



DANDELION

Eventful Events

It is well-known that meetings or events can be tedious, tiring and uninspiring, making them the worst possible environment to learn and take action. However, even in today's digital world, face-to-face interaction is still fundamental to good dissemination, making events one of the best possible forms of dissemination for projects to exploit their results to important stakeholders.

They are an excellent place to meet new faces and reconnect with old faces, and even to put a face to a name in an email or a voice on the phone. If executed correctly, events can foster great communication and long-lasting relationships.

Events come in all shapes and sizes and can be easily adapted for different purposes and to attract the right audience. The following is a **guide through some of the most common and effective event types** that can help bring greater success to your project.

Thematic workshops

These are interactive sessions that allow participants to get thematic feedback on and visibility for their project ideas. Thematic workshops are great in that they focus on one specific theme or topic, making discussions very specialised. For example, DANDELION held a workshop on 'Social growth on trafficking and immigration', which looked at sustainable ways of addressing the key challenges surrounding the refugee crisis and migration.

Workshops are usually based on some of the larger challenges as they provide the time and scope to fully address the issue at hand without being compromised by others, meaning that participants know exactly what they will be discussing and can come prepared with thoughts and ideas. Unlike normal workshops, this usually makes them quite dense but swift as they are designed to provide faster exchange of knowledge

in small to medium groups of researchers. These smaller groups are usually made up of some of the best experts in that field of study, so discussions are fruitful and decisions are reliable.

Thematic workshops excel over other events in that they are known to engage participants in the learning process and topic that is being addressed. A common theme keeps participants motivated and they are more likely to retain the information long after the event, especially if the workshop has been designed creatively. And while no one thematic workshop is the same, participants are able to attend different workshops on a regular basis.

Such intense and focused work also builds relationships quickly, and they are more likely to be valuable after the event as they are known to

specialise in similar topics as you. They also add credibility to yourself and your project if you are able to productively contribute to discussions, highlighting your expertise.

If there is a pressing issue, topic or matter that needs to be concluded quickly and to high standards, thematic workshops are ideal. They will usually have a chair, a facilitator, a number of speakers and some rapporteurs, as well as participants. The objectives of such workshops are usually to ascertain the various challenges of one specific topic of a project in detail and can usually run over several days.

Networking

Networking events are an extremely valuable way to expand your knowledge, learn from other success stories and build lasting strong relationships and friendships with other projects and stakeholders. By surrounding yourself with people who share similar ambitions and targets, you are more likely to progress as you listen and learn from other people's successes and challenges.

A networking event is unlike any other as it is dedicated solely to allowing you to connect with other businesses, stakeholders and projects, and from this it is natural that opportunities will materialise whether immediately or in the future. You can also tap into excellent advice and expertise that you might otherwise never get.

Whether you're hosting a networking event or attending one, they are great opportunities to make your project visible. By regularly attending these social events, people will begin to recognise you, and this can help you build your reputation.

When hosting an event remember that people often talk about great events they've attended, and that means that the benefits extend well beyond the event

itself – building your target audience, business opportunities, and reliable expert resources.

A successful event is one that runs as smoothly as possible for participants, from registering to finding the event and checking-in. Whether you're hosting or attending an event, remember to be a good listener and (hopefully this goes without saying) take genuine interest in your peers.

A good host will be able to spot opportunities to connect people who would benefit from each other, or even if you're a participant and know of people to connect. It is also very good to ask attendees for feedback on how they found it, whether they left with new networks and also any suggestions on how it could improve.

Remember that although networking events can be quite informal and comfortable, they can also be daunting for those who are new to them. If this is you, attend as many events as possible as your confidence will build, and you will reap the benefits. If you see someone who is a little shy, provide them a helping hand, ask them questions and introduce them to others.



Charrettes

A charrette is a group brainstorming session which adds insights from as many angles as possible by engaging various stakeholders. Charrettes can involve representatives from other relevant EU projects as well as external experts in fields such as PR and communications.

Charrettes are usually compressed into short intensive meetings which are very hands-on and collaborative. Participants usually appreciate this format because they see quick results and it can boost creativity by working with a number of other creative participants from relevant disciplines.

Charrettes are most suitable for design tasks because it brings key participants together in the design process in a radically creative event. Participants are subdivided into 2-4 groups, each containing 3-6 participants and each group will have a leader who is responsible for recordings, time management and communication with other groups.

This flexible system of interaction can cut project timelines dramatically and can accelerate the implementation of new processes or the production of recommendations as decisions are collectively reached quickly, reviewed instantly and collected for collation there and then.

Barcamps

Otherwise known as "unconferences", barcamps offer an open environment for people to share and learn in. They are usually intense events with discussions, demos and interaction from attendees. One rule of barcamps is that attendees usually must give a demo, a session or help with one, or offer some form support at the event. In having this rule, you create a room full of highly-motivated people who love to talk about their work and want to talk about it with their peers in the field.

Barcamps not only offer a dedicated space where ideas can be bounced off several people, but are also an excellent sharing space for innovators as content is provided by the participants and flexibly formed during the duration of the event. This format creates an informal and relaxed atmosphere as it is usually off-record by default. The coming-together of many different forms of short presentation such as games, workshops and demonstrations means that participants are kept engaged.

When hosting a barcamp, each EU-funded project attending should be represented by 1-2 participants and it is worth also inviting representatives from

society such as students and youth groups. In total 15-30 participants are expected to attend plus any relevant projects that you believe have reached certain success and encountered discussable challenges.

The organising team will be present during the event, but their role is to mainly facilitate the programme passively as the event should be self-driven by the participants.

With regards to the participants, they will need to send the topic of their involvement in advance allowing the organisers to choose 2-4 focus subtopics. There should be 4-8 time slots and in each time slot, sessions will run in parallel, each from a different subtopic. At the beginning of the day, attendees will show their interest but then move freely among sessions which will be bounded only by the time slot.

eConference

This is an online conference using an interactive website where participants can log on and read papers, enter discussions, be involved in live chats, present, and ask questions with people from all over the world. Unlike physical conferences, eConferences last longer and discussions are more extensive and focused.

Different to webinars, which involve people around the world watching one live stream that is limited to a number of people discussing a topic or an e-learning type class, eConference events are more closely aligned to professional conferences and far more interactive, allowing participants more freedom with their movements across the site, as if they were walking around a conference hall.

eConferences are also more convenient as participants can access the conference at any time, from anywhere with an internet connection, before and after work hours, using their time more valuably as they are not aimlessly wandering or hanging around. Attendees are able to selectively pick what they wish to be involved with, whether it be listening and learning or sharing their own expertise and knowledge, meaning they are more engaged when they are present.

These events also allow delegates to access every session, avoiding the usual disappointment of attending conferences where two sessions of interest are being held at the same time. With online conferences, there are no scheduling conflicts as sessions can be attended on your own watch.

They also offer other benefits. Often, delegates want to attend a conference too far away, the funds, do not have the time or it is too far away. eConferences erase a number of these issues, and as a result usually see higher levels of participation as anyone is allowed to attend, subsequently creating broader networks.

Hosting an eConference is a great way to grow awareness for your project and will generate many new leads and build relationship with other projects or influencers. When planning your event be sure to think about:

- What you want the event to look like
- Promote your event to get expert speakers on-board
- Create an eye-catching landing page and decide on video hosting (i.e. YouTube Live) and production (live Q&A, interview and presentation)
- Get promoting through social media, blogs and emails
- Be sure to analyse your event afterwards based on feedback and the number of qualified leads you got

You can also make your eConference more engaging with online polls, instant messaging, collaborative document editing, and live Q&As. They are excellent spaces for networking, with live mailing lists and personal and shared calendars.

If you're looking to attend an eConference, be sure to make the most of your virtual experience. Don't forget about it by putting reminders in your diary. Be sure to put some time aside to watch the sessions even if you're busy. Engage in live or social events as they are excellent ways of actually getting your questions answered by experts. If a full access ticket is available, purchase it; after all, you haven't paid to get to the conference!

