collaboration	85
Chapter 7: Ethical Considerations in Virtual Spaces	86





Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Manual

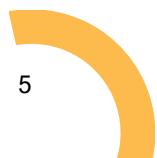
Virtual collaborative spaces are a central pillar of the YOUROPE Horizon Europe project, where 17 partner organisations, from universities, NGOs, youth organisations, and civic actors, collaborate across geographical distances, institutional cultures, and languages. In YOUROPE, virtual spaces are not merely logistical tools; they are democratic environments where cross-work-package learning, youth participation, and community-led research unfold.

The term “**virtual space**” is a digitally mediated environment where people interact, communicate, collaborate, and construct meaning together, regardless of physical location. It combines technological infrastructure (such as video platforms, shared documents, collaborative boards, and communication channels) with the social and pedagogical practices that shape how participants engage within it. In YOUROPE, a virtual space is not only a technical workspace but a democratically structured learning and collaboration environment designed to support dialogical exchange, inclusivity, and shared ownership across partners.

This manual provides guidance, at a mid-point (month 17 of 36 to be precise) of the project lifetime on the design, governance, and operation of the virtual collaboration spaces used in YOUROPE . As such, we are reporting on what we have considered, accomplished and learnt to date, knowing that our understanding and scholarship will progress, and we anticipate, in substantial and swifter ways in this next phase of the project timeline. This manual can be of value for other large-scale, multi-partner projects such as those funded under Horizon Europe. The guidance is grounded in the practical experience gained through the first year of the coordination of YOUROPE which involves 17 partner organisations across multiple countries and sectors and we would like to acknowledge that our learning will evolve and widen in the second half of the project. The project brought together: Higher education institutions, Civil society organisations (NGOs), and youth-led organisations, including the European Youth Parliament (EYP). Partners operate under diverse institutional, regulatory, and geopolitical conditions, including Ukrainian partners working in contexts of heightened instability. The breadth of our partners and the width of Work Package aims brought challenges into setting up the optimal channels of communication and collaboration.

How to use this manual

This manual translates lessons learned into a structured framework aligned with EU principles of inclusion, accessibility, democratic governance, and digital sustainability. We recognize that the effort of creating and sustaining virtual collaborative spaces is a team effort involving coordinators, facilitators, WP leads, as well as IT support and all stakeholders participating in the projects.





The Manual is organized into two sections and aims at different readership.

- **Pedagogical section** (Chap. 2-5) provides insights into the design principles of an inclusive, democratic and highly collaborative virtual space. This section provides hundreds of facilitation tips and strategies and aims especially at project coordinators and those who design and facilitate partner collaboration. Chapter 5 also aims at WP Leads.
- **Technical section** (Chap. 6-7) provides guidance on how to set up Microsoft Teams paying attention to ethical dimension, aimed at IT support and those who technically set up virtual spaces for partner collaboration.

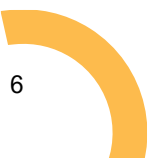
Pedagogical Section 1

Chapter 2 immerses facilitators in the pedagogical principals of YOUROPE virtual space, namely: dialogical engagement, inclusive collaboration, and equitable participation, providing practical methods to support multilingual partners, digital access challenges, and diverse confidence levels. The chapter highlights the use of structured dialogue which ensures every participant's voice is heard, valued, and able to influence outcomes. Central to the YOUROPE approach is the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, which blends virtual and in-person interaction to cultivate agency, self-direction, and collective ownership, allowing students, academics, and civil society partners to co-create knowledge.

Chapter 3 continues to provide a practical guide to designing **democratic, engaging, and inclusive Partner Learning Community meetings**, packed with strategies to ensure every voice is heard and participation is shared equitably. Facilitators will discover (1) how to structure virtual meetings with clear agendas, spotlight sessions, and breakout rooms that rotate roles to foster psychological safety and co-responsibility, (2) how to use **icebreakers and connection-building activities** to lower barriers, celebrate diversity, and nurture trust and (3) **reflective exercises** for capturing insights, feedback for substantial learning loop, and shows how **Celebration Channels** can humanize virtual collaboration.

Chapter 4 is a guide to turning *virtual interaction* into *real collaboration* across Work Packages. It shows how work across WPs can move beyond coordination and reporting to become a powerful engine for shared learning, joint ownership, and collective impact. The chapter includes **concrete facilitation strategies** for enabling meaningful cross-WP dialogue in meetings and online spaces, **accessible approaches to asynchronous collaboration** that support equity, and **real project examples** of how cross-WP collaboration led to innovation—most notably the co-creation of CLRA-COILs and Transnational Youth-Empowering Conversations.

Chapter 5 takes facilitators inside the **dynamic virtual “habitats” of YOUROPE’s six Work Packages (WPs)**, revealing how collaboration thrives differently across teams while reflecting their thematic aims, their unique leadership styles, disciplinary cultures, and institutional constraints





Technical Section 2

[Chapter 6](#) is a hands-on guide to **using Microsoft Teams and supporting digital platforms**, from setting up a structured project, community, and private channels, to organizing files, templates, and mirrored Google Drive repositories. It emphasizes onboarding, clear workflows, and accessible tutorials so all partners can contribute effectively, stay connected, and navigate the project's collaborative spaces with ease.

[Chapter 7](#) complements this with a strong focus on **ethical, responsible, and GDPR-compliant online practices**, ensuring trust, transparency, and participant safety in all virtual interactions. It outlines principles of honesty, respect, accountability, and reflexive practice, highlights informed consent for youth and vulnerable groups, and details how to handle data responsibly while maintaining inclusive and democratic participation.

Together, these chapters show that in YOUROPE, virtual collaboration isn't just about tools—it's about building safe, equitable, and vibrant digital spaces where learning, co-creation, and ethical engagement thrive.

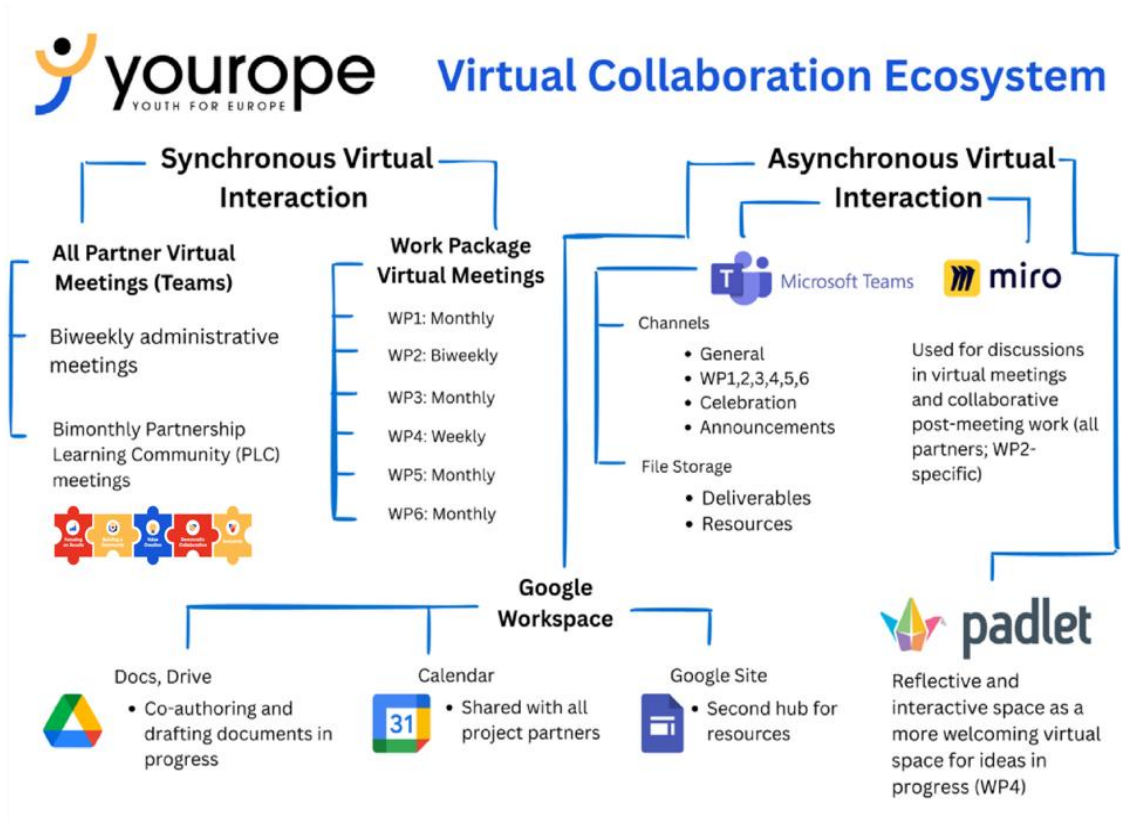




1.2 Mapping out of the YOUROPE Project Virtual Space

The YOUROPE project has adopted a hybrid virtual ecosystem combining synchronous and asynchronous collaboration formats and platforms mentioned above.

Visual Overview of the Virtual Collaboration Ecosystem



Modes of Interaction in YOUROPE

The virtual environment of complex collaborative multistakeholder projects requires structured interaction in both synchronous and asynchronous formats. Within this project, all consortium-wide partner meetings as well as meetings of individual Work Packages were organised in virtual settings. In addition to these scheduled meetings, interaction and collaboration beyond formal meetings were actively supported through the use of multiple digital platforms, enabling continuous exchange, coordination, and knowledge sharing among partners.





Synchronous Virtual Interaction

All-Partner Virtual Meetings

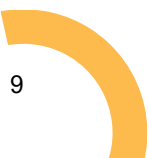
- Biweekly administrative meetings (two alternative dates)
- Bimonthly Partner Learning Community meetings (cross-WP exchange)

Work Package Virtual Meetings

- WP1: Monthly
- WP2: Biweekly
- WP3: Monthly
- WP4: Weekly
- WP5: Monthly
- WP6: Monthly/Bimonthly

Asynchronous Virtual Interaction

- Microsoft Teams – a central hub for communication and documentation storage (Reports, deliverables)
- Miro – used for discussions in virtual meetings and collaborative post-meeting work (all partners; WP2-specific)
- Padlet – a reflective and interactive space as a more welcoming virtual space for ideas in progress (WP4)
- Google Documents – used for co-authoring and drafting documents in progress (all partners)





Chapter 2: Pedagogical Approaches to Virtual Interaction

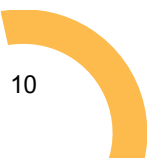
As mentioned, virtual interaction is a central pillar of the YOUROPE project, where multiple partner organisations, from universities, NGOs, youth organisations, and civic actors, collaborate across geographical distances, institutional cultures, and languages. In YOUROPE, virtual spaces are not merely logistical tools; they are democratic environments where cross-WP learning, youth participation, and community-led research unfold.

Our pedagogical foundations for designing these virtual democratic spaces draws upon collaborative and dialogical participation that aligns strongly with YOUROPE's commitment to democratic participation, inclusive collaboration, and shared ownership.

In YOUROPE, virtual interaction supports:

- **democratic dialogical engagement** between senior and early career academics, youth representatives (both within and without university structures/spaces), and civil society partners (NGOs, youth-led organizations, EYP etc.)
- **cross-WP learning** and knowledge building, ensuring that coordination and quality assurance includes ethical governance (WP1), community-led research and action (WP2), policy framing (WP3), learning community development (WP4), youth–policy dialogue (WP5), and dissemination (WP6) remain interconnected.
- **inclusive accessible, equitable, multilingual participation**, especially for partners working in different time zones and institutional and geopolitical contexts.
- **operating as a community** that shares passion for a common goal and intentionally builds relationships as a mission and core value.

This chapter introduces pedagogical approaches that transform YOUROPE's online and virtual environments into collaborative learning communities rather than administrative communication channels. It provides tips for facilitators to meet common challenges, connecting them to pedagogical principles of democracy, inclusion, multilingualism and the principle of learning communities.





2.1 Democratic Dialogical Engagement

Dialogical and collaborative actions are shaped by a set of principles and values, which themselves underpin our **Community-Led Research and Action (CLRA) Methodology**:

- **reciprocity and relationality:** Learning emerges through mutual exchange.
- **authenticity and restorativeness:** tasks must be meaningful and connected to real project practice.
- **shared meaning-making:** participants construct knowledge collaboratively.
- **reflection and responsiveness:** dialogical participation requires structured opportunities for reflective dialogue.

In virtual spaces, these principles translate into intentional design choices. Dialogue cannot be left to chance; it must be scaffolded through tools, prompts, roles, and structures.

Effective collaborative and dialogical virtual spaces include:

- structured interaction sequences (e.g., pre-task reflection → collaborative discussion → synthesis → follow-up reflection)
- transparent roles (e.g., facilitator, challenger, connector, summariser)
- authentic tasks linked with participants' actual work and project practices
- dialogical prompts (open questions) that stimulate deeper reasoning, such as:
 - “What perspectives are we not yet considering?”
 - “Which assumptions need re-examining?”
 - “How does this relate to your local/organisational context?”

These elements ensure that virtual exchanges support the deeper shared processes, rather than remaining superficial or task-driven.

2.1.1 Democracy and Digital Equity

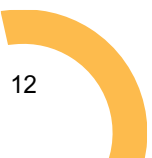
To foster a true democratic online space that adheres to the essence of democracy, where everyone is met where they are, it is fundamental to analyze digital exclusion. This phenomenon cannot be understood merely as a problem of limited access to digital devices or connectivity; it encompasses a lack of digital skills, competencies, confidence, and the capacity to engage effectively with the digital environment (Wilson-Menzfeld et al., 2025).

As stated by the Wilson-Menzfeld et al. (2025), digital exclusion is unevenly distributed across society and disproportionately affects individuals who already experience social disadvantage, including older adults, people with disabilities, and those with lower educational attainment or lower incomes. People from rural areas are often more strongly affected by these disparities (Wilson-Menzfeld et al., 2025; Welser et al., 2019). Research confirms that students from rural backgrounds enter higher education with lower levels of digital skills and weaker digital support within their social environments (Welser et al., 2019).





These digital inequalities are not fixed; they are systemic failures that can be mitigated through targeted interventions, particularly through the strengthening of social support and active participation in online learning communities.





2.2 Recommendations for Ensuring Equity in Professional Learning Environments

In the preparation of professional learning communities, where interdisciplinarity is vital for the advancement of discourse, organizers must prioritize equity. Social support must be provided to enable an equitable online learning community. This support ranges from the provision of necessary hardware to connecting individuals from different countries to institutions where such devices are available.

TIP: **Onboarding training**

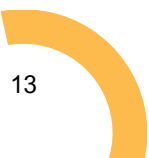
Prior training based on the specific needs of participants is often required to explain the digital tools in use. A questionnaire distributed before meeting, specifically addressing available platforms is a necessary tactic, as paid platforms like MS Office are not universally accessible. Furthermore, the issue of stable internet connection must be addressed, for instance, by encouraging participants to connect from libraries or other public institutions when their private environment is insufficient.

TIP: **Multiple sources and tools**

Virtual mobility becomes socially unsustainable if it relies on perfect conditions such as high-speed internet or expensive hardware. We must assume that participants may lack fast laptops, quiet private offices, or good connectivity. Facilitators should not assume that every participant possesses a digital command centre. Activities should be tested to ensure they are functional on a single gadget, such as an older smartphone. If a task traditionally benefits from multiple screens such as scanning a QR code while viewing a presentation an alternative option must be available. This ensures that those unable to utilize multiple devices are not excluded from the pedagogical process.

TIP: **Empathy and Openness**

To include everyone, communication must move with empathy rather than with rigidity. Specific tools serve to lower anxiety and build trust within the digital environment. Instead of using accusatory statements regarding camera usage, facilitators should use I-statements that express a wish for connection. For instance, : "I personally love seeing your faces because it helps me feel closer to you. If you are able to turn your camera on, I would appreciate it. But if you cannot today, that is fully okay, and we will love listening to your voice instead." This way of communicating removes the guilt associated with private or noisy environments.



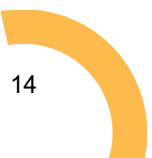
 **TIP: Warmth and Generosity**

When background noise occurs, it is critical to avoid shaming commands to mute. The assumption should remain that noise is accidental. A facilitator may mute a participant for the clarity of the group while inviting them to unmute the moment they wish to contribute. This prevents the formation of communication blocks: "I hear a little noise on your side, so I will mute you for a moment to help the speaker, but please unmute the second you want to talk!" The lack of physical body language in virtual spaces can be replaced with warmth of emoji expression. The generous use of heart or clapping emojis provides appreciation for speakers. Furthermore, a traffic light system using green, yellow, and red emojis allows participants to signal their level of understanding or emotional state without interrupting the verbal flow.

 **TIP: Structuring for Safety and Interdependence**

Facilitating across diverse groups requires a puzzle mindset where every contribution is a vital piece of the whole. Large groups can be exclusionary for less confident participants. Moving frequently into breakout rooms of three to five people creates a safe environment where everyone is seen. Validate the contribution of others during debriefing by asking participants to name one interesting thing they heard from a partner rather than what they themselves said.

Virtual audio lag and cognitive processing require facilitators to be comfortable with silence. Implement a ten-second rule after asking a question to give participants the necessary time to find the unmute button and gather their thoughts. Summarize a participant's point empathically via active listening to confirm they were heard and understood. This is the core of psychosocial support. To prevent cognitive overload and emotional burnout, participants should be given reflection time in small groups after heavy activities. This allows them to process the experience before moving to the next task. For more ideas on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, see the following chapter.





2.3 Ensuring Inclusivity of All Partners

Inclusivity is a precondition for collaborative and dialogical working and all participants must feel safe to contribute and be recognised as legitimate co-constructors of knowledge. Some consortia may encompass cross sectoral collaborations among academia, civil society and youth organizations as well as great diversity within the partner teams (leaders of the institutions, staff, students, volunteers). In these diverse and large consortia making an effort to ensure equal participation becomes a must.

Creating Conditions for Inclusive Collaboration and Dialogue

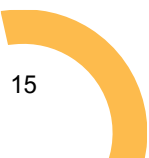
To ensure equal participation, one may:

- Use warm-ups and relational starters to reduce barriers.
- Normalise linguistic diversity; content matters more than perfect language.
- Offer multiple modes of contribution (spoken, written, visual)
- Use structured turn-taking or “participation tickets” to balance voices.
- Create psychologically safe conditions by explicitly acknowledging different backgrounds, expertise levels, and communication styles.

2.3.1 Inclusive Co-construction through Using Dialogical Methods

Using “Dialogue“ in virtual interaction allows for all participants to be learning together as equals. A dialogue is not a discussion, nor chit-chatting, negotiations or debate. The aim is that all the participants are gaining from the cooperation. There are no winners or losers in a dialogue, everyone learns. It requires specific skills: dialogical competences from both the facilitator as well as from the participants. In YOUROPE we decided to practice these skills for everyone in an in-person meeting with a dialogical activity.

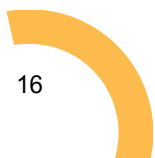
The dialogical methods presented in the table below offer practical ways to strengthen inclusivity, equity, and democratic participation in virtual collaboration spaces. These methods directly support psychological safety, balanced turn-taking, and meaningful engagement across diverse linguistic, cultural, and institutional backgrounds. By intentionally applying dialogical actions in online environments, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Miro, Padlet, and shared documents, partners can co-create a virtual learning community where every participant is heard, valued, and able to contribute regardless of digital access, language proficiency, or confidence level. Grounded in Helena Aarnio’s DIALE framework (Aarnio, 2012), these methods help **transform virtual meetings from one-directional communication into rich, co-constructed dialogue** that deepens understanding and strengthens collaboration across Work Packages.





Building Dialogical skills during an in-person meeting

Dialogical methods and actions	Purpose	How to use in online and virtual spaces
Let Ideas Bud and Flourish (method)	<p>Encourage expression of incomplete thoughts without fear of “not being perfect.”</p> <p>Supports psychological safety, encourages participation from people with lower English proficiency or confidence. Reduces hierarchy, everyone’s contributions start as drafts.</p>	<p>Begin meetings with a “<i>draft ideas</i>” round in chat, Padlet, or Miro.</p> <p>Use breakout rooms where each participant shares one early-stage idea without justification. Emphasise that grammar, accent, or “readiness” do not matter.</p> <p>Excellent for multilingual groups, reduces pressure and creates a democratic participation baseline.</p>
Compact Expression (action)	<p>Encourage clear, concise contributions.</p>	<p>Use time-boxed prompts: “Describe your thought in one sentence in the chat.”</p> <p>Have participants post “1-sentence reflections” at the end of discussions.</p> <p>Very helpful for people joining via phone or unstable connections.</p>
Forming Unbiased Open Questions (action)	<p>Train participants to invite exploration rather than judgement.</p>	<p>In breakout groups, assign one rotating role: “<i>Open-Question Generator</i>.”</p> <p>Use the chat to rewrite closed questions into open questions.</p> <p>After each update, invite 2–3 open-ended questions from the group.</p>
Recognising Key Utterances (action)	<p>Notice important ideas emerging in dialogue.</p>	<p>After a discussion, ask each participant to copy one “key sentence” into the chat.</p> <p>Use Miro sticky notes to collect key utterances and cluster them.</p> <p>Supports slower speakers, non-native English speakers, and reflective learners.</p>
Opening Key Utterances (action)	<p>Expand on an important idea expressed by someone else.</p>	<p>In breakout rooms, ask participants to choose one key utterance and “open it up” by explaining why it matters.</p> <p>Use a shared document where partners write short, deepening reflections on selected utterances.</p> <p>Strongly supports inclusivity by validating diverse voices.</p>
Linking (method)	<p>Learn precise listening by continuing from the exact words of another.</p>	<p>Pair activity: Person B must begin with: “<i>I continue from your words...</i>”</p> <p>Can be done in chat (participants copy and continue each other’s lines).</p> <p>Levels the playing field; no one can dominate quickly or shift topics abruptly.</p>





2.3.2 Didactical Tips for Practicing Inclusivity through Dialogue Activity

As mentioned above, in YOUROPE we have been very intentional about inclusivity and equity in our virtual interactions in our bi-weekly virtual meetings. Therefore, we decided to use that space during our in-person yearly meeting and intentionally have all participants experience inclusive equitable interactions through a Dialogical Activity. During the second in-person meeting, a dedicated **Partner Learning Community Workshop** focused on inclusivity in virtual collaboration.

A **dialogue-based activity** was introduced, using a structured participation method (“discussion tickets”) to ensure equal contribution. The exercise supported the development of key competencies, including:

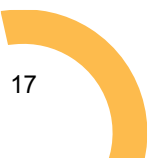
- Active listening
- Openness to different perspectives
- Willingness to reflect and adapt one’s own views
- Respect for linguistic diversity
- Symmetrical participation

We have explained the reasoning behind a Dialogue and invited everyone to a dialogue around several hot project issues, in particular, on how to increase the engagement of students and strengthen cross-collaboration by using Dialogical Tickets in the discussion. Using this activity for any project issues allows for all voices to be heard and makes the co-construction of project solutions more fun. This practice created a safe space for both students and staff, particularly for participants using English as a second language, and laid the groundwork for future cross-WP virtual learning activities (see below).

Activity Instructions - Dialogical Ticket

- Each has 5 "entrance tickets" to participate in the dialogue- sharing 1-2 sentences (questions)- no long monologues!
 - One of the participants begins with their thinking of the matter - no matter how incomplete the thought is
 - Every time you share-put "ticket" on the table.
 - Someone else continues from this utterance and so on until everyone has used their 5 "tickets"

Take turns randomly
Do not be afraid of quiet moments - those do not matter in this activity





2.3.3 Using Inclusive Language

Inclusivity means being mindful of the diversity of stakeholders that our project is bringing together but also, being very mindful of language competency, cultural diversity, time zones, digital literacies, psychological capital etc. Language inclusivity is the enabler to creating meaningful collaborative and dialogical interaction in a multilingual consortium such as YOUROPE.

We are committed to using inclusive language throughout all stages of the project. This includes:

- **gender and identity sensitivity:** avoiding assumptions about gender, using gender-neutral terms (e.g., “they/them” for individuals), and respecting self-identifications of participants.
- **cultural and linguistic respect:** acknowledging the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants, and avoiding idioms or expressions that may be exclusionary.
- **disability and accessibility awareness:** choosing language that does not stigmatize physical, cognitive, or sensory differences, and that highlights abilities rather than limitations.
- **continuous reflection:** actively reviewing all materials, session content, and communications to identify and correct potentially exclusive language.
- **support of non-native speakers** with prompts, time, resources shared ahead of meetings, visualisations, language clarity.

By consistently applying these principles, we aim to foster a respectful, empowering, and inclusive environment in all YOUROPE activities. However, in a transnational research environment, particular attention must be given to ensuring that participants with **varying levels of proficiency in the shared communication language** (English) have equal opportunities to contribute. Measures include using clear and simple language, providing supplementary written summaries, encouraging turn-taking, and creating spaces where participants can ask for clarification or support. This approach helps to maintain inclusivity and ensures that all voices, regardless of language skills, are meaningfully heard in synchronous sessions.

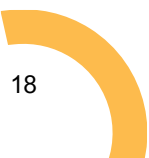


TIP:

Creating a Glossary of Terms

In international virtual environments, English often functions as the shared working language, yet it is rarely the first language of most participants. For this reason, language use must be approached with care, empathy, and an understanding that linguistic diversity enriches rather than complicates collaboration. In our project, we developed a [Glossary of Terms](#) by investing our time in finding common understanding of words across workpackages and across institutions.

Dialogical co-working in multilingual settings requires an intentional effort to value linguistic diversity. Participants bring with them different linguistic repertoires, cultural references, and ways of constructing meaning, all of which can deepen collective understanding when welcomed rather than suppressed. Adopting accessible English, clear, non-idiomatic, and free from culturally specific metaphors helps ensure that contributions remain understandable to everyone, regardless of





proficiency levels. This approach aligns with YOUROPE's democratic ethos, where every participant is regarded as a legitimate contributor to knowledge-building.



TIP:

Space for Multilingual Expressions

Creating space for multilingual expression is equally important. Individuals may think, plan, or take notes in their first language before sharing their ideas in English. This practice enables deeper reflection, reduces the cognitive strain of constant translation, and helps participants articulate ideas more precisely. In virtual meetings, some may choose to refer to a concept using a word from their own language when a direct English equivalent does not exist. Normalising these moments supports authenticity and allows richer cultural nuances to surface in the dialogue.

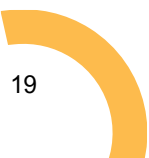


TIP:

Alternative ways of contribution

Virtual environments can further support language inclusivity by offering alternative modes of contribution. Allowing participants to write in the chat before speaking gives them time to formulate thoughts and reduces anxiety associated with spontaneous verbal expression in a second language. Written contributions often make it easier for participants to refine their ideas and focus on meaning instead of grammar. Similarly, encouraging the use of first-language notes or visual concept maps provides cognitive scaffolding, enabling individuals to process complex information and prepare contributions at their own pace. When appropriate, translation tools may also be used to enhance comprehension or help participants navigate dense materials.

In a collaborative and dialogical project community, what matters is the substance of ideas, not the perfection of language. When participants are assured that minor errors will not diminish the value of their contributions, the virtual space becomes safer, more inclusive, and more conducive to deep learning. This emphasis is particularly important for youth participants and partners from organisations with less exposure to academic English, who may otherwise hesitate to speak.





2.4 Working as a Partner Learning Community

The YOUROPE project aims to empower young people to take democratic action through an innovative methodology known as Community Research Led in Action (CRLA). Grounded in democratic values such as participation, non-hierarchical, inclusiveness, and shared ownership, CRLA not only informs the project's substantive activities (see *CRLA Manual*), but also shapes the internal governance and collaboration practices of the YOUROPE consortium.

Given the project's multi-partner and multi-actor structure, which brings together academic staff, researchers, civil society actors, and students, the consortium made a deliberate and explicit decision to embed democratic principles into its **modes of cooperation**—both in **virtual** and **physical** project spaces. This approach represented a significant shift for many partners, moving away from traditional hierarchical project management models in which tasks are primarily allocated top-down by the coordinating institution.

To operationalise these values, YOUROPE adopted the model of a **Professional Learning Community (PLC)** as a core mechanism for cross-work package learning, reflection, and collaboration.

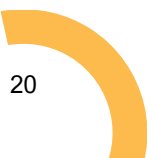
2.4.1 Why Professional Learning Community

Contemporary research highlights the growing importance of **informal, network-based learning** as a driver of innovation, problem-solving, and organisational learning—particularly in complex, interdisciplinary, and international contexts such as Horizon Europe projects (Milligan et al., 2014; Tannenbaum & Wolfson, 2022).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) offer several key advantages:

- They connect individuals across roles, functions, and institutions, enabling the consortium to mobilise diverse expertise and perspectives toward shared project goals.
- They create inclusive learning spaces in which early-career researchers and students can engage on an equal footing with senior staff and project leaders—an essential feature in the YOUROPE context.
- They foster multidisciplinary collaboration, enabling cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices across Work Packages (WPs).
- They support adaptive responses to emerging challenges through collective reflection and peer learning.

In YOUROPE, the PLC model was instrumental in supporting learning **across Work Packages**, strengthening coherence, and enhancing the overall quality of project outputs.





2.4.2 Defining the Term: Partner Learning Community

The literature and practice of networked learning use a wide range of related concepts, including: Learning Network, Professional Learning Network, Professional Learning Community, Community of Practice, Community of Innovation Practice, Learning and Innovation Lab, Peer Learning Network. Despite terminological differences, these approaches share common features:

- a shared purpose or passion
- voluntary engagement based on **perceived value**
- knowledge creation through **interaction and reflection**

Aangenendt, Sjoer & Wallner (2023) who identified six values of professional learning communities. First, expected values are potential profits that participants think they can harvest in the future resulting from their participation. Immediate values are produced on the spot during social interaction at an event and can be indicated by feelings and exchanges such as engagement, flow and joy. Potential values are indicators of growing knowledge and action capital indicated as picking up ideas, insights, connections and access to resources. Applied values refer to indicators of change in practice and are defined as the „extent that changes in practice make a change to what matters“ (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019, p. 8). Examples of applied values include the use of resources, encouragement and social connections beyond the community (Booth et al., 2014). Realised values are indicators of performance improvement produced as a result of changes in practice. Finally, transformative values refer to indicators that signal a redefinition of the original challenge and provide an unexpected benefit

For YOUROPE, the term **Partner Learning Community (PLC)** was deliberately chosen to emphasise:

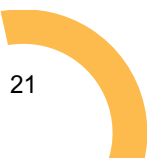
- the **partnership-based nature** of Horizon Europe collaboration
- the importance of learning across Work Packages
- the collective responsibility for project quality and innovation
- transformative value of the project on communities.

2.4.3 Design Principles of a Blended Partner Learning Community

The YOUROPE PLC developed as a **blended community**, combining:

- **In-person meetings** to build trust, relationships, and shared identity
- **Virtual collaboration** to sustain learning and interaction throughout the project lifecycle

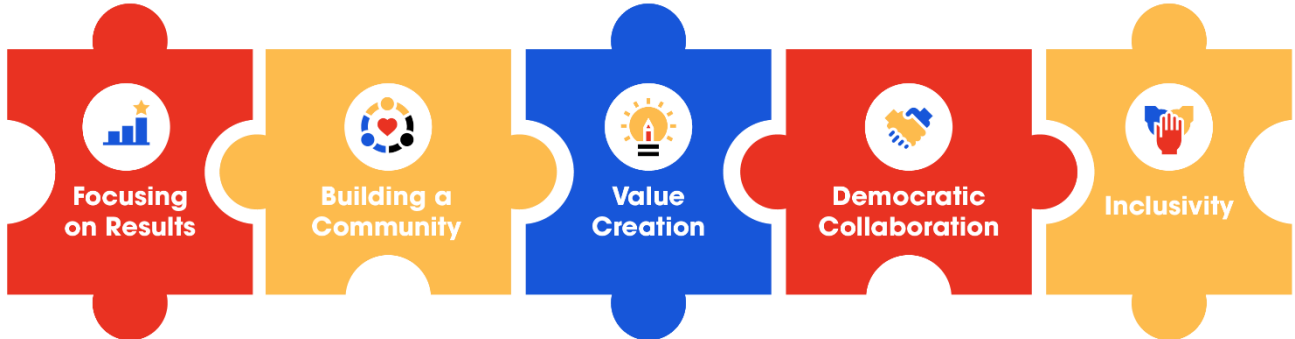
Annual in-person meetings were strategically used to strengthen virtual collaboration, clarify expectations, and jointly address emerging challenges





Five Design Principles of Partner Learning Communities

Drawing on Beelen & Janebová (2025), the YOUROPE Partner Learning Community was designed around five principles that support transformation from project-based team to a learning community.



PLC Design Principle 1: Focus on Results

A clear focus on results ensures that learning activities remain aligned with project objectives.

Key guiding questions:

- What outcomes does the community aim to achieve?
- What changes are we seeking to generate?
- What concrete outputs or improvements should result?

In YOUROPE, expected results were clearly defined in the **project proposal** and operationalised through the Work Package structure. During the first project year, the PLC focused on how **cross-WP learning and interaction** could enhance the quality, coherence, and impact of individual WP deliverables.

PLC Design Principle 2: Building a Community

Community-building and relationship building was intentionally supported through both **in-person** and **virtual** formats. (Relationship Building is described in detail in Chap. 3)

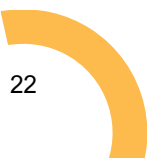
We have used many practices to support community building, among the key strategies for the blended PLC were:

1. In-person Kick-off Meeting Activity

We used an Activity that we called the *Community Tree* to highlight that *collective expertise becomes a strength when actively shared*. Participants identified concrete ways they could contribute to the learning community (e.g. facilitation, listening, coordination, technical skills).

2. **Virtual Meetings Systematic** use of warm-ups and icebreakers to:

- Create a positive and inclusive atmosphere
- Encourage equal participation (“every voice counts”)



- Support linguistic and cultural diversity
- Enable regular check-ins with the group

3. **Celebration Channels** in Teams to support the sharing of achievements and personal moments related to the project.(For more on Building relationships, see Chap. 3)

PLC Design 3: Value Creation

Beyond formal results, learning communities generate value that motivates sustained engagement.

Identified value dimensions in YOUROPE included:

- collegial support and trust-building
- new international perspectives and networks
- shared passion and collective commitment
- a strong sense of participation and belonging
- increased global and civic engagement

A particularly strong driver of YOUROPE project is the **shared commitment to social change** and to supporting young people as democratic actors. This value orientation informs the design of the Learning Community with Agency being the overarching value.

Agency as a Value

Scholars highlight the critical role of agentic participation as a key driver of self-directed development (Bandura, 2006; Erstad, et al., 2016; Skinner, 1996). In educational settings, the intentional, self-regulated, participatory process is explained with agentic engagement, referring to students' proactive and constructive contribution to the flow of instruction (Patall et al., 2019; Reeve, 2013). Within the YOUROPE project, this engagement is operationalized through the Community Research Led in Action (CLRA) methodology, which shifts the pedagogical and organizational focus from top-down management to a non-hierarchical, democratic model.

For our YOUROPE, where the consortium of partners blends in with students, agentic engagement is fostered by a deliberate shift in internal governance and facilitation. By moving away from traditional hierarchical models where tasks are allocated top-down, YOUROPE embeds democratic values into its modes of cooperation. Partners do not merely execute assigned tasks; they proactively shape the project's trajectory, mirroring the self-regulation skills (Zimmerman, 2002) required to take responsibility for collective progress. This democratic structure ensures that every partner—regardless of their institutional status—has the agency to influence decision-making processes in both virtual and physical project spaces.

For students, CLRA transforms the learning experience into a research-led action where they are empowered as co-creators of knowledge. Virtual and physical learning contexts in YOUROPE fundamentally alter the pedagogical dynamic by shifting agency to the learner (Zou et al., 2025). This



autonomy demands and fosters robust self-regulation skills, as students set their own goals, monitor community-based research, and manage their action plans.

Non-Hierarchical Facilitation

Facilitation would be kept at a minimum necessary level. Academic staff should act as peers or technical supporters rather than supervisors. This creates the psychological safety required for students to express dissent and take ownership of the discussion flow.

Fluid and Youth-Driven Structure

The virtual series can be flexible. If members of the community including students find a specific topic crucial, the next session's directive should be handed over to them to design and lead.

Asynchronous Action Boards

Beyond live meetings, digital spaces (like Miro) would allow anyone to post their CRLA outcomes, experiences, creating an asynchronous next meeting directive.

Reflecting on Agency

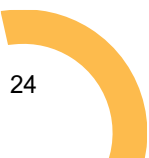
Does every virtual activity encourage students as well as us to reflect on themselves: "*What change do I want to foster?*" This shifts the focus from completing a project task to "developing a civic identity" as a value.

Bridging Local to European

The virtual space would explicitly help everyone to see that their action is a part of a larger European democratic movement. This realization is a key driver of agentic participation.

PLC Design Principle 4: Self-Direction and Shared Ownership

Closely linked to agency, self-direction is a defining design feature of effective and sustainable Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In YOUROPE, The PLC was facilitated by a **core group of four members** from two partner institutions, supported by six additional members from six other partners, as mentioned above. This meant that YOUROPE Partner Community was not entirely self-directed by all 40+members, but was actively steered with these principles in mind





Core PLC facilitators:

- shadowed WP meetings
- met weekly to identify learning needs and opportunities
- designed bi-monthly Partner Learning Community meetings
- initiated *Transnational Conversations* to support youth exchange and learning

This bottom-up governance model reinforced ownership, responsiveness, and innovation within the consortium.

Fostering Shared Ownership

In large international projects, virtual cooperation is often initially experienced as strongly structured and centrally coordinated. Partners and youth participants may rely on WP leaders and coordinators for guidance, decision-making, and validation. This can lead to limited initiative and a tendency to focus mainly on completing assigned tasks rather than actively shaping project processes.



TIP:

Intentional Sharing

Our experience shows that ownership develops when partners and young participants are encouraged to build a shared relationship to project content and goals within digital collaboration spaces. When teams are involved in selecting themes, planning activities, and shaping outputs together, motivation and responsibility increase. Through regular online meetings, shared documents, and transparent communication channels, project objectives gradually become collectively owned.



TIP:

Collective co-creation of outputs

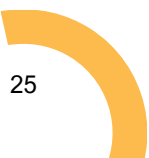
Participation across the WP virtual spaces is organised through light, rotating roles that support shared ownership and avoid the consolidation of hierarchy. Outputs, including this Manual were developed as living documents where everyone contributes. WP2 went further, as all documentation in WP2 remains explicitly provisional. Rather than producing final conclusions, it establishes shared reference points and working questions. In doing so, it creates the conditions for continuation, transnational learning, and policy engagement without compromising the integrity of CLRA practice.



TIP:

Joint Decision Making

As partners and youth participants begin to formulate their own questions, proposals, and solutions in virtual discussions and collaborative platforms, their sense of agency strengthens. Decision-making becomes more distributed, and communication shifts from hierarchical reporting to horizontal dialogue. Virtual spaces thus become environments for joint reflection and co-creation rather than only coordination.



**TIP:**

Openness to Diverse Opinions

Creative openness to diversity is another important factor in supporting self-direction in virtual cooperation. Instead of prescribing uniform formats for deliverables and activities, WP leaders and facilitators provide flexible frameworks that allow different approaches. Partners are encouraged to adapt methods to their local contexts and to share innovative practices across the consortium. This openness supports learning and reinforces shared responsibility for quality.

**TIP:**

Mutual Support

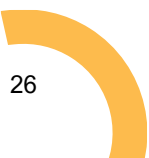
Sustaining ownership and self-direction in virtual environments remains an ongoing challenge. For this reason, supporting ownership is understood as a continuous learning process that requires regular reflection, adaptation, and mutual support across the partnership I.

PLC Design Principle 5: Inclusive Collaboration

Inclusivity has been already mentioned above as one of our core pedagogical principles. In learning communities the principle needs to go beyond accessibility to, and equity of, to encompass inclusive collaboration. Inclusive collaboration within PLCs is often captured by the principle “**Do ut des**” (“I give so that you may give”). However, collaboration cannot be assumed; it must be actively supported—particularly in consortia characterised by:

- institutional hierarchies
- diverse organisational cultures
- uneven resources and capacities

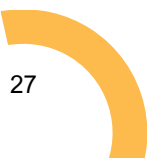
In our YOUROPE Community, we tried to support collectively owned, consent-based learning and care is taken to create an environment where all members, including students and partners, feel respected through non-hierarchical cooperation. This significantly enhanced their sense of ownership. The psychological safety provided by YOUROPE’s democratic values allows all actors—students and partners alike—to ask questions, express viewpoints, and engage in dissent without fear. Consequently, CRLA serves as a bridge where well-structured democratic interaction contributes significantly to both the agentic engagement and the self-regulation of all participants, empowering them to take meaningful democratic action.





Overall, we opted for enhancing inclusive collaboration by using different strategies:

- systematic updates of what is happening in individual WPs by shadowing meetings of all WPs
- designing **cross-WP engagement activities across WP** with individual WPs during Partner Learning Community Meetings
- constantly generating ideas and committing to supporting other WPs in their efforts
- Inclusion of **structured reflection** moments, such as:
 - Short post-meeting reflections on how the community is doing
 - An **Appreciative Inquiry questionnaire** after Year 1 to get a very detailed reflection on how to support the collaboration, accessibility, and inclusion of the project partner interaction and community feeling.
 - **Dedicated moments for reflection on competencies**. By documenting their growth in empathy, critical thinking, and leadership, everyone becomes more aware of their own agency.



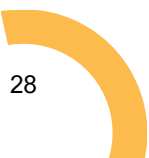


Chapter 3: Facilitating Virtual Partner Community

With the above pedagogical design principles in mind (the creation of democratic spaces for dialogue, commitment to inclusive, non-hierarchical interaction and collaborating as a learning community), we have gathered, developed and/or adopted a number of practical facilitation strategies. These strategies are designed to operationalize these principles and ensure that diverse voices are heard, power imbalances are minimized, and participation is shared equitably so that participants feel comfortable and connected within the virtual setting.

This chapter provides facilitators with specific ideas on:

- structure of meetings,
- Icebreakers,
- activities to support connection,
- reflective activities,
- a celebration Channel.



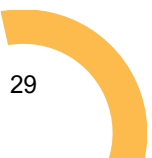
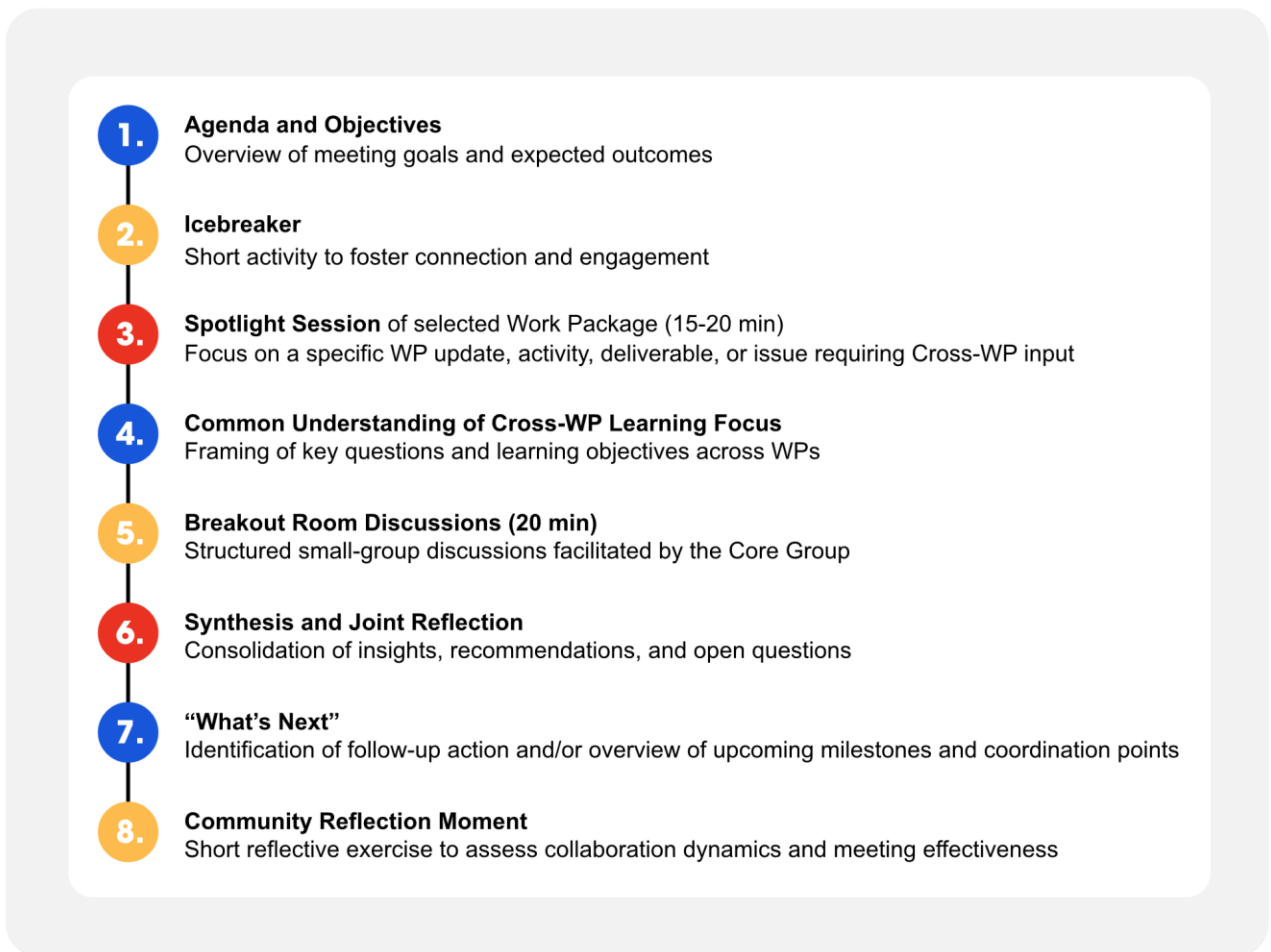


3.1 Structure of Virtual PLC Meetings

Drawing on the work of Kasíková (2009), breakout room discussions are used when the PLC meet in our virtual Bi-Monthly Partner meetings. These smaller virtual rooms, formed in the Microsoft Teams platform, are deliberately structured to support equal participation and shared responsibility. Rather than relying on spontaneous interaction, each group is provided with clear roles that rotate among participants. PLC core members also divide themselves into the breakout rooms to help continually listen and hear about partner ideas, suggestions, and reflections. This structure helps create psychological safety, encourages engagement from all members, and prevents dominance by a small number of voices.

 **TIP:** for Meeting Structures

Each bimonthly PLC meeting follows a consistent structure to ensure clarity, inclusivity, and effective knowledge exchange:





TIP: for WP Spotlight Sessions

Spotlight sessions are designed to create focused learning moments around specific WP needs or challenges, however they must not serve only as presentations of information, but need to engage everyone in the audience..

- The relevant WP Lead or designated WP representative introduces the topic
- The Core Group, in collaboration with the respective WP, formulates guiding questions for discussion
- The Core Group facilitates breakout discussions and supports the synthesis of outcomes
- Unresolved questions or emerging issues are documented and addressed through follow-up actions or subsequent meetings

The image below is a screenshot of a Miro Board with sticky notes participants inserted from one of our breakout room discussions.

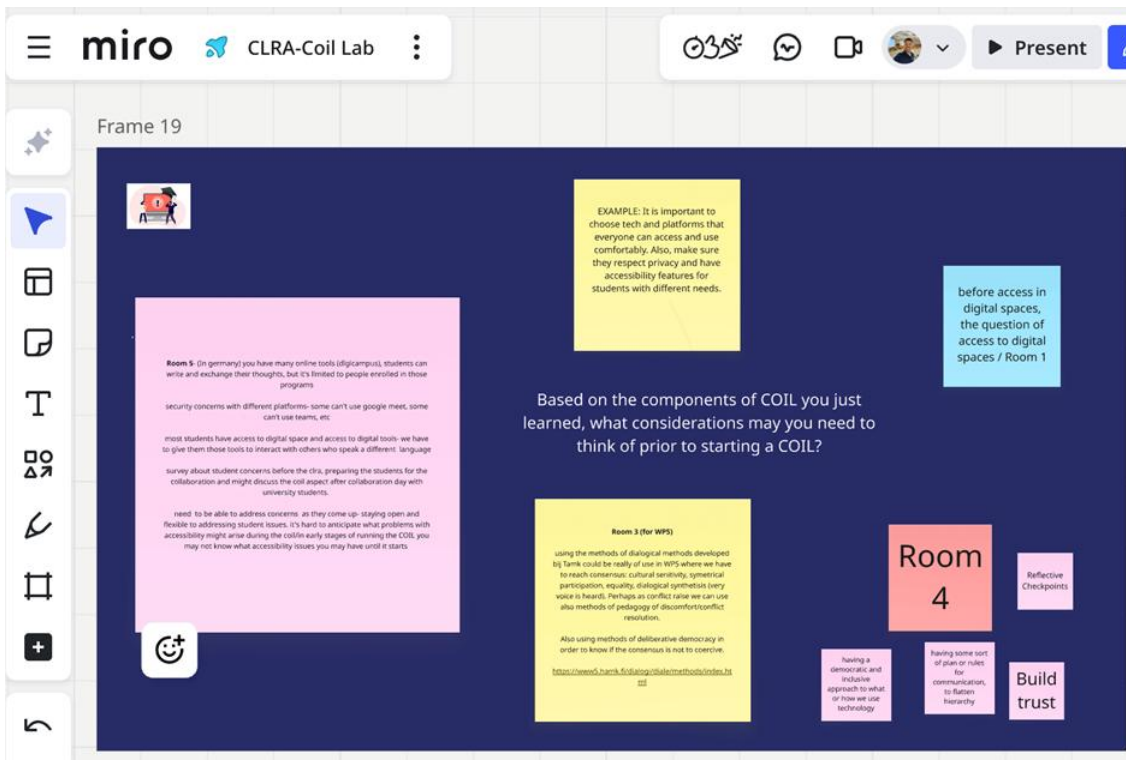
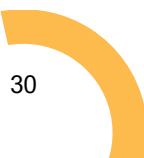


Figure 1: Miro board showing breakout room notes and contributions from different participants. The notes are either added directly to the board by participants, or by facilitators of the breakout room.





3.2 Using Icebreakers in Meetings

Icebreakers in virtual meetings serve a similar function to informal greetings in in-person settings (e.g., “How are you?”). They create space for human connection, particularly important in partnerships where participants may meet only every few weeks. They also support the shared value of staying connected to the community spirit.

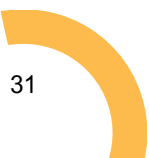
Icebreakers also serve as essential tools for safe collective expression. In superdiverse environments such as international online learning communities or cross-sector encounters involving academics, practitioners, and youth, icebreakers function as an enabler to fostering democratic dialogue. They dismantle participation barriers by demonstrating that every individual possesses a valid aspect of contribution, reinforcing the principle that perfection is not a prerequisite for engagement. Additionally, well-tailored icebreakers possess the capacity to evolve into profound pedagogical activities, allowing for the deployment of diverse methodological techniques.

Furthermore, icebreakers provide restorative intervals between cognitively and emotionally demanding sessions as they play a pivotal role in neurophysiological regulation. Functioning as brain breaks, they offer short-term exercises that allow the brain to defocus from demanding tasks, thereby refreshing cognitive and emotional capacity. This connects directly to wellbeing and stress reduction, by lowering the stress response, icebreakers assist participants in re-engaging the prefrontal cortex which is responsible for executive function and logic, while down-regulating the amygdala - the brain’s fear center. Even simple synchronization exercises, such as collective breathing, can foster genuine community connection and regulation within the online environment and provide participants the means of grounding.

While icebreakers may appear simple on the surface, they facilitate profound intercultural learning when multilingual approaches are pursued. When participants are invited to share even a simple word in their native languages, it highlights linguistic variety and the uniqueness of every language. This practice inevitably fosters an appreciation for diverse accents and validates non-native English speakers. Ultimately, icebreakers pave the way for cohesive group collaboration, by utilizing tasks that emphasize shared imperfection, facilitators can break down hierarchical barriers and align the entire community on a level playing field.

In this Partnership Community, icebreakers are designed to be:

- very brief
- inclusive (all participants can easily take part in them regardless their level of English or seniority, i.e. students and academics)
- light, positive, and engaging.





Happy Thought Activity (Peter Pan)

During winter months, particularly in some countries, the season can feel gloomy. This Icebreaker aims to create a positive emotional start.

Instruction:

Participants are briefly introduced to Peter Pan, a fictional character created by J. M. Barrie, known for his ability to fly by thinking happy thoughts.

Prompt:

- Think about something positive that happened in the past week, or something you are looking forward to in the coming week.
- Share your “happy thought” in a maximum of two sentences.



Emotional Check-in via Mentimeter

Tool: Menti.com

Question:

- “How do you feel today?”

Participants respond with one or two words.



Positive mood icebreaker

Prompt:

- What is one thing that brought you joy lately?



One-Minute Icebreaker: Superpower

Prompt:

- “If you could have one superpower, what would it be?”

Participants share their answers in the chat.



Emoji Check-in via Slido

Tool: Slido - This activity provides a quick, visual overview of the group's mood.

Instruction:

- Participants click on the Slido link
- Select the emoji that best represents their current state of mind and Click "Send"

3.2.1 Activities to Build Connection

In this section , we share examples of activities that support connection building and do not need to be used in the beginning of a meeting or session, but can be incorporated throughout the meeting or in breaks.

Shared Imperfection

Instead of starting with a verbal introduction or a typed answer (which requires language skills and confidence), we begin with a visual mess.

The Prompt: The facilitator opens a shared whiteboard and gives a prompt that cannot be done perfectly.

Instructions:

- "Draw how you are feeling right now using only your non-dominant hand."
- "Everyone draw a cat in 10 seconds and go!"
- "Just fill this white space with lines and shapes - make a total mess."

The result is inevitably silly, messy, and unpolished, which is a positive outcome because when everyone produces something that looks bad or just okay, the social pressure evaporates. It dismantles the fear of perfection. A professor cannot draw a better stick figure than a student. In this activity, status indicators disappear. Everyone is just a person drawing a line.

Inevitably, the inner critique can be overcome. By forcing speed and imperfection, we bypass the brain's editor. This signals to the group that this virtual space is a place for draft thinking and experimentation, not just for final, polished products.



The Object Autobiography

The Prompt: Participants have 60 seconds to find an object within their immediate reach that has a personal or cultural story.

Instructions: Each person shows their artifact to the camera and explains it in exactly three sentences.

The Learning Outcome: This builds narrative empathy. In an international setting, it provides a tangible connection to the person's reality.

Blind Portraits

This activity involves participants drawing a portrait of a colleague (or themselves) on a digital whiteboard or paper without ever looking down at their drawing surface.

Instructions: Participants focus their eyes entirely on the person they are drawing on the screen. Their hand moves the pen, but they must not check the progress of the image until it is finished.

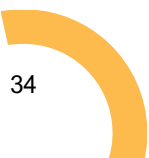
The Learning Outcome: This exercise is a powerful lesson in vulnerability and psychological safety. Because the results are intentionally distorted and humorous, it removes the fear of making mistakes. In a democratic space, this levels the hierarchy; everyone looks equally unskilled. Hence this activity fosters a culture where it is safe to fail.

Cognitive Breaks and Engagement

The Reversed Logic Quiz (Kahoot/Mentimeter). This is a quiz where participants must select the incorrect or opposite answer to a set of prompts. It serves as a brain break and reduces the pressure of correctness. In a multicultural setting, it levels the playing field for those who may feel disadvantaged by Western-centric trivia or standardized testing formats.

Digital Literacy: Meme Check-in

Prompt: Participants select a non-offensive meme that reflects their current state of mind. Memes act as a global digital language. They allow for the expression of complex emotions or systemic frustrations through a shared, contemporary medium.





The Collective Poem

Prompt: Each participant contributes one line to a shared document. The goal is to build a single, coherent text.

Prompts may vary, in the beginning of the meeting a facilitator might use a simple question such as: "How am I feeling today?" or more joyful such as "Which fairy-tale figure am I feeling like today?" Participants might write a sentence or just a word, which in the end adds into a larger community poem showcasing the diversity in the group

Padlet - Photos

Visual communication transcends language barriers. Using Padlet, the group can engage in specific thematic prompts, examples:

Prompt 1: The Cultural Kitchen: Participants share a photo of a traditional meal. This highlights cultural diversity through universal human experiences.

Prompt 2 (if the participants feel safe enough) Geographic Context: Participants upload a photo of the view from their current window. This grounds the virtual meeting in the physical reality of the participants' diverse locations.

Prompt 3: Workspace Reality: Sharing a photo of one's immediate working environment fosters empathy by acknowledging the different conditions under which each participant is contributing.

The Democratic Alphabet

In international meetings, English often becomes the dominant voice. This activity reverses that dynamic. It validates the native languages of all participants and expands the group's definition of democracy beyond just politics.

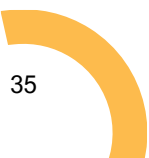
Prompt: The facilitator assigns a letter of the alphabet to each participant or breakout group - this can be done on shared Google docs, Miro, Mural, Padlet etc.

Instruction: Find a word starting with your assigned letter in your native language.

- The Topic: The word must relate to democracy, but the definition is open. It can be a :
- Feeling (e.g., Hope, Anxiety, Safety)
- Position (e.g., Citizen, Monitor, Activist)
- Value (e.g., Truth, Transparency)
- Form of Government

The Sharing: Participants write the word/words and, depending on the capacity, they can share, or the facilitator can say a few words and ask about them. For example:

- Letter D (Czech): Důvěra (Trust)
- Letter S (Spanish): Solidaridad (Solidarity)





5 senses

In online meetings, we often forget our physical bodies. This quick activity uses the five senses to land participants in the present moment before the work begins. It also brings a perspective on the diverse environments the participants are joining from.

Prompt: The facilitator asks the group to pause for one minute and mentally answer this simple prompt:

- "What do I see, hear, touch, smell, taste in my immediate environment from where I am joining?"

To keep the process fast and the chat clean, give this specific instruction:

- "Pick the one sensation from your list that is the most interesting or surprising. Type just that one thing into the chat."

The chat fills with vivid details (e.g.: The smell of burnt toast, The sound of heavy rain, The soft fur of my cat). This instantly humanizes the group and creates a shared snapshot of everyone's reality without taking up too much time.

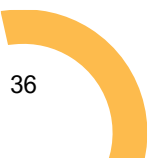
One word

Participants are encouraged to share in the group chat, using only one word, their expectations of the meeting

The Online Pulse

Collective short breathing exercise.

The prompt: "To sync our energy across time zones, we invite everyone to pause for a simple 4-count breath. Inhale slowly for four seconds, acknowledging your physical presence in your room, and then exhale for four seconds. As you breathe out, imagine extending that calm focus through the screen to connect with the group. This brief reset lowers stress and ensures everyone has truly arrived before we begin."





3.3 Reflective Exercises

Reflection Exercises and Icebreakers are integral components of Partner Learning Community Meetings. They support a positive partnership climate, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and foster a sense of trust and engagement among partners.

Partnerships are built on relationships. Strong, respectful, and human-centered relationships contribute to:

- higher quality collaboration
- more effective project outcomes
- increased personal satisfaction and motivation among partners

These activities are intentionally brief, inclusive, and adapted to virtual settings, ensuring that all participants can engage comfortably regardless of cultural background, role, or communication style.

Reflection Exercises are usually conducted at the end of Partner Learning Community Meetings. Their purpose is to check in on the emotional and collaborative climate of the community

- Encourage shared responsibility and contribution (Essential of PLC)
- Collect feedback for continuous improvement of collaboration across partners (Essential of PLC)

Mentimeter Reflection

This activity provides a quick emotional check-in and actionable feedback.

Prompt:

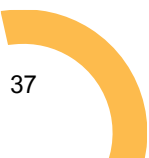
- “In one word, how are you feeling right now?”
- “What is one piece of advice for our next Partner Learning Community Meeting?”

Generating Community Contribution – Chat Storm

This activity encourages personal responsibility and collective engagement, it ensures equal participation and prevents early responses from influencing others.

Instruction:

- Ask the question: “How can you personally support WP5?”
- Participants think individually and write their response in the chat for 1 minute.
- Participants wait for the facilitator’s signal before pressing “Send.”





Feedback via MIRO – “Community Parking Lot”

This activity captures constructive feedback and creative ideas in a visual, collaborative format.

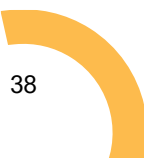
Prompt:

- “What ideas or suggestions would help make our next meeting better and more enjoyable?”
- “What is 1 thing you learned, 1 thing you found interesting and 1 question you still have from today’s session?”

This activity captures constructive feedback and creative ideas in a visual, collaborative format as the figure below illustrates.



Figure 2: Example Miro activity used to encourage constructive feedback.





3.4 Celebration Channels in Teams

In order to build relationships in our Partner Learning Community (PLC) we have decided to create Celebration Channels - dedicated virtual spaces where participants can share milestones, achievements, and personal moments related to the project or their everyday lives. Our Celebration Channel extends conversations and supports the relationship building activities during the partner community meetings. In international and blended learning contexts, these spaces help humanize collaboration and strengthen relationships beyond task-based interaction.

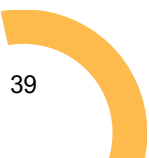
By intentionally creating space for recognition and informal interaction, celebration channels support trust, motivation, and a sense of belonging. They are especially valuable in virtual environments, where spontaneous social interaction is limited and participants may feel disconnected.

Celebration spaces can be hosted in different formats, depending on the project design. They may be created as a dedicated MS Teams channel to support informal, ongoing interaction, or as a curated *News* or *Community Updates* page on a [Google Site](#). When using Google Sites, content can be collected from participants and selectively shared or highlighted by a project administrator. This approach balances openness with care and ensures that key moments of the project are visible and accessible to the wider community.

Good practices for using celebration channels include:

- Create a clearly labelled, optional space (e.g. *Celebrations*, *Community Moments*, or *Good News*).
- Encourage sharing of both small and big moments, such as project milestones, birthdays, completed deliverables, local holidays, or personal achievements.
- Invite participants to feel proud of their work and experiences and to share moments they value. Making successes visible supports motivation, builds confidence, and strengthens a sense of belonging and shared ownership.
- Promote the use of informal and creative formats, including GIFs, memes, short videos, reels, emojis, or links to social media posts, to make the space lively and relatable.
- Model participation as facilitators by posting first and responding with appreciation or short comments.
- Keep the space low-pressure and inclusive. Participation should always be voluntary.
- Be mindful of cultural differences in humour, visibility, and public recognition. Some participants may prefer private acknowledgement over public celebration, and humor may be interpreted differently across contexts. When posts involve this person (e.g. photos, stories, or social media content), encourage participants to ask for permission before sharing and to respect privacy at all times.

Celebration channels contribute to a more democratic and engaging virtual space by valuing participants as whole people, not only for their outputs. When used with care and purpose, these spaces help foster connection, mutual recognition, and a stronger sense of community over time.





Chapter 4: Cross-Workpackage Collaboration



Virtual interaction is when we show up online. We attend meetings, read messages, and share documents.



Virtual collaboration is something deeper. It's when interaction leads to shared understanding, joint ownership, and collective progress.

Within our Partner Learning Community, we intentionally foster cross-Work Package (WP) collaboration to create a continuous learning loop among WPs and to leverage the diversity of WP expertise in support of high-quality project activities and outputs. This focus on cross-WP engagement strengthens overall project coherence and helps to continually reaffirm shared project goals, which in large-scale, long-term projects can otherwise become fragmented over time.

This chapter outlines the following facilitation strategies:

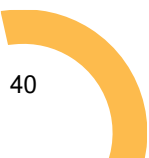
- fostering cross-WP collaboration in partner meetings
- fostering asynchronous cross-WP collaboration
- examples of creative cross-WP initiatives

Effective Cross-WP Collaboration

Effective collaboration across Work Packages (WPs) is essential to ensure coherence, knowledge exchange, and joint ownership of project outcomes. Cross-WP interaction supports integration of perspectives, avoids siloed implementation, and strengthens the overall impact of the project.

Expected Outcomes of Cross-WP Collaboration are:

- stronger coherence across Work Packages
- more effective problem-solving and innovation
- increased overall project impact



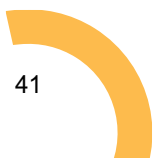


Modes of Cross-WP Interaction

The project applies a structured, multi-layered approach to Cross-WP collaboration that takes place through multiple complementary channels:

- synchronous interaction during virtual and in-person meetings
- asynchronous interaction via follow-up emails and shared digital workspaces
- dedicated Cross-WP communication channels within Microsoft Teams (see Microsoft Teams section of this Manual)

This blended approach ensures continuity of dialogue, flexibility across time zones, and sustained engagement among partners.





4.1 Facilitation of Cross-WP Collaboration

Effective facilitation practices support the progression from surface-level integration to deeper, shared meaning-making collaboration across WPs. In a multi-actor consortium, differences in hierarchy or expertise can inhibit participation.

Applying collaborative and dialogical pedagogy means:

- encouraging distributed leadership during virtual meetings.
- rotating facilitation roles.
- valuing experiential, contextual, and youth perspectives alongside academic expertise.

The Role of Facilitators

In YOUROPE, Cross-WP collaboration is facilitated and coordinated by the Core Group of facilitators. They play a central role in ensuring collaboration and learning across the project. The core group of facilitators works closely together on the design of partner community meetings. In order to support the cross-WP learning, the Core Group:

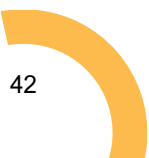
- Regularly attends all individual WP meetings and takes structured notes capturing key updates, challenges, and emerging themes
- Meets internally every week to share WP updates and
 - Identify potential synergies and overlaps
 - Propose topics requiring Cross-WP discussion or alignment
- Takes responsibility for the design, facilitation, and follow-up of Cross-WP learning activities, particularly within the Partner Learning Community (PLC).

The Structure of Partner Community Meetings

Collaboration across work packages (WPs) does not occur automatically. Projects are typically structured around individual WPs with predefined deliverables, and effective cross-WP collaboration requires additional time and effort. In YOUROPE, we have deliberately made cross-WP collaboration a core principle, as it is essential both for overall project success and for enhancing the quality of deliverables and activities within each work package.

Cross-work package (WP) collaboration is based on the premise that all project partners understand the value of such collaboration and that the quality benefits of providing feedback and mutual support in the development of deliverables are tangible and clearly demonstrated.

Consequently, during each bi-monthly meeting, we allocate a substantial portion of the agenda to collective engagement with the information shared in the Spotlight across all WPs. Depending on the intended learning outcomes, discussions are facilitated either through breakout rooms organized by WP or through mixed, cross-WP breakout groups.





When designing and structuring meetings, facilitators need to pay attention to:

- cross-WP dialogical encounters where partners collectively examine shared challenges (e.g., Breakout Room discussions)
- synthesis activities (e.g., collaborative MIRO boards, shared concept maps) that help integrate different disciplinary and cultural perspectives.
- reflection checkpoints where partners articulate what has shifted in their understanding
- the function of a 'Core Group' to support and keep track of cross-learning.

Shared Understanding of Cross-WP Collaboration

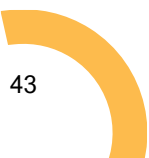
It is important that all partners understand the benefits of the cross-WP collaboration. In YOUROPE, we have developed a range of visualisations of cross-work package (WP) activities to support a shared understanding of jointly emerging themes across the project. These visual tools need to be accessible to all project partners, including those who may not be actively involved in cross-WP activities, those who did not participate in the original project drafting, and partners who joined the project after its commencement. This shared understanding of the foundational principles guiding collaboration within the project is essential and must be regularly reinforced to integrate new participants and to sustain the project's collaborative spirit over time.



TIP:

Create Visuals for cross-WP collaboration

One such diagram was developed over the course of the first project year and was presented at the second in-person project meeting.



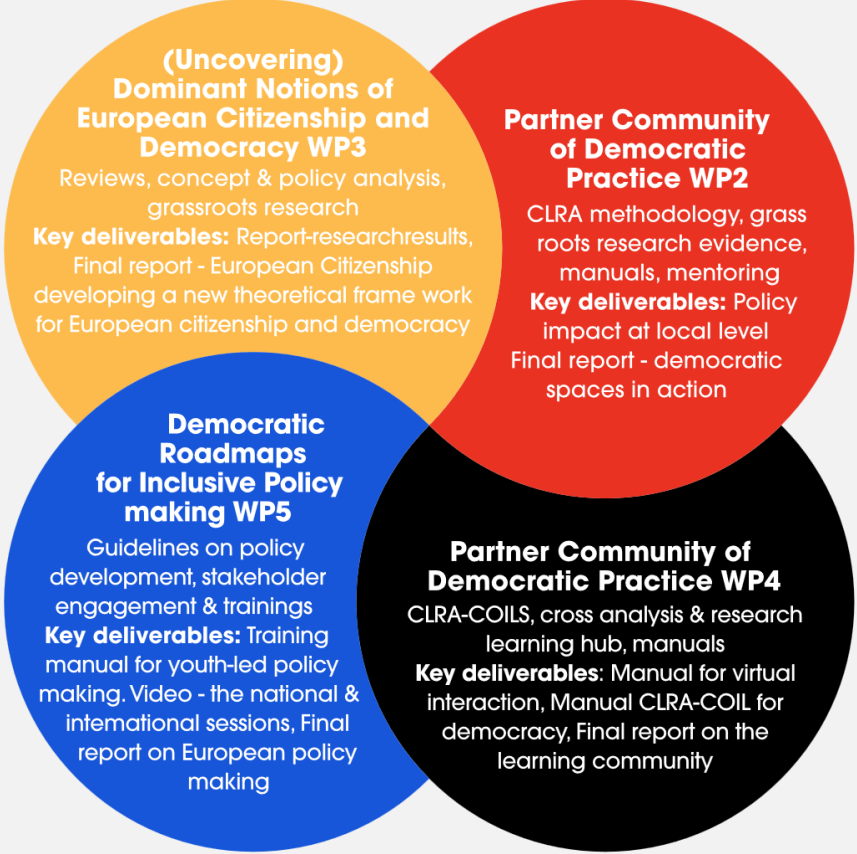


YOUROPE WORK-PACKAGE COMPONENTS & THEIR INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

Project Management and Coordination WP1

Governance, risk analysis and ethics

Key deliverables: Data Management Plan, Project Management Plan & Handbook

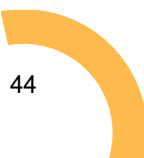


Stakeholder Engagement and Message Management WP6

Dissemination, brandings, CitizenArt, events

Key deliverables: Key messages per stakeholder map, Exhibition portfolio, International and national sessions, Final report-Dissemination

This Diagram was developed for a virtual Partner Community Meeting to support understanding of the reasons and benefits of cross-WP collaboration and the alignment between WP2 and WP5. The diagram was presented before the Spotlight Session on WP2 on CLRA-COIL and its themes.

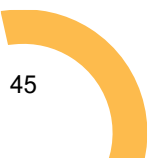




Subsequent breakout room discussion followed the spotlight on WP2 which focused on CLRA-COIL. The breakout room discussions happened around “how can we improve CLRA-COILS through the expertise found in the different work packages?”. Discussion prompts for the breakout rooms were structured as follows:

- WP1: CLRA-COILS & Ethics around data collection and quality assurance
- WP2: CLRA-COIL & Themes inc. partner matchmaking
- WP3: CLRA-COILS & Sharing precursor themes from lit. & policy
- WP5: CLRA-COILS & Developing Policy road maps (inc. meeting policy makers)
- WP6: CLRA-COILS & Dissemination ideas

(Note that WP4 has the role of facilitating the discussion in breakout rooms and thus does not have a discreet breakout room of its own.)





4.2 Facilitating Cross-WP Asynchronous Collaboration

Asynchronous engagement is essential in international projects where partners work across different time zones, languages, contexts, and ways of collaboration. In a Blended Project Learning Community, asynchronous spaces should support learning, reflection, and connection, not only information sharing.

Tools such as MS Teams, Google Drive folders, and Google Sites can support this type of interaction. In the YOUROPE project, for example, Teams channels are used to post updates, share resources, and comment on peers' work. Google Drive folders help organize project materials and drafts, enabling participants to collaborate through shared documents over time. [Google Site](#) acts as a shared hub where all participants could access project guidelines, and templates. This setup allows everyone to contribute thoughtfully, even when working from different countries and schedules.

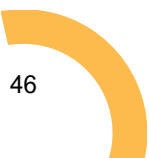
To support accessibility and inclusion, asynchronous materials should be easy to navigate, and clearly labeled. Using consistent structures, descriptive file names, and accessible document formats helps ensure that all participants can engage effectively.

Asynchronous collaboration is particularly valuable for facilitating learning across multiple packages (WPs), as it extends exchange beyond scheduled meetings.

Key considerations:

- Design asynchronous spaces as active learning environments, not just file storage.
- Organize spaces clearly by purpose (e.g. separate Teams channels and different Google Drive folders for each WP).
- Provide clear instructions, guiding questions, and realistic timelines to support participation across different languages and working cultures.
- Use post-guiding questions or short prompts to encourage reflection and discussion.
- Reduce pressure to be constantly online and accept different participation rhythms.
- Allow flexibility for different time zones: participants can read, comment, or edit at times convenient for them.
- Use asynchronous tools to amplify voices that may be less present in live meetings, particularly participants working in a second language or in less formal institutional contexts.

In YOUROPE, each WP has its own folder for deliverables, while Teams threads are used for questions, updates, and peer feedback across groups.





Democratic Inclusive Principles in Asynchronous Spaces

Democratic asynchronous spaces aim to give all participants equal opportunities to contribute and co-create knowledge, regardless of language proficiency, time zone, or prior experience. Transparency, shared ownership, and flexible participation are key.

- Use shared editable documents (Google Docs, Slides, Sheets) for collaborative tasks, planning, and decision making. This allows participants to contribute at different moments, and in their own language if possible, to then translate into the agreed common language.
- Make governance processes visible by clearly outlining roles, responsibilities, and timelines, and decision-making processes in shared spaces such as Google Sites or structured folders.
- Encourage commenting, suggestions, and resource sharing to normalise participation and peer feedback.
- Build in dialogical engagement that supports equal participation.
- Support accessibility and inclusion by allowing multiple modes of contribution (written text, audio, short videos, visuals).
- Promote the use of simple, clear English as a shared working language to support participants with English as a second or additional language. Short sentences, consistent terminology, and avoiding unnecessary jargon help lower barriers to participation.
- To support a safe and inclusive learning environment, facilitators may begin by explicitly acknowledging linguistic diversity. The following language acknowledgement can help set shared expectations and reduce anxiety for participants communicating in a second or additional language:

Before we start our activities, we would like to share that although English is the working language for this session, we acknowledge and value linguistic diversity. We recognize the effort involved in communicating in a foreign language, and we encourage all participants to speak from the heart. Please feel free to include words or expressions from your mother tongue to enrich your ideas. What we say is more important than how we say it. — Gabriela Méndez, VE COIL Consultant, Tecnológico de Monterrey

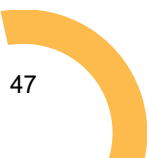
This type of acknowledgement helps normalize diverse language practices, supports accessibility, and encourages more equitable participation in asynchronous and synchronous spaces.

Supporting Cross-WP Asynchronous Collaboration

Supporting learning across WPs needs clear and inclusive communication. When projects include many teams, it is important to help information, questions, and ideas move across WPs, not stay in silos. This helps participants understand the full project and learn from each other.

In the YOUROPE project, work is organized into six Work Packages:

- WP1 - Monitoring and Announcements of Timelines
- WP2 - Community-Lead Research and Action (CLRA)





- WP3 - European Policy Framing and Grassroots Survey
- WP4 - Learning Community Interaction using Microsoft Teams
- WP5 - Engaging Youth and Policymakers Together
- WP6 - Dissemination and Engaging the Wider Public

MS Teams can be used as the main space for cross-WP communication. Clear and well-organized channels help participants follow discussions beyond their own WP. For example, shared channels can be used for updates, questions, or themes that are relevant to more than one WP. Threaded messages and shared files make it easier to follow conversations over time.

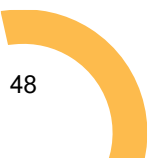
At the same time, not everyone may have full or regular access to MS Teams. For this reason, it is important not to depend on only one tool. Key messages shared in Teams should be also shared in other ways, such as short email summaries or shared Google Drive folders. Google Docs, Google Sheets, and Google Slides can be used for shared notes, reflections, and joint work across WP's, even when participants cannot join live discussions.

Good practices to support cross-WP learning include:

- Explain clearly which tool is used for what (for example, Teams for discussion, Google Drive for documents, email for important updates).
- Share important information in more than one place so no one is left out.
- Check early if participants can access all tools and help solve access problems at the start of the project.
- Offer simple guidance, such as short written instructions, screenshots, or short videos.
- Provide early technical support and name a clear contact person for questions.
- Acknowledge that people have different levels of comfort with technology and say clearly that asking for help is welcome.

By using MS Teams together with Google Tools and clear communication, projects like YOUROPE can reduce technical barriers and lower technology-related anxiety. Early support and simple guidance help participants focus on learning, collaboration, and shared goals.

To further support cross-WP learning, it can be helpful to name a contact person or a rotating role to help connect information across WPs. Sharing short updates in simple English can make it easier for everyone to stay informed, especially for those who cannot follow all channels or who work in a second language. Using clear titles, short messages, and fewer acronyms can also reduce confusion. Finally, it helps to acknowledge that working across many tools and WPs can feel overwhelming at times, and to remind participants that support is always available.





Linking Other Platforms

Linking to other platforms should not be seen as a strictly technical task; in online learning communities, the priority is learning from others. In the YOUROPE project, where young people often lead online communities, it is best practice to learn directly from their methods and apply them. While there must be prior consultation regarding ethics and privacy, an example from a Czech CLRA group showcases how young people as experts by experience navigate online media and curate it to meet their community's needs:

“The Discord server was organized into various channels categorized by specific issues. In addition to these, there was a dedicated channel for ideas and a voice channel used for weekly meetings. The process typically involved key members introducing topics for development, which other participants then picked up. The group engaged in mutual brainstorming and provided constructive feedback. For instance, they consulted with a legal expert regarding the enforceability of traffic violations in the capital city. At the same time, the team explored and identified ways to improve the situation without imposing restrictions on drivers. Discord functioned as a central platform for sharing, framing ideas, and their subsequent implementation. Because the community was composed of both enthusiasts and industry experts, the collaboration proved to be highly enriching. The only significant constraint was time, which was managed efficiently through the use of this online environment.”

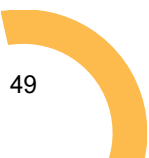
This choice of platform was rooted in lived experience and daily usage. While such platforms might not always be viewed as credible in formal organizations, their structure can be mirrored effectively using Slack. Slack allows for a similar multi-channel architecture, including secret channels for distinctive working groups, which preserves the workflow while meeting professional standards.

To visualize the community's progress, Padlet can serve as a living visual gallery. It functions as a rich board showcasing the diversity of contributions, allowing users to post different media types seamlessly. Crucially, Padlet remains highly accessible even from a mobile phone, enabling participants to interact and upload content on the go.

To foster continuous engagement, a living diary can be established where participants upload their ideas and progress. While platforms like Padlet, Mural, or Miro provide visual spaces for this, Google Docs is often the most effective choice due to its widespread accessibility. It offers a stable, familiar environment where users can easily contribute text or images without a steep learning curve.

For more creative and interactive elements, tools like Canva can be used to generate visual content, while Mentimeter is excellent for ice-breakers and instant feedback. However, one must not be blinded by the variety of tools; step-by-step training is always necessary.

It is crucial to remember that some people may not use multiple devices. Therefore, using extra applications during online meetings must ensure accessibility from a single device. Another part of linking these things together is daily usage; if a group scarcely uses Teams but relies on Google as their technological hub, it is more effective to bridge these environments to support the group's natural workflow.

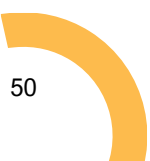




4.3 Setting up Cross-WP Collaborative Initiatives

The Partnership Learning Community is understood as a living ecosystem, continuously shaped by engagement with youth and external stakeholders, interaction with policy makers, and the broader social, historical, and political contexts in which the project operates. This dynamic environment requires adaptive forms of collaboration and a commitment to continuous learning across the consortium. The project's strong emphasis on community-building and open communication creates the conditions for reflection, experimentation, and innovation.

In response to challenges identified within WP2 during the first part of the project, particularly regarding participant motivation and the implementation of planned activities, our focus on cross-WP collaboration actively contributed to problem-solving and supports WP2 delivery. As a result of Cross-WP dialogue and joint reflection, the consortium co-designed a new transnational initiative aimed at strengthening the motivation and empowerment of young people, thereby enhancing both the quality and impact of WP2 outcomes.





4.4 CLRA COILS

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a method that enables students from across the globe to engage in “co-taught multicultural online and blended learning environments emphasizing experiential student collaboration” (SUNY COIL, n.d¹). YOUROPE aspires to transform European citizenship and democracy by enhancing youth involvement in such COIL exchanges related to CLRA iterations.

At the core of YOUROPE is our Community-Led Research and Action (CLRA) methodology. CLRA understands democracy as living, evolving, entangled systems sustained by reciprocity, care, and shared responsibility. CLRA is a relational practice enacted through everyday encounters between people, communities, and environments. CLRAs are taking place within the formal curriculum within education institutions and within and across communities. CLRA’s are thus engaging university students and youth communities.

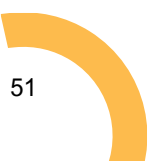
CLRA-COILs are important in creating a more inclusive democratic space and process for developing policies that align with the different needs, perspectives, and ambitions of European youth, especially those who are currently underrepresented.

CLRA-COILs present the potential online-space for deepening the understanding of grassroots notions of European Citizenship and democracy explored by youth and their communities. From local CLRAs, engaging youth across the partner communities, YOUROPE envisions CLRA-COILs as a pioneering approach to promote youth participative action and research based on collaborative investigation of societal issues, across the cultural contexts implicit in European policy. As a key performance indicator (KPI) of the Project 300 youth are expected to engage in CLRA-COILs.

CLRA-COILs in YOUROPE are being used to support pluralised, inclusive networked learning spaces and activities, enabling youth (16-30 years old) from all backgrounds and educational experiences to make meaningful contributions in addressing societal issues of importance to them, that can be influenced by EU policies.

As part of the YOUROPE ambition and aims, CLRA-COIL aims to establish a lasting, sustainable pedagogical approach that influences democratic practices and evolves the concept of European Citizenship in involved institutions, communities, and regions.

¹ The term and pedagogical approach known as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) originated in the State University of New York (SUNY).

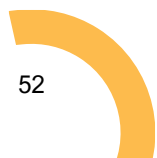




WP4 is co-creating a CLRA-COIL Manual for Democratic Spaces (the first version of which is due 31 March 2026). The manual will be an evolving document² and eventually, when completed, will serve as a road map for wider institutions to embark on their CLRA-COIL exchanges.

For further detail, please refer to the [manual](#), which is structured in three parts. Part One introduces strategic preparation and engagement in CLRA-COIL, outlining its pedagogical foundations and providing practical, step-by-step guidance through a CLRA-COIL Facilitator Toolkit. Part Two focuses on collaborative learning across Work Packages, highlighting the role of partner expertise and youth researchers in supporting shared analysis and meaning-making within virtual CLRA-COIL spaces. Part Three addresses strategies for sustaining inclusive, democratic online learning environments, including curricular integration and wider community engagement. The appendices provide background research on COIL, key concepts, and relevant studies to support deeper understanding.

² We will be presenting the CLRA-COIL Manual deliverable as a ‘living document’ as it will continue to evolve due to it being early days for suggesting we have this pedagogical approach sorted (and with our newly conceived “Transnational Youth Conversations” to also pilot and further integrate).





4.5 Transnational Youth-Empowering Conversations

During project implementation, a new Cross-WP initiative—Transnational Youth-Empowering Conversations—emerged in response to identified needs across multiple WPs. This initiative exemplifies how Cross-WP collaboration enables:

- rapid response to contextual developments
- integration of youth perspectives
- creation of novel, cross-cutting solutions aligned with project objectives
- learning about oneself and one’s positionality within processes of social change, from the level of everyday local contexts to the broader arena of European policy.

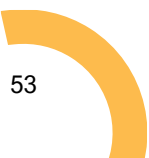
This approach aligns with Horizon Europe principles of collaboration, inclusivity, and excellence in project implementation.

This reflection has led us to develop the idea of **Transnational Conversations** (“YOUROPE Virtual Conversations”) as an additional format of collaboration. Whereas CLRA-COIL builds mutual learning on thematic similarity between projects, Transnational Conversations rely on creating a dialogic context in which key events, dynamics, and processes of youth civic engagement can be examined across diverse contexts and manifestations.

During the WP2-WP4 discussions, a collective learning has emerged that there are differences in youth motivations to engage in CLRA. Across CLRA groups running in parallel in YOUROPE partner countries, two particularly relevant issues for conversation have surfaced:

- varying levels of student interest in engaging with CLRA projects (e.g. concerns raised early on by colleagues from Finland);
- differing motivations for participation, including the perception of insufficient financial compensation as a disengaging factor.

Building on these observations, we came to understand that, although projects share a common methodological framework, their implementation unfolds within locally specific contexts. These contextual components significantly shape what young people actually learn through their civic engagement. For this reason, we consider it valuable to broaden students’ perspectives by exposing them to these contextual differences. By recognising, naming, and reflecting on such variations, young participants can better understand the diverse ways in which they contribute to sustaining a shared community of European values.





Transformative Pedagogy of Transnational Conversations

Transnational Conversations are designed to support transformative learning around the characteristics, processes, obstacles, and challenges emerging in youth civic engagement projects. Experiencing differences in how activities with a shared overarching goal are implemented fosters self-reflective, transformative processes and initiates negotiations of one's own identity within a field of actions carried out by diverse actors—working toward a common aim, yet realizing it in varied ways.

The attempt to create conditions for transformative learning during Transnational Conversations (TC) involves processes that stimulate participants to question their assumptions and engage in intercultural reflection on the ethos of research aimed at participatory change. The ethos of participatory research is not uniform. A shared reflective space allows young researchers to:

- Observe how institutional conditions in which projects are implemented (e.g., remuneration, organizational structures) affect their relationships with participants;
- Reflect on what it means to be a responsible researcher-activist in relation to marginalized communities.

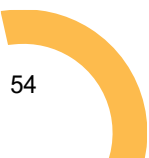
This approach aligns with the principles of intercultural pedagogy, which emphasizes the need to analyze power relations even within emancipatory practices. As Melter (2006) highlights in critical pedagogy, “Power relations must be reflected upon even where action is guided by good intentions”.

Format of Transnational Conversations

Transnational conversations take place in a virtual environment through regular synchronous sessions, enabling representatives from different CLRAs to come together regardless of their thematic focus or stage in the research–action process. These conversations are envisioned as a series of recurring online (Zoom-based) meetings organised as open, consortium-wide exchanges, to which young people involved in CLRAs may voluntarily sign up.

The core objective is to foster an inclusive and flexible environment that connects participants working on diverse topics, situated at different stages of the appreciative inquiry and CLRA cycle, and embedded within various disciplinary contexts. Accordingly, the space remains open and non-restrictive, with no predefined thematic boundaries, allowing all young CLRA participants to engage meaningfully.

Each session is structured around a guiding theme or shared concern, providing a common focus for reflection, experience-sharing, and collective sense-making.





Accessibility and Participation

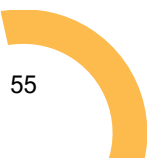
Young researchers actively shape both the content and format of Transnational Conversations, ensuring that their perspectives and decisions meaningfully guide the learning process. Participation is voluntary and open, with no prerequisite involvement in a specific CLRA and no predefined roles within the conversations.

Participation is understood as active engagement in decision-making related to the focus and evolving structure of the Transnational Conversations. While an initial framework supports transformative learning, both content and format remain open to youth input and may be adapted over time through co-creation. As the process matures, responsibility for communication is progressively transferred to young researchers, supported by a gradual reduction in facilitation to strengthen ownership of the dialogue and learning process.

Participants include students and young researchers from YOUROPE partner countries, as well as selected young collaborators from institutions beyond the consortium. External participants are invited to intentionally introduce diverse perspectives, based on their experience in socially and politically engaged, action-oriented research within non-European contexts.



Figure 3: Poster created to promote our first Transnational Conversation





Chapter 5: Virtual Spaces within Individual WPs

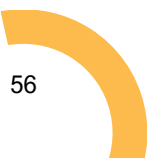
This chapter provides an overview of the collaborative “habitats” in which the individual Work Packages (WP 1-6) operate. Each WP has a different aim/function in the project and is led by a different leader, and variations in leadership styles as well as in disciplinary and academic cultures have a direct influence on how virtual collaboration is organised—both within individual WPs and across the project as a whole. These differences are reflected in the choice and use of digital platforms, as well as in the formats, rhythms, and degrees of structure characterising WP meetings.

Diversity among WPs

Some WPs adopt a highly informal and flexible mode of collaboration. For example, WP4 meets on a weekly basis and operates through close, ongoing interaction among its core team members. Collaboration is supported by a wide range of digital tools, including Padlet, Zoom or Teams, and Miro, enabling dynamic exchanges and iterative joint work. Similarly, WP2 meets biweekly and deliberately integrates dedicated time in each meeting for the sharing of CLRA facilitation experiences and for personal exchange. In these meetings, speaking time is distributed relatively evenly among participants, and team members actively engage in joint sensemaking of emerging issues and challenges as they arise. Both WP2 and WP4 therefore exemplify collaborative practices characterised by shared reflection, mutual responsiveness, and collective problem-solving.

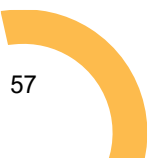
In contrast, other WPs operate with more formalised and structured meeting formats. These meetings typically follow clearly defined agendas and are often facilitated by a single lead person, who accounts for a larger share of the speaking time. Contributions from other WP members are structured around assigned tasks or action points, which are then followed up between meetings. While this approach may limit spontaneous interaction, it supports clarity, accountability, and progress tracking, particularly in relation to predefined deliverables.

Differences in virtual communication practices are further shaped by varying levels of access to digital infrastructure, particularly Microsoft Teams. Some WPs rely more heavily on platforms outside Teams due to institutional constraints, while in certain cases individual members do not have full access to Teams at all. These limitations affect not only where collaboration takes place but also how visible and interactive WP communication can be across the project.





An analysis of activity within Teams indicates that only WP1 and WP6 consistently engage with their channels through posts, updates, and reactions. Other WPs use Teams primarily as a repository rather than as an interactive communication space. As a result, issues of accessibility and interactivity have been identified as key areas for further development within the YOUROPE project. Addressing these aspects has therefore become a specific action point, with the aim of strengthening cross-WP communication, enhancing transparency, and supporting more inclusive and effective virtual collaboration.





5.1 WP1: Designing Virtual Space for Virtual Coordination of Tasks, Quality Assurance, and Key Deadlines

In projects with multiple work packages, such as YOUROPE, coordination is needed to support meaningful virtual interaction across teams. When participants work online and in different groups, clear coordination helps connect people, tasks, and timelines, and prevents work from becoming fragmented.

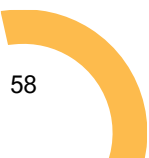
To support virtual interaction around tasks, coordination should encourage teams to share brief updates, questions, and next steps that are visible across work packages. Simple tasks overview, and shared check-ins help participants understand how their work relates to others and where input is needed.

For quality assurance, coordination helps create shared understanding across teams. Clear review stages, common templates, and visible feedback support interaction around quality and consistency. Written comments and shared notes allow teams to respond, ask questions, and adjust their work over time. For example: *“We’ve uploaded the draft report to the shared folder. Please use comments to suggest changes or ask questions. This will help us align the format and content across WPs.”*

To support interaction around timelines, coordination should make key dates and milestones easy to see and discuss. Friendly reminders and updates help participants plan their work and reduce last-minute pressure. For example: *“Friendly reminder that the draft deliverables for WP2 are due next week. If you see any delays or challenges, please let us know early so we can support.”*

Coordination also supports cross-WP connection by making relevant work visible to others. For example: *“WP5 and WP6 may find this document useful for upcoming activities. We’re happy to answer questions or adjust based on your needs.”*

When changes or delays occur, early and clear communication helps maintain trust and alignment. For example: *“Quick update: the timeline for this task has shifted by one week due to data collection delays. The new deadline is March 18. Please reach out if this creates any issues.”*

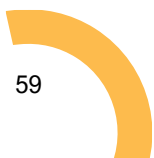




Good coordination practices to support virtual interaction across work packages include:

- Use shared spaces to connect updates, questions, and next steps across teams.
- Keep communication clear and concise to also support participants working in a second language.
- Make tasks, feedback, and deadlines visible to all relevant groups.
- Use written interaction to document decisions and support follow-up.
- Monitor progress in a supportive way that invites dialogue rather than control.

When coordination is designed to support virtual interaction, teams can stay connected, informed and engaged across work packages, even in complex and distributed projects.





5.2 WP2: Supporting CLRA with a Virtual Democratic Learning Space

The virtual space for WP2 stands out for being conceived as a collective democratic learning environment that aligns strongly with the main aim of the WP2, i.e. to facilitate a Community-Led Research and Action (CLRA) across participating universities. Its purpose is deliberately modest and precise. It is not intended as a reporting platform or data repository, but as a space in which partners, facilitators, and young researchers can jointly reflect on how CLRA cycles give rise to democratic spaces within—and sometimes from the margins of—the university.

Within WP2, democratic knowledge does not primarily emerge through predefined outputs, indicators, or templates. Instead, it takes shape through lived practice: through dialogue, ethical exposure, experimentation, and shared responsibility. Democracy is understood here not as a formal arrangement or participatory technique, but as a relational practice that unfolds when educational activity becomes oriented toward matters of common concern that cannot be resolved in advance. The virtual space therefore functions as a kind of democratic research habitat—one in which authority, responsibility, and plurality are continuously negotiated rather than fixed.

This design reflects a deliberate commitment to non-extractive research practices, to keeping administrative demands light, and to forms of documentation that remain meaningful and usable for those who are directly engaged in the work.

Rhythm and Structure of Virtual Interaction in WP2

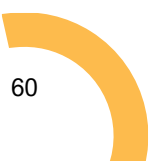
Virtual interaction in WP2 is organised around a stable rhythm of bi-weekly online meetings. These meetings form the backbone of WP2's collective learning process and are intended to replace fragmented reporting with shared interpretation and dialogue.

Rather than structuring meetings around updates per country or institution, sessions are organised thematically and oriented toward specific aspects of CLRA practice. Partners reflect together on how democratic questions are formulated in local contexts, how ethical tensions are handled in practice, and what kinds of democratic spaces emerge within institutional constraints. Particular attention is paid to moments in which dominant educational logics—such as instrumental learning, assessment-driven authority, or fixed role expectations—are interrupted or unsettled through CLRA.

This rhythm mirrors the cyclical logic of CLRA itself, moving through phases of defining, discovering, imagining, designing, and sustaining action. In this way, virtual interaction follows the tempo of practice rather than the logic of external monitoring or evaluation.

Documentation as Collective Sense-Making

Within WP2, documentation is approached as a collective process of sense-making rather than an individual obligation to report. Its primary function is to support reflection, deepen shared understanding, and make learning available for continuation and exchange.





Documentation is therefore iterative, situated, and explicitly provisional. It does not aim to produce harmonised datasets, comparative metrics, or systematic transnational analysis. Instead, it stays close to practice, attending to how democratic space is enacted in specific institutional settings and how authority, responsibility, and participation are configured in everyday work.

Collective sense-making in WP2 is oriented toward understanding the conditions under which democratic spaces become possible, fragile, or contested. Tension, uncertainty, and interruption are not treated as problems to be resolved, but as constitutive features of democratic educational practice. Documentation remains attentive to these dynamics, without pushing toward premature closure or consensus.

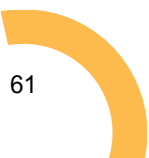
Example: CLRA Manual as a Living Document

Insights from the bi-weekly WP2 meetings are captured in a shared living document that gradually expands the WP2 CLRA Manual. Rather than being written in advance or finalised at a later stage, the manual grows directly out of practice.

After each meeting, one partner—on a rotating basis—develops a short reflective contribution that synthesises the collective insights, questions, and tensions that emerged. These contributions may take the form of narrative reflections, conceptual sketches, or thematic syntheses, depending on what best captures the learning at hand. No fixed template is imposed; the emphasis lies on articulating meaning rather than producing uniform outputs.

The living document remains open, revisable, and explicitly unfinished. In this way, documentation functions as a shared archive of learning rather than a static record, and the manual stays closely connected to the evolving realities of CLRA practice.

WP2 documentation does not aim to resolve institutional tensions. Instead, it holds them open for reflection. By attending to both curricular and extra-curricular configurations, WP2 develops a grounded understanding of how democratic practice is enabled, constrained, or marginalised across different institutional settings.





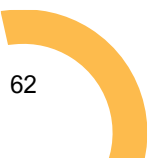
5.3 WP3: Building a Virtual Space for European Policy Framing and Grassroots Survey

The WP3 team collaborates primarily in a virtual setting, with regular coordination taking place through structured online meetings and targeted communication. Formal WP meetings are held once a month, typically on the first Wednesday, providing a fixed rhythm for alignment, decision-making, and progress monitoring. Outside these meetings, communication is deliberately kept focused and purpose-driven, mainly taking place via email and occasional telephone calls, particularly between the project manager and partners, to resolve practical or time-sensitive issues.

Microsoft Teams is used mainly as a shared workspace for storing files and exchanging data and ideas, rather than as the primary meeting platform. The WP stores a wide range of resources in its shared file system, including CLRA results, working texts, datasets, PDFs, systematic literature review articles, and meeting minutes

While Teams offers useful collaborative functions, its use is shaped by institutional constraints. Due to data protection considerations and limited functionality at some partner institutions, including the University of Augsburg, most live meetings are held via Zoom. As a result, video conferencing in Teams is used only to a limited extent, while its file system has proven to be the most effective and consistently used feature.

Overall, virtual collaboration within the WP is characterised by structured meetings, selective and purposeful communication, and a pragmatic use of digital tools shaped by institutional realities. The team emphasises clarity, relevance, and feasibility in its online collaboration practices, aiming to balance transparency and cooperation with realistic expectations about time, capacity, and engagement.



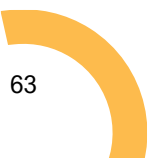


5.4 WP4: Designing A Virtual Space for Facilitating the Partner Learning Community

To best facilitate the deep and impactful work occurring across a large project like YOUROPE, it is vital to have a work package committed to cross-learning, community building and interactive engagement. This interaction is further compounded by the immense linguistic, sociocultural, and professional diversity across the consortium. WP4's aim is to build on these elements within YOUROPE to design, implement and reflect on the learning done within the consortium from cross work package interactions and discussions predominately using the Microsoft Teams platform.

Within this workpackage, colleagues have organized and facilitated several methods and instances of virtual interaction taking various shapes and sizes over the duration of the project so far. As this work package is centred around the cross work package interactions and discussions, designing, implementing and reflecting on how to best garner cross work package content is paramount. Therefore, this work package has employed a Partner Learning Community (PLC) methodology in fostering cross work package project learning. During these PLC meeting sessions, work package 4 has created a format of “spotlighting” particular work packages at certain points to share out and call upon other work packages. In this way, everyone can be kept abreast of larger project actions, developments, and results. Besides the “spotlighting” during PLC meetings, work package 4 colleagues have tried to be innovative, responsive, and flexible, in engaging colleagues across work packages in virtual interactions. Some examples of virtual interactions occurring in practice with the help of WP4 within the project are: facilitating breakout rooms during meetings, including reflective question prompts during and prior to ending meetings aimed at content and meeting structure feedback, utilizing the chat feature in Microsoft Teams for sharing links, thoughts, questions, and sidebar conversations (as needed), recording meetings (especially important for those not able to attend) and disseminating meeting notes, transcripts, and the recording after meetings on the Microsoft Teams channel ensuring equitable access, follow-up and organization.

Overall, WP4 has needed to think and respond to the various needs, work and styles of the colleagues across the consortium to cultivate a Partner Learning Community in the virtual space. WP4 colleagues continue to respond reflexively and realistically to members of the community ensuring virtual interactions for cross work package learning are themselves a democratic space thereby reflecting the ethos of the project.





5.5 WP5: Designing A Virtual Space for Cross-National Sessions with Policy Makers

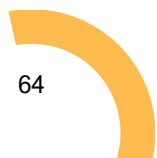
The WP5 team includes researchers and practitioners representing six countries (Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Czechia, Norway, Germany) who decided to use Teams as the main platform to create a virtual environment to work effectively. WP5 has a sub-channel in the YOUROPE Teams which is used to smoothly run the coordination activities, communication and information and resource sharing.

The WP5 sub-channel is a shared space open not only to WP5 team members but also to the whole project team to ensure transparency, keep the information flow with other WPs and record the progress of the work. The sub-channel contains several folders where different types of resources such as policy documents, literature and reports are stored. It is also used to keep the track of the work with meeting minutes, group discussions and update sharing by each team member. Each country being represented in WP5 has their own country folder within the WP5 sub-channel and they share country specific information regarding the national policy sessions which WP5 is conducting in individual countries. By doing so, WP5 can do cross-country comparisons on how the policy sessions are delivered in different countries and support continuous learning.

Microsoft Teams is also the main platform for the regular meetings WP5 team. The WP5 team comes together in several meetings based on the WP tasks. The main WP meetings include a weekly meeting between the WP lead and WP coordinator and a monthly catch up meeting with the whole WP5 team. Besides short monthly catch up meetings, based on the needs emerging, the WP5 arranges longer team meetings to discuss the issues raised throughout the project timeline and deliverables.

A core task of WP5 is the organisation of national policy sessions in six partner countries, followed by the coordination of international policy sessions that bring these country teams together. These cross-country policy sessions are conducted in a virtual environment. National teams meet with their respective stakeholders at country level, and representatives from these teams then come together approximately every three months also via Microsoft Teams for international policy sessions.

The online international sessions bring together researchers, students, community members, and policy makers to discuss existing policy frameworks and collaboratively develop more inclusive policy proposals. The design and focus of each virtual cross-country policy session evolves in line with the project timeline and the outcomes of the national sessions. Early sessions primarily support cross-country policy analysis and comparison, while later sessions concentrate on the co-creation and drafting of new policy recommendations with the active involvement of policy makers.





5.6 WP6: Designing A Virtual Space for Dissemination and Branding

The WP6 team collaborates primarily in the virtual environment, using Microsoft Teams as the central hub for communication, coordination, and resource sharing. All key resources and artifacts—such as templates (reports, slides, one-pagers), branding materials (logos and graphics), leaflets, presentations, recordings, Excel sheets, guides, and official deliverables—are **stored in the dedicated WP6 sub-channel on Teams**. This shared space ensures transparency and easy access for all partners.

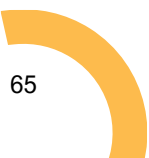
Given the cross-cutting nature of WP6, all resources are intended to be shared with all other Work Packages. WP6 outputs are designed to support partners across the project, whether through ready-to-use templates, branded materials, or dissemination tools. **Open access** to these resources enables consistency in communication and branding and allows partners to efficiently use and adapt materials for their own activities.

Collaboration with other WPs is continuous and involves close coordination around dissemination, branding, and communication needs. WP6 works with all Work Packages, as any output requiring branding, visibility, or external communication passes through WP6. This collaboration typically takes the form of feedback, design input, branding support, and recommendations on suitable communication channels and platforms.

Regular WP6 meetings are held online via Zoom, bringing together partner representatives to discuss ongoing activities, timelines, and upcoming needs. Each meeting is **followed by a recap email** summarizing key decisions, responsibilities, and next steps. In addition, WP6 maintains ongoing communication with representatives of individual WPs, primarily via email and, when clarification or alignment is needed, through Zoom or Teams calls. This flexible communication approach helps ensure shared understanding and timely progress.

WP6 activities run throughout the project lifecycle and include promotion of the short movie competition, regular **website** updates, **LinkedIn** communications, the establishment of a youth **social media squad**, creation of branded materials, and preparation of official deliverables. These activities are coordinated virtually, with timelines and responsibilities clearly communicated through meetings, shared documents, and follow-up emails.

To support smooth collaboration, WP6 provides clear guidance to partners. Templates and key documents are available in Teams, and partners are encouraged to reach out if they have questions, lack access, need support using templates, or require new or adapted materials. While attendance at WP6 meetings is encouraged, it is especially important that partners follow up on tasks outlined in recap emails. Early communication about upcoming deliverables or outputs requiring branding or design support is strongly encouraged, as it allows WP6 to plan resources and timelines more effectively.





Upcoming outputs, such as the next WP6 deliverable on stakeholders, updates on the **short movie competition**, and recruitment materials for the youth social media squad, will be shared with partners for input, feedback, and dissemination support. Partners are also encouraged to actively engage by sharing materials with relevant audiences, amplifying project content on LinkedIn, and providing timely feedback on draft deliverables.

All main documents and drafts can be found in the WP6 folders on Teams, and meeting notes and recordings are stored in the dedicated WP6 Meeting Minutes and Recordings section. This structured virtual setup enables WP6 and all partners to collaborate effectively across locations, ensuring alignment, consistency, and shared ownership of project communication and dissemination efforts.



Chapter 6: Using Microsoft Teams for Supporting Virtual Collaboration

Microsoft Teams is a digital platform designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and project management. It integrates chat, video meetings, file sharing, and app integration into a single workspace, making it ideal for virtual teams, especially those working across different locations. For large, democratically-run projects like YOUROPE, Teams provides a user-friendly environment to connect, brainstorm, and organize activities across various work packages.

This chapter provides ideas and strategies that can help project partnerships decide on optimal set up and onboarding of all partners to using Microsoft Teams.

6.1 Setting up Microsoft Teams

When creating a team, choose a structure that aligns with your project's goals:

- School/Class Teams: Ideal for educational settings, such as workshops or training sessions on democracy.
- Project-Based Teams: Best for focused initiatives, like organizing events or campaigns.
- Community Teams: Suitable for broader engagement, such as connecting youth across Europe.
- Other Custom Teams: Tailor the team type to specific needs, such as advocacy groups or research teams.

Inviting colleagues to Teams

Administrators (or "Owners") manage team settings, membership, and content. To add administrators:

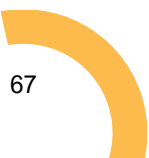
1. Navigate to Your Team: Click on the team name and select Manage team.
2. Add Members: Under the Members tab, click Add member and enter their email.
3. Assign Roles: Select the Owner role for administrators to grant them full management permissions.

To ensure that all colleagues (including those who join the project at later points) have access to the team, create an ongoing mailing list where new colleagues can register to be added to Teams and to other relevant communication channels. To maintain clear organization, use a spreadsheet to organize the mailing list that is accessible to team members and information about that team member.

This may include:

Name	Email	Organization	Main WP	Phone Number
------	-------	--------------	---------	--------------

Keeping this spreadsheet active and easy to access within Teams is an important part of maintaining clear, organized, and accurate communication to colleagues and project partners, while ensuring that no one is missing key updates or invitations. Administrators of the team should be responsible for keeping the list updated and adding new colleagues to Teams as necessary.





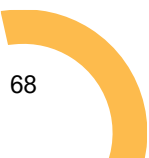
Using Channels on MS Teams

Microsoft Teams is organized using *channels*, or individual spaces that can be used for specific purposes, groups, and activities. Administrators or owners of a team are the only ones that can create new channels in a team, but we recommend creating channels based on input from the project community to ensure that everyone is able to organize their work as necessary and communicate effectively.

The **General channel** can be used for making announcements, sharing resources, and organizing meetings with the whole community. Anyone can access, post in, and edit/add files in the general channel. When adding files to the general channel (for more information on this, see section “*Storing and Accessing Files*”), consider the needs of the whole community. What files, resources, and information should all team members have access to? Consider making resources such as deliverables, a schedule or GANNT chart, and the project proposal, along with any other files that may be frequently referenced, available in the general channel.

Private channels can also be created for individual teams. While these channels are designed for members of an individual work package or project team to discuss, meet, and upload files relevant to them, these channels are accessible for the entire community. The organization of these private channels is detailed later in this manual (see section “*Designing Virtual Space for WP5 - Engaging Youth and Policy Makers Together*” and section “*Designing Virtual Space for WP6 - Dissemination and Engaging the Wider Public*” for more information), however, it is important to remember when setting up private channels that these spaces should be easily navigable for all project members. This means that they should be organized in a way that other members of the project can easily find important files, and coordinate cross-WP work.

Celebration and announcement channels can be set up as well. These are channels dedicated to making personal or professional announcements, to congratulate other team members or send them well wishes, or any other communication not directly related to the project. The purpose of a celebration channel is to foster a sense of community and encourage project members to build each other up. In a large project such as YOUROPE, there are many partners from several different countries, many of whom rarely get the chance to meet and spend time together face-to-face. It can be difficult to feel acquainted with colleagues and learn more about each other, which is why taking time to celebrate each other’s accomplishments or even wish colleagues a happy birthday can be great for community building.





Storing and Accessing Files

Clear and consistent file organization supports effective collaboration, and ensures that all partners can access shared materials. Within YOUROPE, MS Teams serves as the primary working space, while Google Drive functions as a mirrored repository to support access equity and long-term availability.

Good practices of storing and accessing files include:

- Files should be uploaded and shared within the relevant **channel** in MS Teams (General, Work Package channels, Cross-Work, and Community and Celebrations).
- Each channel includes a “**Shared**” tab where files related to that channel’s work are automatically stored.
- This structure allows documents to remain connected to conversations, decisions, and ongoing collaboration.

Mirroring to Google Drive

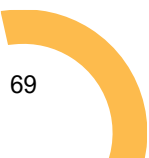
- To ensure access for members with limited or no MS Teams access, key documents are mirrored in **Google Drive**.
- Google Drive serves as:
 - A shared repository
 - A continuity space for finalized or reference documents
 - Links to Google Drive folders may be shared in MS Teams channels and on the [Google Site](#).

File Upload and Organization Guidelines

- Upload files to the appropriate channel
- Use clear and consistent file names, including:
 - WP number or name
 - Document type
 - Date (when relevant)

Examples:

- WP1_ProgressUpdate_May2025.docx
 - WP4_EventPlanning_Draft.pptx
 - WP6_FinalDeliverable_PublicBrief.pdf
- Avoid duplicate uploads across channels unless necessary.
 - When a document becomes final or is relevant across WPs, mirror it to Google Drive and share the link.





Using Templates

Templates help streamline collaboration, support shared understanding, and reduce the time spend creating new documents from scratch.

Templates are used to:

- Track progress and activities
- Document meetings and decisions
- Support coordination across Work Packages

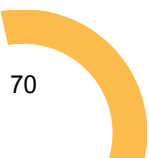
Template use is reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with:

- Existing Work Package workflows
- Reporting and coordination needs

Feedback from Work Package leads and partners informs updates and refinements. Templates are adjusted as needed to support evolving project practices.

Template Examples

- Mapping Document for CLRAs to encourage asynchronous interaction building to CLRA COILs
- Partnering Template for colleagues to fill out when aiming to participate in CLRA COIL exchange.





6.2 Onboarding and Training Colleagues to Use Virtual Spaces

To support consistent and inclusive engagement, a set of short guides and video tutorials have been developed. These materials focus on the tools and workflows most commonly used across the project.

Format and Access

- Materials are available in video and text formats.
- All guides and videos are publicly accessible and hosted via:
 - [Google Site](#) (central access point)
 - Embedded videos (e.g., shared video repository or YouTube)
- Links are also to be shared in Microsoft Teams and mirrored in Google Drive when relevant.

Microsoft Teams Tutorials

These resources support participants in navigating the YOUROPE Teams space and collaborating effectively.

Topics of Tutorials:

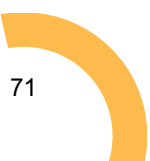
- [How to Access Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Navigating channels](#) (General, WP channels, Cross-Work, and Community and Celebrations)
- [How to Share and Find Files in YOUROPE Channels](#)

Google Site and Google Drive Integration

To address accessibility and ensure all partners can easily access project materials, a Google-based hub has been created to complement Microsoft Teams. The Google Site functions as the entry point, providing access to tutorials, key resources, and direct links to the Google Drive. The Google Drive mirrors essential documents and supports consistent organization across all Work Packages.

Video tutorials available:

- [How to navigate the Google Site](#). This video introduces the Google Site, including the Tools section (MS Teams, Google Drive, Miro), the Community Calendar, Work Package Resources, and the News section.
- [How to navigate Google Drive](#). This video explains how to access the Google Drive, and outlines the folder organization ready for collaboration across Work Packages.





Chapter 7: Ethical Considerations in Virtual Spaces

Researchers' integrity is essential for maintaining trust, transparency, and ethical participation across YOUROPE's virtual working environments. Because much of the project's collaboration takes place online, through Microsoft Teams, shared documents, digital workshops, and asynchronous discussion spaces, responsible and ethical research conduct must be consistently upheld in every digital interaction.

7.1 Core Principles of Integrity in Digital Work

YOUROPE aligns with responsible science and embeds it directly into daily online practices. In virtual collaboration, this means:

Honesty and Transparency

All researchers, students, staff, and partners must communicate clearly and openly when working in shared digital spaces. Project materials, decisions, and research processes are documented transparently in the virtual environment so that all partners can trace how knowledge is produced, shared, and used. YOUROPE's ethical framework reinforces this by ensuring research processes and outcomes are openly communicated to participants and stakeholders.

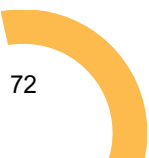
Respect for Participants in Online Engagement

Virtual research activities require the same ethical sensitivity as in-person encounters. YOUROPE follows a strict **"Do No Harm"** principle, ensuring that participants, especially youth and underrepresented groups, are engaged respectfully, safely, and without pressure, even in digital settings. Informed consent procedures remain robust when delivered online, with participants given clear information, time to reflect, and space to ask questions.

For minors, both guardian consent and youth assent are required, and these materials are shared and stored securely through project platforms.

Accountability in Virtual Spaces

Every researcher is responsible for following GDPR, ethical guidelines, and the project's virtual collaboration norms. This includes handling shared documents responsibly, protecting confidential content during online discussions, and ensuring that no sensitive information is posted in public or informal channels. YOUROPE requires all external partners working online to uphold the same standards.





Reliability and Quality in Digital Research

In virtual environments, reliability means using shared platforms consistently, documenting methodological decisions, and maintaining high-quality research practices regardless of distance. YOUROPE's training for student researchers strengthens cultural competence, ethical behaviour, and responsible use of digital research tools.

Ethical Practice Embedded in Virtual Collaboration

Virtual collaboration is not merely a technical setup; it is an ethical environment. YOUROPE treats its digital spaces as shared democratic arenas where:

- Secure platforms are used for all research-related communication and data exchange.
- Confidentiality is protected in online meetings, channels, and shared workspaces.
- Accessibility and inclusivity are prioritised, enabling equitable participation across languages, backgrounds, and technological contexts.
- Reflexive practice is encouraged, using digital team meetings, cross-partner sessions, and feedback loops to identify and address ethical challenges as the project evolves. YOUROPE embeds these reflective mechanisms into its research design.

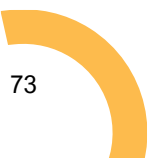
Informed Consent in Digital Research

In YOUROPE's virtual settings, informed consent is not reduced to digital paperwork. It is an ongoing, relational process supported by:

- Clear communication of research aims (via online meetings or digital information sheets)
- Time and space for participants to engage, question, and reflect online
- Secure storage of consent forms and participant data
- Continued check-ins during virtual sessions to ensure comfort, understanding, and voluntary participation

These steps are essential in a project working with youth and community groups across multiple digital environments.

YOUROPE treats ethics and integrity as dynamic. Regular online cross-partner meetings create space to revisit and refine ethical practices, including those unique to digital environments, such as handling visual materials shared online, moderating sensitive virtual discussions, or ensuring digital safety. This ongoing evolution ensures that researcher integrity remains strong, relevant, and responsive throughout the project cycle.





7.2 GDPR-Aligned Virtual Collaboration

In YOUROPE's cross-institutional virtual collaboration spaces, such as Microsoft Teams, shared workspaces, and online community environments, privacy and data protection are fundamental to creating safe, democratic, and inclusive participation.

YOUROPE strictly follows the EU's GDPR and national data protection laws in all digital interactions. Personal data is collected only when essential and anonymised whenever possible, especially important in virtual meetings, asynchronous collaboration, and youth-driven community research. Explicit consent is required for any non-anonymisable content, such as video or photographs.

All partners commit to GDPR obligations through the consortium agreement, ensuring shared responsibility for secure data handling across platforms.

Virtual collaboration relies on carefully designed data practices:

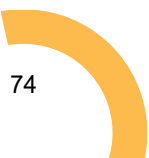
- Controlled access: Only authorised team members can view or handle sensitive materials.
- Encrypted storage and role-based permissions: Prevent unauthorised access or accidental disclosure.
- Ongoing audits and clear workflows: Ensure compliance during document sharing, co-editing, and online meetings.

A dedicated Data Management Plan (DMP) defines storage rules, FAIR-compliant data flows, retention schedules, and safe dissemination strategies.

YOUROPE's virtual collaboration environments are designed to support inclusive participation, especially for young and underrepresented groups. This includes:

- Providing accessible and well-structured platforms for cross-WP teamwork
- Protecting participant identities when sharing research or co-created content in digital forums.
- Ensuring culturally sensitive handling of qualitative data like discussions, images, and recordings.

By embedding GDPR principles into virtual collaboration, YOUROPE strengthens trust among partners and participants. Safe digital practices ensure people feel comfortable sharing ideas, engaging in democratic dialogue, and co-creating knowledge across borders.





7.3. Data Privacy and Protection

This section draws on [How to Choose and Use Technology Tools for COIL with Data Privacy and Data Protection in Mind](#) by Méndez, G., written in her role as Assistant Director of the FIU COIL Office, and reviewed and approved by Florida International University's Division of Information Technology (IT), and the Educational Technology Services (ETS).

Protecting participants' data is essential in blended and international project learning communities. Because projects often involve different countries, institutions, and digital tools, it is important to be intentional about how data is shared, stored, and accessed. A clear and simple approach to data privacy helps build trust, supports democratic participation, and ensures compliance with institutional and EU regulations, including the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (GDPR).

Under GDPR, data protection applies specifically to personal data, meaning information that can identify an individual directly or indirectly (such as names, student IDs, email addresses, grades, or images linked to a person). When project content does not include personal identification information, the data protection risk is considered low. Examples of low-risk content include anonymous reflections, group drafts, shared resources, templates, or project outputs that do not name individuals. Even when risk is low, good data practices should still be followed.

Using MS Teams as the Main Collaboration Space

MS teams is used as the main communication and collaboration platform because it is institutionally supported and includes data protection measures aligned with GDPR principles such as access control, data minimization, and security.

Using Alternative Tools with Care

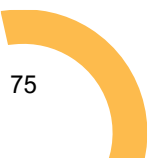
Additional tools such as Google Drive or Google Sites may be used to support collaboration and shared visibility. According to GDPR principles, content created in these tools is low risk when it does not include personal data.

- Personal data should not be collected unless it is strictly necessary.
- Collaborative documents should focus on content and learning outcomes, not individual identification.
- Institutional accounts should be used whenever possible.

In YOUROPE, Google Drive folders are used for shared working documents, while MS Teams remains the main communication space. A Google Site is used as a shared project hub for guidelines and resources, without publishing personal data, which aligns with GDPR's principle of data minimization.

Supporting Privacy, Inclusion, and Democratic Participation

GDPR emphasizes transparency, fairness, and respect for individual rights. These principles also support inclusive and democratic learning environments. When participants understand that personal





data is protected, and that most of the shared content is low risk, they are more comfortable engaging and contributing.

- Clearly explain what data is collected and what is not.
- Encourage participants to avoid sharing personal identification information in common spaces.
- Support different ways of contributing that feel safe and appropriate across languages and contexts.

GDPR Quick Reference

What counts as Personal Data?

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), personal data is any information that can identify a person, directly or indirectly, such as:

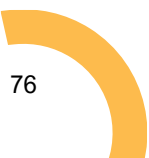
- Full names linked to work or opinions
- Student or staff ID numbers
- Email addresses or usernames
- Grades or assessment results
- Photos, videos, or recordings where a person is identifiable
- Any combination of information that makes a person identifiable.

Transparency and Consent

GDPR emphasizes that participants have the right to understand how their information is used, where it is stored and who has access to it. In YOUROPE, data privacy and protection are handled in a clear and practical way to support trust, inclusion and democratic collaboration across institutions and countries. From the start of the project, participants are informed about how digital spaces are used and how information is managed.

- MS Teams is the main platform for communication, collaboration, and coordination across work packages.
- Team channels are used for discussions, updates, and shared work, with access limited to project participants and facilitators.
- Google Drive is used for shared working documents and collaborative drafts.
- A Google Site is used as a shared project hub for guidelines, timelines and resources, and does not include personal identification information.
- Most project content is group-based and does not require sharing personal data.

Participation in YOUROPE is based on informed engagement. Participants are made aware that the project involves online collaboration across institutions, countries, time zones, and languages. Facilitators explain the digital tools being used and the type of content participants are expected to



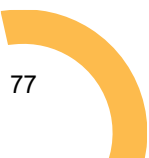


share. Participants are encouraged to ask questions, raise concerns, or choose alternative ways of contributing if they feel uncomfortable sharing certain content.

By being transparent and supporting informed consent, YOUROPE aligns with GDPR principles of transparency, data minimization, and respect for participants' rights while maintaining an open, collaborative, and low-risk learning environment.

Reusable Facilitator Disclaimer

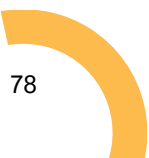
For this project, we will use MS Teams as our main collaboration space. Most shared work will be group-based and will not include personal identification information (PII). Please avoid sharing names, or other personal data in shared spaces. This helps keep our collaboration low risk and aligned with GDPR and institutional data protection policies.





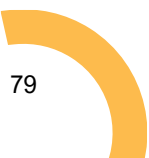
References

- Aarnio, H. 2012. Dialogical Methods. HAMK Häme University of Applied Sciences website. <https://www5.hamk.fi/dialogi/diale/methods/>
- Aangenendt, M., Sjoer, E., & Wallner, C. (2023). Facilitation of value creation in Professional Learning Networks. *Higher Education Studies*, 13(3), 31. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v13n3p31>
- Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1(2), 164–180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006.00011.x>
- Beelen, J., Janebová, E. (2025, September 9). *Building learning communities for the internationalization of curriculum at home*. EAIE Gothenburg 2025, Gothenburg. <https://miic.world/miic-eaie-gothenburg-2025/>.
- Booth, S. E., & Kellogg, S. B. (2014). Value creation in online communities for educators. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 46(4), 684–698. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12168>.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2020). *Manual for developing intercultural competencies story circles*. Taylor & Francis. 2026, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370336>
- Erstad, O., Kumpulainen, K., Mäkitalo, Å., Schrøder, K. C., Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., & Jóhannsdóttir, T. (Hrsg.). (2016). *Learning across contexts in the knowledge society*. Sense Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-414-5>
- Kasíková, H. (2009). Učíme (se) spolupráci spoluprací. AISIS.
- Melter, C. (2006). *Rassismuserfahrungen in der Jugendhilfe: Eine empirische Studie zu Kommunikationspraxen in der Sozialen Arbeit*. Münster: Waxmann. (Zugl.: Oldenburg, Univ., Diss., 2006)
- Patall, E. A. (2019). The complex role of choice in human motivation and functioning. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (2nd ed., pp. 135–155). Oxford University Press.
- Reeve, J. (2013). How students create motivationally supportive learning environments for themselves: The concept of agentic engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 579–595. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032690>
- Skinner, E. A. (1996). A guide to constructs of control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(3), 549–570. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.3.549>
- SUNY COIL. (n.d.). <https://coil.suny.edu/>
- Tannenbaum, S. I., & Wolfson, M. (2022). In Diversity of social ties and employee innovation: The importance of informal learning and reciprocity.





- Welser, H. T., Khan, M. L., & Dickard, M. (2019). Digital remediation: Social support and online learning communities can help offset rural digital inequality. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(5), 717–723.
- Wenger-Trayner, B., & Wenger, E. (2019). Designing for change: Using social learning to understand organizational transformation. *Learning 4 a Small Planet*.
- Wilson-Menzfeld, G., Erfani, G., Young-Murphy, L., Charlton, W., De Luca, H., Brittain, K., & Steven, A. (2025). Identifying and understanding digital exclusion: A mixed-methods study. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 44(8), 1649–1666.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner: An Overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64–70. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2
- Zou, Y., Kuek, F., Feng, W., & Cheng, X. (2025). Digital Learning in the 21st Century: Trends, Challenges, and Innovations in Technology Integration. *Frontiers in Education*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1562391>





ANNEX

Manual for Virtual Interaction Checklist

Chapter 1: Introduction

Clarify the Purpose and Scope

- Define what “virtual space” means for your project: a democratic, inclusive, and collaborative environment, not just a logistical tool.
- Ensure all partners understand the hybrid ecosystem (synchronous/asynchronous) and the platforms used (Teams, Miro, Padlet, Google Workspace).

Map the Virtual Collaboration Ecosystem

- Create a visual overview of all platforms, channels, and meeting rhythms (e.g., biweekly administrative meetings, WP-specific meetings).
- Clearly outline the purpose of each platform (e.g., Teams for communication, Miro for collaboration, Padlet for reflection).

Establish Modes of Interaction

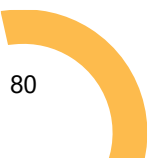
- Define and communicate the frequency and type of synchronous (meetings) and asynchronous (channels, shared documents) interactions.
- Ensure all partners know where and how to participate (e.g., WP1 monthly, WP2 biweekly).

Promote Inclusivity and Accessibility

- Address digital equity by providing onboarding training, alternative tools, and empathy-driven communication (e.g., flexible camera use, clear instructions for multilingual participants).
- Use inclusive language and provide resources in multiple formats (written, visual, audio).

Foster a Shared Understanding

- Use the manual as a living document to align partners on project goals, values, and expectations.
- Encourage all partners to contribute to and update shared resources (e.g., Google Drive, Teams channels).





Chapter 2: Pedagogical Approaches to Virtual Interaction

Embrace Democratic Dialogical Engagement

- Structure virtual interactions to ensure every voice is heard: use breakout rooms, rotating roles, and dialogical prompts (e.g., “What perspectives are missing?”).
- Design activities for authentic, meaningful exchange (e.g., pre-task reflection, collaborative discussion, synthesis).

Ensure Equity and Digital Inclusion

- Provide onboarding training and alternative tools for participants with limited digital access or skills.
- Use empathy-driven communication (e.g., “I” statements, flexible participation options) and avoid assumptions about tech proficiency.

Practice Inclusivity in All Interactions

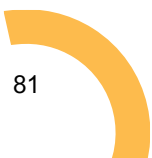
- Normalize linguistic diversity: allow contributions in any language, use clear and simple English, and provide written summaries.
- Use structured turn-taking (e.g., “participation tickets”) and multiple modes of contribution (spoken, written, visual).

Build a Partner Learning Community (PLC)

- Foster a sense of shared purpose, voluntary engagement, and collective ownership.
- Use in-person and virtual community-building activities (e.g., “Community Tree,” icebreakers, celebration channels).

Support Agency and Self-Direction

- Encourage partners to co-create agendas, lead discussions, and take ownership of project outcomes.
- Use reflective exercises and appreciative inquiry to strengthen agency and collective responsibility.





Chapter 3: Facilitating Virtual Partner Community

Structure Meetings for Inclusivity and Engagement

- Use a consistent agenda: icebreaker, spotlight session, breakout discussions, synthesis, and reflection.
- Allocate time for cross-WP learning and ensure all voices are heard (e.g., rotating breakout room roles).

Use Icebreakers and Connection-Building Activities

- Start meetings with brief, inclusive icebreakers (e.g., “Happy Thought,” emoji check-ins, blind portraits).
- Incorporate activities that build empathy and psychological safety (e.g., shared imperfection, object autobiography).

Incorporate Reflective Exercises

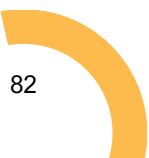
- End meetings with reflective prompts (e.g., Mentimeter word clouds, chat storms, MIRO “Community Parking Lot”).
- Use reflections to gather feedback, assess collaboration dynamics, and plan improvements.

Create Celebration Channels

- Dedicate virtual spaces (e.g., Teams channels) for sharing milestones, achievements, and personal moments.
- Encourage informal, creative, and voluntary participation to humanize collaboration.

Foster Psychological Safety and Trust

- Normalize imperfection and vulnerability (e.g., messy whiteboard activities, collective poems).
- Use activities that level hierarchies and build trust (e.g., blind portraits, democratic alphabet).





Chapter 4: Cross-Workpackage Collaboration

Design for Cross-WP Interaction

- Allocate meeting time for cross-WP dialogue (e.g., spotlight sessions, breakout rooms by WP or mixed groups).
- Use visual tools (e.g., diagrams, MIRO boards) to clarify shared themes and synergies.

Facilitate Asynchronous Collaboration

- Use platforms like Teams, Google Drive, and Padlet for continuous, flexible interaction.
- Ensure asynchronous spaces are inclusive: provide clear instructions, multiple contribution modes, and support for multilingual participants.

Encourage Distributed Leadership

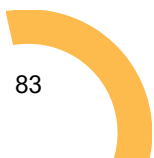
- Rotate facilitation roles and encourage all partners to lead discussions or initiatives.
- Use a “Core Group” to track cross-WP learning and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Support Creative Cross-WP Initiatives

- Co-design initiatives like CLRA-COILs or Transnational Youth Conversations to address shared challenges.
- Use virtual spaces to pilot new formats (e.g., youth-led dialogues, policy co-creation).

Promote Shared Ownership and Reflection

- Document cross-WP learning in living documents (e.g., shared notes, collaborative manuals).
- Use reflective checkpoints to assess progress, adapt strategies, and celebrate collective achievements.





Chapter 5: Virtual Spaces within Individual WPs

Tailor Virtual Spaces to WP Needs

- Align platform choices and meeting structures with each WP's goals, leadership style, and disciplinary culture.
- Balance formal and informal collaboration (e.g., WP2's biweekly reflective meetings vs. WP1's structured updates).

Support WP-Specific Rhythms and Tools

- Use a mix of synchronous (e.g., weekly/biweekly meetings) and asynchronous (e.g., Teams channels, Google Drive) interaction.
- Ensure all partners can access and navigate WP-specific platforms (e.g., Zoom for WP3, Padlet for WP4).

Document and Share WP Learning

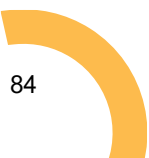
- Use living documents (e.g., WP2's CLRA Manual) to capture insights, questions, and tensions.
- Make documentation iterative and provisional to support ongoing reflection and adaptation.

Encourage Cross-WP Visibility and Alignment

- Share WP updates, challenges, and resources in cross-WP channels (e.g., Teams, Google Site).
- Use visualizations and summaries to help all partners understand WP interdependencies.

Address Accessibility and Inclusivity

- Provide alternatives for partners with limited platform access (e.g., mirroring Teams content in Google Drive).
- Use clear, simple language and multiple formats to support multilingual and diverse participants.





Chapter 6: Using Microsoft Teams for Supporting Virtual Collaboration

Set Up Teams for Clarity and Accessibility

- Organize channels by purpose (e.g., General, WP-specific, Cross-WP, Celebrations).
- Use clear naming conventions for files and folders (e.g., “WP1_ProgressUpdate_May2026.docx”).

Support Onboarding and Training

- Provide tutorials (video/text) for navigating Teams, Google Drive, and other tools.
- Offer ongoing support for new partners and those less familiar with digital platforms.

Use Templates and Shared Resources

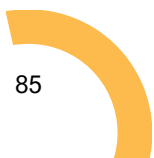
- Create and update templates for meetings, progress tracking, and collaboration.
- Mirror key documents in Google Drive for accessibility and continuity.

Foster Community and Celebration

- Dedicate channels for announcements, milestones, and personal celebrations.
- Encourage informal interaction to build relationships and trust.

Ensure Ethical and Secure Collaboration

- Limit access to sensitive channels/files and use role-based permissions.
- Regularly audit data practices and remind partners of GDPR and privacy guidelines.





Chapter 7: Ethical Considerations in Virtual Spaces

Uphold Integrity and Transparency

- Communicate openly about research processes, decisions, and data use in virtual spaces.
- Document ethical considerations and consent procedures clearly and accessibly.

Protect Data Privacy and Security

- Use GDPR-aligned platforms (e.g., Teams, Google Drive) and minimize personal data collection.
- Store sensitive data securely and use encryption/access controls.

Promote Inclusive and Respectful Interaction

- Use inclusive language, support multilingual participation, and avoid assumptions about digital literacy.
- Provide alternatives for participants uncomfortable with certain tools or formats.

Support Informed Consent and Agency

- Explain digital tools, data practices, and participation expectations upfront.
- Allow participants to opt out or choose alternative ways to contribute.

Foster Reflexive and Responsible Practices

- Regularly reflect on ethical challenges in virtual collaboration (e.g., power dynamics, accessibility).
- Adapt practices based on feedback and evolving project needs.

