Training Manual for Organisation of National Seminars within the DMCSEE Project

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The manual was prepared based on years of our own experience in planning and implementing events on various topics and for different stakeholders. It also draws from a wide range of other sources and influences, which makes it hard to pin down all of them. However, at the bottom of this document you can find links to the resources that have inspired us, as well as to some other useful sites that will help you plan events.

This manual is to be used complementary to the DMCSEE Communication Plan and the DMCSEE Management Plan which also already include additional useful tools for event implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Every too often we participate at events that leave us feeling like our time was wasted. A number of reasons can lead to this – either the topic of the event did not really reflect what the invitation promised, the event went on for too long with no one keeping track of time, the discussions were not focused due to bad facilitation and ended in no or in irrelevant conclusions …

This can happen when events are left to chance and are made just for the sake of making an event, with no real vision of what the event is to achieve and what benefit it should bring both to the organisers and especially to the participants. Although there might always be some individuals that will not be fully satisfied with the event, careful planning of the event can contribute greatly to its success, making it worthwhile for both the organiser, as well as the participants.

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

The manual in your hands was prepared to help the partners of the DMCSEE project plan and implement project events, especially the **national seminars which aim to promote the project results and the establishment of a permanent Drought Management Centre in South East Europe**. That is why some instructions in the manual are tailored to the project, however, the tips and information can be used for organisation of events in general.

The document **structure follows the process of planning and implementing** an event – the first chapter focuses on the **planning phase**, the second part focuses on the **actions to be taken at the event itself**, while the third part outlines the necessary **follow-up activities**. Additionally, the fourth chapter gives tips on how to make the most of **working with the media**.

The manual focuses on giving practical advice, giving some general information to each topic while in **boxed text** you can find useful tips and tricks. Each chapter ends with a **"Forget-Me-Not" –** a checklist summarising the main points of the chapter.

At the very end of the document you can find additional resources on event planning and annexes that represent helpful tools for you to use at your events.

We hope the manual will be a useful tool in day-to-day planning and implementation of your events. And remember – failing to plan means planning to fail, so take the time to carefully prepare the event! We wish you plenty of success with your events!

2.1. Setting the aim and the target audience

2.1.1. Event aims

Often we tend to rush into organising an event before giving much thought to what we actually want to achieve. This can especially happen when planning events that need to be carried out within a project – we have promised to have an event so let's do it. But be careful, this is the first step towards ineffective people gatherings.

There are many different reasons why to hold an event:

- to inform people about an issue
- to network, share ideas and best practices
- to explore issues and come up with new ideas for actions
- to assist decision-making processes
- to understand the needs of target groups regarding specific issues
- to promote ideas and gain support for their implementation etc.

Defining the aim is a crucial first step that will guide us through the whole process and will be a basis for choosing the right audience and selecting the best methods of presentation or cooperation of participants. **In order to pinpoint the purpose of an event, here are some questions to help you.** So, before you send out any invitations, sit down with your colleagues or your team members and think about these questions:

- **What do you want to achieve at the end of an event – what are the expected results** (e. g. key stakeholders informed about the DMCSEE project and its products for end users; raised awareness and gained support for the establishment of the permanent DMCSEE).
- **What information do you want to share, what should be the main message of the event? How will the participants benefit from the event?** (e. g. farmers will have better knowledge of drought management which will help them better foresee and minimise the consequences of drought).
- **What tangible outputs/products do you want to get at the end of the event/what information do you want to receive back from the participants** (e. g. a list of concrete needs of end users related to the permanent DMCSEE).
- **How will you use the results/the outputs of the seminar** (e. g. the concrete needs of the end users that participated in the event will be used when preparing a work programme for the permanent DMCSEE beyond 2012).

The aims of DMCSEE national seminars are:

- to **present to the end users** the **use of DMCSEE project results and outputs** for drought mitigation and impact reduction measures, and
- to **promote the DMCSEE** project and to raise awareness and **gain support for the establishment of a permanent Drought Management Centre for South East Europe**

These aims are quite broad and are targeted at decision-making institutions, relevant expert institutions, as well as end users like farmers or tourism workers. **Their needs differ!** The decision makers need data, analyses, facts, recommendations on which they will base their decisions, while e.g. farmers need concrete advice on how to plan the irrigation of their crops in order to mitigate the effects of drought etc.

Different needs of stakeholders affect the way things will be communicated to each of them at events. That is why it is important to better understand your target groups. In the next step we need to analyse our target audience – our stakeholders – in order to fit the aims and methods to their specific needs.

2.1.2. Who are our stakeholders?

Let's start by the word "stakeholder". **Stakeholders can be defined as any person, group or organisation that is likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the decisions being made.** In the case of the DMCSEE project these are organisations that will use the developed methodologies and that will be affected by the approaches, measures, actions that will be based on the newly developed tools.

When thinking about stakeholders and how to identify the relevant ones for your events, here are some questions to help you:

- What organisations or individuals have an interest in the DMSCEE project results?
- Who are the people that represent them?
- What is the information/knowledge that they need?
- Who will be directly affected by the event/project results?
- Who is directly responsible for making decisions on the discussed issues?
- Who is influential in this topic/region/organisation?
- Who has been involved in this issue in the past?
- Who was not involved but should have been involved?
- Who are they key "movers and shakers" that can help further promote the results and decisions?

Never forget to think about:

- ***What is so special about my event that the stakeholders will take their time and come?*** *At the end of the day – how will their voices be heard, what will they take home with them, how will they benefit from the event, how will they use the results of the seminar?*

- Who are the opponents or “blockers” of your ideas, initiatives that are better to be included in the events or projects in general, rather than speak badly of your efforts outside of the event/project and thus giving it bad publicity?

2.2. Who is on my team?

Once you have decided on organising an event and you have set your aims and target groups, it’s time to start with the technical preparations. Organising an event can mean a lot of work and a lot to handle for a single person so we recommend putting together an organising team.

First thing to do next is to appoint someone in your organisation who will be in charge of the event. Even if you decide to outsource the event organisation to external experts – either individuals or an organisation – you should always appoint the lead organiser in-house to oversee their work and be in contact with them for any issues.

Main things to consider, when putting together a team:

- Always appoint the **main responsible person** within your organisation to coordinate and hold an overview of the whole planning and implementation process
- Consider whether you have **enough time, people and knowledge** to organise everything alone in your organisation
- Define the **tasks** of all team members
- Define the tasks that might be **outsourced** (e. g. printing of some info materials)
- Add **clear deadlines** and **main responsibilities** for all team members.

When thinking about distributing tasks between team members, these are the main tasks you should plan:

PREPARING THE EVENT:

- Preparing the content and detailed programme of the event
- Preparing invitation, other information materials
- Inviting the speakers, arranging the presentations
- Booking the venue, arranging catering
- Working with the media (check also the chapter Working with the Media)
- Purchasing any necessary office materials (flipchart paper, pens, name labels etc)
- Arranging IT equipment for the event (laptop, projectors etc)
- Planning the budget and making payment arrangements with your accounting/legal department.

AT THE EVENT:

- Appoint the person who will be in charge of coordinating the event on site and taking all necessary last minute decisions on any changes
- Taking care of registration, reception of participants, distributing handouts
- Reception of speakers, taking their presentations, putting them on laptops/projectors
- Room layout and technical arrangement
- Managing paper and other materials
- Making arrangements regarding catering
- Putting up posters
- Facilitation of the event
- Recording the discussions
- Cleaning up the place after the event
- Taking case of payments, invoices.

AFTER THE EVENT:

- Prepare a report on the event and send it to participants and all other invitees
- Send thank you letters to guest speakers
- Write and send a press release to media outlets.

To distribute the roles and set deadlines you can **use a table like this**:

Task	*Responsible*	*Until when*	*Remarks/status*

2.3. Choosing the right time and place for the event

2.3.1. The time

In order to move on with the planning and to prepare invitations, the next step is to decide on the time of the event. You should take into consideration:

- How long should the event be, and
- When should it be organised.

DURATION OF THE EVENT

There is no rule about how long the event should be. The most important thing is that you know what you want to say to the participants and that you plan enough time to do so. So you might plan a short morning or afternoon event lasting for about three hours with a short break between two sessions or a whole day event.

When deciding you should also take into consideration your targeted participants – how interested they are in the topic, how much time they have.

WHEN TO ORGANISE IT

When picking the **date** consider the following issues:

- What else is going on at that time – the participants will most likely be harder to attract if there are for example **school holidays**, long weekends due to **public holidays** in the middle of the week, other **popular events** like the World Cup or Olympic Games … all these can be reasons why people may not be so enthusiastic to come to an event but rather spend time with their families and friends.
- Are there any **similar events targeted at the same audience** that are taking place in the same time – there might be a big conference on drought or climate change around the date of the event and speakers are already booked; the same goes for participants – they will not go to a similar event twice in a week or two.
- On the other hand – you may want to use the opportunity and **join your event with another event on the same topic** – in this case you should have contacts with the organisers and arrange for them to reserve a session (e. g. three hours) for your topic. For example, you hold your event in the framework of an important international conference (e. g. DMCSEE presentation at the Balwois conference in Skopje in 2010). This can increase your visibility and attract even more relevant stakeholders.

- If you are planning and event for workers in agriculture or tourism, be sure to take into consideration the seasons – don't plan events for the season of harvest or in the peak of the tourist season – work is more important at that time and they will not be willing to waste time sitting is some closed rooms while there is a lot to do at work.

When picking the **time of day** consider the following:

- If you target professional organisations and individuals the best time to hold the event is during the working hours. You can start at around 9.00 to allow them to go in the office before the event if necessary. Plan to finish until 15.00; they probably won't be happy to work overtime.
- If you are planning an event for locals, e.g. for farmers – don't do it during the day when they have a lot to do on the field or they are at work and would need to take a day off work to participate. Plan for late afternoon or evening. Sometimes even weekends can be good choices.

For **choosing the best starting and ending time** also think about the following:

- Be clear on when the **informal part of the event** starts (registration, welcome drink), when does the **official part of the programme** start (when is the first presentation/session)?
- What is the **room layout** – how much time will we need in the morning to set up the room, can we do it the day before and just show up, or do we have to do everything in the morning?
- Check if the location has **all the necessary technical equipment** or if you have to bring your own – setting up the technical equipment will also take time.

2.3.2. The place

What to consider regarding the event location:

- **Transport** connections to the location – is it easy to access?
- Are there enough **parking spaces**?
- Is there **public transportation** available?
- How long are the **meeting rooms available**?
- Is the meeting **room big enough** for the expected turnout? You don't want people to crowd or even stand in the back the whole time.
- Is the **room too big**? You don't want that either – then people get "lost" in the room and it affects the close working atmosphere which is especially important when we have discussions – together or in groups.

- If we will hold **workshops** where people will be separated **into groups** – is there enough space for setting up more work groups?
- Is there a table/part of the room where the registration table can be placed so that it doesn't stand in the way?
- Check if the location has **all the necessary technical equipment** or if you have to bring your own.

2.4. Preparing the meeting agenda and invitations

2.4.1. Meeting agenda

We now have the meeting date and the location. Now it's time to build the agenda of the event so that we can prepare and send out invitations.

Set the start and end time – take into account what we already mentioned above – how much time it will take for the participants to reach the event location and how much time will you need before the event in order to set up the room.

The next step is **to block out fixed times** - at any event you always need time for:

- Breaks
- Starting and finishing activities
- Introductory presentations

BREAKS

Breaks are an **integral part of any event**. They are necessary because:

- They provide the time for the participants to mingle informally
- They break the ice and enable time for informal conversations or for continuing some discussions that were already started during the sessions – this is especially relevant during joint lunches
- They give participants the chance to take a break and have a rest between topics and sessions, improving their concentration and energy.

How long should a break take?

- It depends on the **number of the participants**, the **space available where coffee** or refreshments are served (do they have to stand in line or can they all get to them at more or less the same time) and the number of available **toilets**!

- Always tell people that breaks are shorten than you have planned in your timetable. Realistically – if you say the break will last 20 minutes, it will most likely take 30 minutes – count this into your agenda!

STARTING AND FINISHING ACTIVITIES

At the **beginning of each event** some time is needed for:

- Time for gathering of participants, registration
- If possible have some coffee or refreshments available during the registration time – this gives the participants the opportunity to already engage in informal conversation which can help build a good working atmosphere and builds trust between the participants.
- Welcome addresses by representatives of the hosting organisations and VIPs – for example the mayor of a municipality, representative of a ministry in charge of the topic of the event etc.
- For presenting the facilitator(s) and the speakers
- To go through the agenda and outline the course of the event, pointing out also when the breaks will take place and where the refreshments will be served and where the toilets are.
- To explain how the event will be run, especially if you plan interactive workshops – explain how the work in group will be organised, who will facilitate the work groups etc.
- In case of interactive workshops – to go through ground rules and explain the parking place (for more information check the chapter on facilitation).
- To explain which were the materials that you handed out to them.
- If the group is small enough and you plan an interactive event it's good to have an introductory round so that the participants present themselves. Otherwise you can do this later when people are working in groups.

At the **end of each event** you need time for:

- Making event conclusions
- Answering any questions that were put on the parking place (for more information check the chapter on facilitation)
- Explaining the next steps – when will they receive a report of the event, what are the next deadlines
- If relevant – when will the next event take place
- Closing words – thanking the participants for coming.

INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATIONS

Even if you plan that the whole event as an interactive workshop some introductory presentations will probably be needed to outline the project topic:

- Presentation of the project
- What has been done so far – what are the main results
- Presentation of key information for further discussion.

If you plan the event to be very interactive, keep these presentations very short and to the point so that the main activities and discussion start as soon as possible in order to have enough time for discussion.

Make sure that before the event you inform all speakers well about what they should present:

- . Give them precise instructions regarding the **available time** and expected **content** of the presentations.
- Always **plan more time in the agenda** for the presentations than you give them – you should count in the time or the speakers to come up to the podium, to get ready and then after finishing they have to pick up any materials, notes they had, thank the listeners and go back down from the podium again – if they have 10 minute presentations, **plan at least 5 minutes more** in the agenda.
- During interactive events presentations should be held in the beginning to open the topic.
- Avoid planning presentations immediately after a lunch break – people will be sleepy and tired. Plan something interactive where they can be active and move around.

After we have planned all this we can see **what time we have left** for the **sessions** that will focus on the event topic. In this table you can see an example of how the agenda can be built:

Time slot	*Activity*	*Time needed*
9.00-9.30	Registration and welcome coffee	30 min
9.30-9.40	Welcome addresses	10 min
9.40-9.50	Introduction, presentation of the agenda, of the speakers, how the day will work	10 min
9.50-10.05	Presentation of the DMCSEE project	15 min
10.05-10.20	DMCSEE project so far – main activities and results	15 min
10.20 – 10.40	Presentation of the idea for a permanent DMCSEE – activities so far, scenarios for the future	20 min
10.40-11.00	Coffee break	20 min
11.00 – 12.30	Session 1: Topic 1 (e.g. group work on a specific topic)	90 min
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch break	60 min
13.30-14.15	Session 2 (e.g. group work on a specific topic)	45 min
14.14 – 14.40	Reporting from the groups and joint discussion	25 min
14.40 – 15.00	Closing session	20 min
15.00	Finish	

Now we have the outline of the event. Even though we might not have the detailed plan of each of the sessions, we know the issues and topics that we want to discuss and it's time to prepare and send out invitations.

2.4.2. Invitations

A tempting invitation is the key to the success of the event. A clear, short, concise but at the same time explanatory invitation should raise the people's curiosity in your topic and tempt them into coming. You can have a great programme planned out and you can have important and relevant things to say but all these will remain untold if they are not well communicated to the targeted participants.

A **well prepared invitation** should include:

- **Title** of the event
- Give short **background information** about the event – is it part of a larger process, which is it and how does this event fit into it
- Who is the **target audience** and **what will they gain** by attending the event
- What is the **aim** of the event, what are the **expected outcomes**, how will they be used further on and by whom

- The event **agenda**
- Information about how and where to register and deadlines for **registration**
- **Contact details** where the participants can get additional information about the event – list both e-mail and telephone of the contact person
- Information about the **venue** and (if relevant) how to reach the venue and any other necessary logistic information.

There is no magic formula for writing a good invitation. The important thing is that you tailor the invitation to your targeted audience, using fluent and easy-to-understand language. You can find an example of an invitation in the annex but do not just use it as a template as a different audience might require a different approach. But it should serve you as guidance for structuring the text.

Additionally, if you plan to have in-depth discussion about specific topics it is good to prepare the participants by sending some **additional materials in advance**, for example:

- **Information about the project** – e.g. DMCSEE project leaflet or short presentation of the project on one page with link to the project website
- If possible and relevant send them **presentations** in advance
- If the topic of the event will revolve around a specific output – a **report or study** – you can send it to the participant in advance – but include clear instructions about what they should focus on when studying the materials
- If you want to also present some **online tool** or some specific **website** you can send them a link so that they can get acquainted with it
- Think about any other materials the participants might need ahead of the event in order to better understand the topic and event purpose and to prepare for it.

Take **enough time to plan** everything for the event:

- **Start preparing** a national seminar **6-8 weeks before** the event;
- Send out **invitations** or at least a short announcement of the event **4-6 weeks before** the event.
- Send a **reminder** to all invitees **1-2 weeks before** the event and again **2 days before** the event
- For an **international event** you should start planning **up to 6 months before** in order to get the desired speakers and especially if you plan to have an expert conference where you want to also have expert articles presented; send out the **invitations 3 months before**; don't forget to send out reminders when the event gets closer – **1 month before** and 2 weeks before for last minute registrations.

- If you already have good relations with your stakeholders and you know each other well it is possible to **organise an event in a shorter time**.
- Announce the event at least **4 weeks** before and send out invitations no later than **2 weeks** before the event. And don't forget about the **reminders** – they always help!

When **sending out the invitations** consider the following:

- Do all your stakeholders have **internet and e-mails**? If necessary send out also **letter invitations** by regular post.
- In case you are organising the event in some region or town where your organisation is not well known and recognised, **connect with local organisations that people know well and trust** (e. g. municipality, tourist organisation, NGO …).
- Invite them to participate as **co-organisers** (without having to pay for any costs – but they can if they want to, of course).
- Arrange with them that **they** are the ones that **send out invitations** – this can increase the event turnout as the locals will trust the known organisation that the event will be well organised and relevant.
- Usually, this is not so difficult to achieve as the other organisations also have the chance to promote themselves, but of course **it takes some more time and effort** to make the arrangements.

2.5. Detailed plan of the event

Now that we have sent out the invitations we can focus our attention on preparing a detailed plan of the event. This actually means preparing a **scenario** of how the event will be implemented so that everyone on the team can be on the same track. It also means choosing the **techniques and methods** of work in interactive workshops.

There is in fact no recipe on how to choose the right techniques for running a workshop, this is the **creative part** of the whole process where we can play with our ideas to put together a series of actions that will lead us to our goals that we set for the event.

The key is to find the most appropriate techniques to achieve what we want in the time that we have available for the single sessions.

We need to decide:

- Will we work in one group or in more groups
- Will every group work on the same issue/same question, or should each group have its own topic
- How to divide the participants into groups
- Make a list of appropriate techniques and then compare them to the available time, space and available facilitators – on the basis of this you can decide on the one that seems the most appropriate
- Decide on how the room shall be arranged for the interactive part of the event.

Additionally, we should decide on:

- Materials we will need: flipcharts, pens etc.
- Materials that the facilitators will need
- Materials to be prepared for the participants and handed out at the event
- Distribution of roles of the organisation team at the event: who will be the main facilitator, who will be facilitators in groups, who will record what is being said, who will take care of practical arrangements

Check the next chapter for some useful techniques for holding interactive workshops.

When you have clarified all these issues you should write down the **detailed plan** and make sure everyone on your team has it. Here's an **example of such a plan**:

Time slot	*Topic and used techniques*	*Who*	*Materials*
8.00 – 9.00	Room set-up: - Putting up posters - Preparing the table for registration and materials for participants - Preparing the computer and projector and saving PPT presentation on the computer - Etc.	Whole team	- Posters - Attendance list - Materials - Laptop - Projector - Flipchart paper - Etc.
9.00 – 9.30	Registration and welcome coffee - Giving participants attendance list for signing - Handing out materials - Serving coffee and biscuits	Team member Catering service	- Materials - Attendance list
	…		
9.40 – 9.50	Introduction, presentation of the agenda, of the speakers, how the day will work	Main facilitator	- PPT with agenda
	…		
10.20 – 10.40	Presentation of the idea for a permanent DMCSEE – activities so far, scenarios for the future	Speaker 1	- PPT
	…		
11.00 – 12.30	Session 1: Topic 1 Technique: Carousel: - Work in 3 groups Questions for the qroups: - Question 1 - Question 2 - Question 3 Prioritising with dots	Main facilitator Facilitator 1 Facilitator 2 Facilitator 3	- Flipchart paper – 5 per group - 3 different colour pens - Coloured dots - ….

You can make this plan **as detailed as you need it** – you can add detailed description of each step for each single technique. That will probably be very useful especially when you are using some technique for the first time. Or if other facilitators are not yet familiar with it – give them such a plan ahead of the event so that they can prepare properly.

Revise the plan after a couple of days and work out plans B and C in case you foresee any problems – for example if less participants come than planned and you will not be able to work in groups – what can be an alternative?

2.6. Useful techniques

When organising your national seminar within the DMCSEE project, or any other event, you can decide to:

1. Have a seminar with only presentations, or
2. Have a seminar that will in part be based on presentations, but will also have group discussions and interactive workshops.

2.6.1. Seminar based on presentations

At least **one month before** the seminar you should do the following:

- Choose the presenters – the topic should be connected to the activities within the DMCSEE project.
- Send all presenters short instructions on what you expect them to present and how their presentations should be prepared (to avoid repetitions or presentations that are too advanced or not advanced enough for your invited stakeholders).
- Don’t forget to inform them about how much time they will have for the presentation. You can also send them the DMCSEE project template for Power Point presentations and suggest them to use it for their presentations.

On the day of the seminar do not forget to:

- Introduce the lecturer and make a short introduction into his/her presentation.
- Keep to the time and make sure that the lecturer knows how much time he or she still has and don't be afraid to remind them.
- At the end of the presentations allow some time for directly related questions to clarify the presentations
- At the end of each session or at the end of the seminar devote some time for questions or discussion which should be led by the main facilitator.

2.6.2. Seminar with an interactive workshop

INTRODUCTORY PART

The focus of the workshop can be on the promotion of the DMCSEE project and its results, on discussion about specific results that are targeted at end users, as well as on promotion of the permanent DMCSEE Centre. Presentations are in this case needed at the beginning to get everyone up to speed. The presentations should:

- Provide key information about the project, the lead partner and partnership, main aims and expected results of the project
- keep the participants up to speed regarding the development of products for end users and discuss these with them
- give background about the idea of establishing of the Centre
- update the participants on activities connected with establishment of the Centre.

For a successful workshop it is very useful that at the beginning of it the group has the chance to get to know each other. We can do this with different **Icebreakers**. This can be done either with all participants at the beginning of the event or when participants start working in groups.

Some ideas for icebreakers:

- Together with the name each participant can tell his/her ***favourite colour***; at the end we can count how many like which colour and make some funny (but not offensive!) conclusions;
- Together with the name each participant has to mark on the map from which city/country he/she comes from – then we have a ***map of participants***; this is especially nice if we have an international event.
- In a more relaxed surrounding and if we are staring a series of events with the same group of people we can make a ***game of throwing the ball***: All participants stand around in a circle. Each participant has to present himself while holding a ball, then throws it to someone else. At the end we have to retrace the ball in the same order, always calling out the name of the person that we are throwing the ball to next.
- In a very formal environment even placing some cookies and sweets or fruit on the table around which the participants are seated can help relax the atmosphere.

WORKSHOP

Before starting the workshop you have to decide whether you will **divide** participants in groups, and how many groups you will make and then choose the **technique** with which you will collect the information and later present the results of the workshop to all participants.

Working in plenary works great for giving presentations does not work well if we want an in-depth discussion. Trying to hold discussion in plenary has the following disadvantages:

- A few people will dominate – most will not participate.
- The larger the group, the fewer the people who are assertive enough to speak up.
- Those who do speak up will feel constrained in what they say.

Working in small groups is better in the following circumstances:

- When the group is too large for everyone to have their say.
- When in-depth discussion is needed.
- To allow people who are less confident to speak up.
- To build more trust and understanding between the stakeholders.

When planning work in groups keep in mind that participants will work best in groups of 7 to 10 individuals. Participants can sign up for the group in which they want to be (self selection) or you can allocate people on the basis of the following techniques:

Deciding to group people ourselves has the advantage that it disperses people from the same organizations or with similar interests. Groups formatted this way are much more "colourful" from the groups that are made by self selection as like-minded people will likely choose the same groups. Discussion will probably be much more interesting and intense if we mix the participants up a little.

Some ways to group people:

- **Numbering people off** and then ask all the 'ones' to go to workspace one, 'twos' to workspace two and so on. People from the same organisations usually sit or stand together so in this way there is a fair chance that you will mix them up.
- Give people a **random colour or shape** as they register and divided them into groups after the same colours or shapes. This can be done by sticking a coloured dot on the name badges or by giving them name badges of different colours. Then you ask all participants with orange colour to go to one group, the "reds" to another and so on.
- This is especially usefully if you want to **mix up different sectors**. You give each sector one colour and then you can mix the groups y limiting the number of "greens", "blues" and so on.
- If it is not really important to you how you divide them you can simply divide them by taking the first 10 people sitting together into one group, the next 10 into another and so on …

After the grouping you should use the **technique** which will enable you to get to get as much answers, ideas and prepositions as possible on one particular thematic. At this point you have to be careful on the following:

- Be clear on the purpose of the workshop; what are expected outcomes and outputs.
- Clearly define the questions that you want the participants to answer.

If you have **different but related questions** and you want the **answers from all participants** to all questions then here are **two methods** that are quite easy to do and allow you to get a lot done in little time.

CAROUSEL

Carousel is a great method for larger groups. It works by rotating people around a number of 'stations'.

- Each station has a different but related question or task.
- Each group has their own colour of marker.
- Each group starts at a different station and responds to that question.
- After a short time (20 minutes is maximum) ask the group to move to the next station. They have to take their pen with them.
- When the groups arrive at the next station the facilitator shortly summarises the answers the previous group listed.
- The arriving group then adds their thoughts or comments.
- The amount of time at each station should decrease.
- The rotation should allow the group to get back to their home station to see how people responded to their work.
- The process ends when all the groups answer on all of the questions.
- 45 – 60 minutes is usually enough time for three or four groups.

At the transnational partner **workshop for the establishment of the DMCSEE Centre** that took place in July 2011 we used the Carousel to get answers to the following three questions:

- Which organizations and networks on the strategic and decision-making level are relevant for the establishment and running of the Centre?
- Which organizations should be involved in day-to-day operation of the Centre?
- Which organisations will use the products and services of the Centre (end users)?

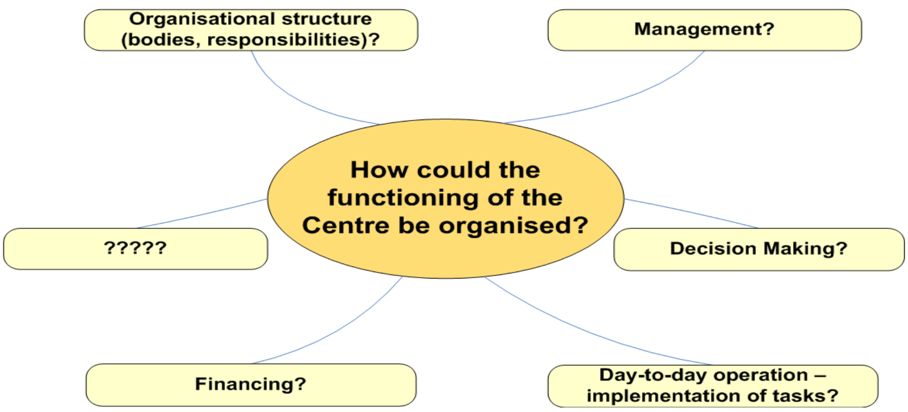
WORLD CAFÉ

One of the varieties of the carousel is the so-called **World cafe method**. This is a simple method for encouraging conversation among participants about defined questions.

The method allows for collecting the ideas and experiences of each group member in a short period of time (1,5 to 2 hours). Main characteristic of this method are:

- One table for one question.
- We put on the table flipcharts and markers (each table has a different colour).
- We put snacks, biscuits and coffee on the table to make it resemble a café – the method mimics a relaxed discussion at a café.
- One person out of each group is nominated as "host of the table" and will stay at the table during the whole process.
- After 20 minutes of discussion groups change the table.
- Host of the table presents briefly the results of the previous group and then they can start editing their own answers.
- *You can choose to have the same question in all groups. In this case participants stay at the same table all the time and do not move around (see the example below).*

At the transnational workshop for establishment of DMCSEE Centre we adjusted the World cafe method and did not change tables. All three groups had to discuss about the same issue, presented by the picture below.



Each group prepared a poster with their answers to the question how they see the organisation of a permanent DMCSEE. Afterwards each group shortly presented the results and they will be used to prepare the business plan for the permanent DMCSEE.

What are the main **differences** between both methods so that the choice of the technique can be easier?

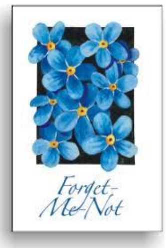
Carousel	***World cafe***
Questions are exact and specific.	**Brainstorming** of different ideas on given questions.
Result is a list of answers	**Results** can be list of answers, diagrams, sketches, etc.
Time for each question is limited.	**Time** for implementation of the method is limited; inside of this time participants can take as much time as they need for brainstorming.
Participants usually stand around a flipchart at a station and when time for one station expires they have to move to the next station.	Participants sit around the table (they can bring coffee, cookies, etc.). They do not need to change tables if they don't want to or if they have nothing to say to other issues debated at other tables.

At the end of the work in groups it is nice to get feedback from all groups, especially if they were working on different topic. One of the ways how to get feedback from the groups without repeating the whole discussion and without repeating answers can be done easily. It's fun and quite simple:

MINI METAPLAN:

- Each group is working on a different question (max 35 minutes).
- Each group has their own facilitator who writes all their answers on flipcharts.
- About 10 minutes before the end of the discussion give each member of the group 2-3 post-its.
- Ask them to write down up to 3 most important points raised during the discussion that they wish to feed back to the wider group.
- Collect all the post-its up within the group.
- Sort similar ideas together, with the group if there is time, or facilitators do this quickly by themselves.
- Write a title that summarises the points in a cluster.
- Nominate a spokesperson to use the post-its to give feedback – just reading out the titles and one or two post-its.
- The lead facilitator then goes around to each group and asks for the feedback.

Now you are quite ready for the event. Before we move on, check if you have finished all the steps in this chapter:



Planning the event:

- ☐ Defining the aims and target groups
- ☐ Appointing the team and distributing the roles and responsibilities
- ☐ Booking the date and the venue and arranging catering
- ☐ Preparing the event agenda
- ☐ Inviting speakers and participants
- ☐ Making a detailed plan of the event
- ☐ Choosing the techniques and methods of work

3.1. Before the start of the event

Today is the day that the event will happen. We have to be sure that the detailed event plan that we prepared will work and the day will run smoothly. This includes **checking** the **event plan**, **briefing the team** and ensuring all the **practical arrangements** are in hand.

3.1.1. Reviewing the event and briefing the

Just before the start of the seminar run through the programme one more time with your team.

- Does it make sense, does it communicate what is planned to other members of the team.
- Run through briefings and instructions for participants to ensure that they are written in the clearest language possible.
- Run through the plan in detail and consider all sorts of practical matters; be ready to make changes in the last minute.
- Make sure everyone on the team knows what is expected of them.

3.1.2. Setting up the room

ROOM LAYOUT

Check if the **room-layout** has been arranged as required. If someone else is setting the room up for you, even with layout maps and clear instructions, there can be misunderstandings, so always check the room with enough time to make any adjustments necessary.

How tables and chairs should be arranged in a meeting room depends on how the content will be delivered to participants. Different set-ups allow for different types of learning and audience participation or interactions. Where a participant sits may actually influence overall meeting effectiveness. Choose a room that will help you achieve your objectives for your event.

Room layout is usually left up to chance, but where and how people sit significantly influences the course of the event. Here are some tips:

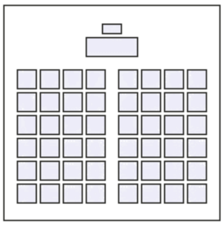
- ***Theatre style*** – Rows of chairs facing the front of the room, usually divided by centre and/or side aisles. Maximizes meeting room space utilization. Theatre works well when the audience needs to take minimal notes and/or the presentations are 2 hours or less in length.

- ***Classroom style –*** Rows of tables with 2 or 3 chairs at each table, with tables arranged to face the front of the room. Appropriate when the conference is an informational type presentation. The presenters are providing the information, with some dialogue with the audience.

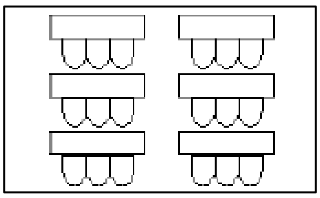
- ***U–shaped*** arrangement promotes equality and interaction and allows the presenter to move freely to the individual group members and address individuals. This is a good layout for discussions.

- ***Round table*** arrangements encourage contributions from all participants (if you are planning to have discussion during the seminar. If you are planning to have discussion with all participants together then remove the table, and put only chairs in a circle. If you are planning to implement the "world cafe" method then prepare several smaller round tables as seen on picture 4 below.

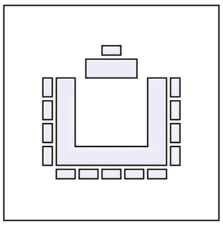
1)Theatre style



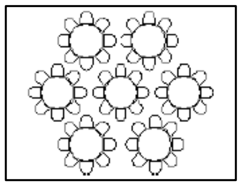
2) Classroom style



3) U–shaped



4) Round tables



Beside that you have to make sure:

- that speakers don't have their back to windows - they become a silhouette and are hard to look at.
- If you are planning to have a workshop then check if there is enough wall space with appropriate surface to stick flipchart paper to. Have flipcharts or some panels ready just in case.

REGISTRATION

Set up the registration desk and have the following ready for the participants:

- The DMCSEE participants list – have it ready for participants to sign at arrival,
- Badges with participants' names (have some extra in case someone that hasn't registered will come),
- Materials (if you prepared any).

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

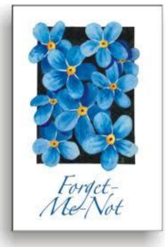
In annex you can find a checklist with possible equipment and materials that you might need in seminar. Please don't assume this is the definitive check list. It is just a proposal of different equipment that can be used especially if you will decide to include interactive workshop into the seminar programme.

Before the participants come put up any posters and make the materials ready for use in the workshops.

Check the **computer** and save all presentations to the computer connected to the **projector**. If possible joint them all in one file so you won't have to switch between them during the event.

REFRESHMENTS

Check if everything is in accordance with your agreements that were made with the catering service before the seminar. Remember to update the caterers if times change after refining the seminar design. Refreshments should be served outside the room, but water should be available to all participants inside.



Before event starts:

- ☐ Reviewing the event
- ☐ Briefing the team
- ☐ Room set-up
- ☐ Equipment & materials
- ☐ Refreshments – catering
- ☐ Registration

3.2. During the event

And at last – the room is set, the participants have arrived and now the event starts. You have done your preparations well so you are calm and relaxed at the beginning of the event. Now it comes down to how the event itself will run. The success of the event now relies on:

- Good facilitation
- Keeping to the times and topics of the agenda
- Carefully recording what is being said, taking into account all participants and all comments.

3.2.1. Facilitation and facilitators

Running interactive workshops with many different interests requires a team of well prepared facilitators. Facilitation is one of the key skills for working with groups of people. The facilitator is very clear about what the group is there to do, but less structured about the way the group will achieve the outcomes.

There are a few **key skills** that all members of the facilitation team require:

- The ability to intervene effectively
- Record what is said
- Manage paper and other outputs

INTERVENING

The role of intervener requires not just good verbal and non-verbal communication skills but also:

- *Listening:* show that you are interested, both in what they are saying and why they are saying. This creates a trusting and supportive atmosphere.
- *Questioning:* ask the right questions, of the right people, at the right time, in the right way. This will keep the discussion moving forward.
- *Reframing:* manage tension and negativity, focusing on shared goals. This skill is particularly important when there is a lot of conflict or tension in the room.

> ***Active listening*** *does not mean the listener is silent:*
> - *Non verbal feedbacks: eye contact, nodding, leaning towards them, focused attention, smiling, recording what is said*
> - *Verbal feedbacks: sounds – aha, umm, short phrases – OK, I see, clarifying, encouraging, summarising or paraphrasing content and feeling, affirming*

RECORDING

In small groups one person can be a facilitator and record everything what is said, but in bigger groups we advise to have two people for each task.

Key to good recording is to provide concise record of dialogue, clear, easy to read and easy to follow. You have to capture the essence and write down everything what is said.

Some additional advices for good recording:

- Listen and be precise – try to use their words
- If unsure check with the participants that the wording is OK
- Don't worry too much about spelling
- When starting each line us a dash
- Put a number on each listed flipchart
- Use big enough lower case letters.

PAPER MANAGEMENT

On such a workshop big amount of paper can be used. If you don't want that crucial sheets of participants' work go missing remember the next tips:

- Label each sheet with a number
- Write the question at the top of the first sheet to help people focus
- Do not stick paper on paper but stick the top sheet on the wall just above the bottom sheet
- When the session ends, gather up all the sheets and fold them up. On the top write the session number, recorder name and group number.

To sum up, here are some **general skills** and/or rules that a facilitator should employ (and some things they should not do!)

DO	***DON'T***
• Introduce yourself • Be relaxing • Be confident • Use the appropriate vocal tone and open question • Encourage everyone to participate • React appropriately to what is said: by affirming, encouraging, showing understanding • Be comfortable with silence, work with it don't try to fill it • Treat everybody's views as equal • Manage difficult people • Record everything what is said	• Over-summarise • Interrupt • Pre-empt conclusions • Impose your own options and views • Make anyone a 'special case' • Lose your temper

3.3. Finishing the seminar

At the end of the event there will be some finishing up activities including:

- making conclusions,
- explaining next steps in the process or where results from the workshop will be used, and
- getting feedbacks from participants.

3.3.1. Making the conclusions

We are almost at the end of our seminar. You have to clearly communicate to all participants how and where the results from the workshop will be used and what are the next steps and when will they happen.

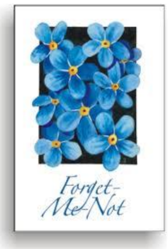
- Clarify that a report will be send to all participants in no later than two weeks.
- Answer any remaining questions or issues raised during the event and conclude the event.

3.3.2. Getting feedbacks from

Feedback from participants gives us the arguments and the mandate for what we are doing. The easiest way is to distribute questionnaire but it can happen that information you will get back will not be useful. That is why is important to prepare interesting questionnaires:

- First of all you have to be clear where and for what purpose these questionnaires will be used.
- Results of this evaluation will be included in the report of the workshop.

Make sure that all materials and questionnaires from the seminar and workshop are collected and organized.



Finishing of the seminar:

- ☐ Distribute evaluation questionnaires.
- ☐ Closing words / thank you for coming.
- ☐ Collect all questionnaire and materials.
- ☐ Clearing up work space.

4.1. Event follow up

No matter how successful the event was and how satisfied the participants were, it can all easily go to waste very quickly if you do not ensure proper follow-up to the event. It is therefore important that you keep to the agreed deadlines and to sending the promised materials and information.

Take enough time to prepare the follow-up materials but don’t wait too long. You should communicate with them in 1-2 weeks after the event.

WHAT?

You should send them:

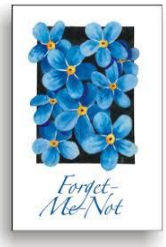
- A short report of the seminar with transcripts of word-by-word recordings from the workshops – do not try to summarise but leave it written in the words of the participants.
- Explain how you will use the results of the workshop and their inputs.
- Include also the evaluation results.
- Attach presentations which were presented at the seminar, scanned attendance lists and photos.
- Inform them about the next steps or next events.

WHY?

- To show that you value their opinions and that you carefully recorded what they were saying.
- To keep the participants involved and informed.
- It’s a great opportunity for additional promotion of the DMCSEE project and the establishment of the DMCSEE Centre.
- You need to let participants know what will happen to their views (which they putted out during the workshop) if you want them to take part again. This will encourage all participants to feel that their views have been taken into account.

After the event:

- ☐ Send report of the seminar / workshop to all participants (with presentations and photos).
- ☐ Prepare a press release about the seminar for the media.
- ☐ Keep participants up-to-date and involved in others DMCSEE events too.



5.1. Understanding the media

Every media outlet – newspaper, radio, television etc, is approached by numerous events and stories on a daily, even hourly basis. What you have to know when trying to get information about your event published is that no matter how important the event is to you, they have plenty of more events that are just as interesting reaching them at the same time.

It is therefore good to know how to present the information to the journalist in a clear, short, concise way. Another important issue is timing – knowing when to inform them in order to ensure their participation at the event.

There are **several ways to ensure publicity** for your event, the main ones being:

- Sending a press release
- Organising a press conference
- Through articles written by you and organised to be published by specific media or departments within the media outlets that focus on topics related to the project.

5.2. Tips for working with the media

Here are some tips for getting the word out to general public:

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Don't send the **invitation** to the event to some random contact at the newspaper – **send it to the editor** who will (if interested) assign a person to go to the event, or send it to a specific journalist that already knows you and follows your activities.

- It's a good idea to contact the **newspapers or departments that deal with the topic of your event** (e. g. the department or person covering environmental issues).

- If your organisation has a **PR department**, make sure to **connect with them** and use their resources; PR people often have personal contacts with relevant journalists so they can help you attract them to the event.

- Send additional information about the project together **with the invitation – include a press release** (for tips on writing it check the annex). If possible, link the background and description of the event to some other currently popular topic (e. g. if there is already drought it will be more interesting for the media to report on activities to combat the impacts).
- **Do not send the invitation too early**; it is very likely they will forget about it by the day it starts. Make sure they have the invitation on Monday morning in the week of the event – that is the time when editors usually meet to pick the stories for the week.

- **Send a reminder** for the event **one day before the event** and again **on the morning of the event** – interesting stories for the day are selected in the mornings.

- In the week before the event try **phoning the main contacts** at the media outlets, especially if you have a personal relationship with some journalists.

> - ***Holding the event outside of capitals and other major towns*** *can positively affect the media turnout. There are less event taking place in smaller town, the media are more connected with the local organisations and will be more interested to attend*
> - ***Inviting a well-known guest speaker*** *who is a known commentator on the topic will also increase the interest for your event. But be careful – if this person is known as controversial and problematic, this can be less positive for the discussions and good atmosphere at the event.*

AT THE EVENT:

- Some journalists will write down basic information, some will record a taping for radio or TV, but all of them will appreciate **written material** with basic information (press release). We know – you already sent it together with the invitation, but who knows where they put the document, it doesn't hurt giving it to them again.

- It is even better (and recommended) if you **have electronic version of the information materials ready for the media** – you can burn it to a CD or to a USB stick.

- If you decide to hold a **press conference, do it in the morning** – have in mind that people have to get back to the office and prepare the article or taped news feature to be ready for publishing in the afternoon or evening news or in time to send it to the press for next day's paper.

- Sometimes **journalists may just drop by** the event for a short time to get some information or make an interview or two – **appoint a member of your team to be responsible for taking care of them** and also giving a short statement in-between the event if necessary.

- **Gather contacts** (e-mails and telephones) from **journalists** – either on a separate attendance list (if you have a press conference) or as part of the general one. This way you can gather direct contacts for sending them follow-up info and for inviting them personally for your next events.

AFTER THE EVENT:

- It may happen that no one will come, however, even if they do, it is a good idea to **send around a post-event press release** where beside the general information on the event you also give some information about the main conclusion and results.

- The person in charge of the media should prepare this already before the event, then add conclusions and **send it to the media immediately after the event or the next morning** if the event is held in late afternoon or the evening.

- Send the press release also to your **PR department** and have it circulate it; have it published on your website.

- Engage your team to follow the press in the following days and archive all articles and reports.

Organising a press conference

- Press conferences are **short** events targeted **only for the media**.
- Organise it in-between brakes or simultaneously to the main event in another room in order to **prevent repeating the information** to all participants.
- They should be **facilitated** with the facilitator **keeping to the time** and **managing questions** of the media.
- At the **beginning** the facilitator shall **introduce the speakers** and explain that basic information about the event will be presented first and then there will be time for questions.
- Begin by holding a **short presentation**(s) on the project and topic – **maximum 5 minutes** per presentation.
- Don't plan more than **3 or 4 presentations** (main speakers and topic of the event should be presented).
- **At the end** of the presentations the facilitator shall ask the participants if they have any **questions.**
- If the questions are not directed to a specific person already by the journalist the **facilitator shall address the right speaker** to answer the specific topic.
- Have **materials** ready for the journalists in electronic and print versions.
- The event should be finished within **30 minutes**; reserve some time for **individual interviews** afterwards.

Working with the media:

- ☐ Appoint a member of your team to take care of the journalists before, during and after the event
- ☐ Keep your information short and concise
- ☐ Contact the right people at the right time
- ☐ Use personal contacts
- ☐ Cooperate with your PR department
- ☐ Keep the press conference short and stick to relevant information
- ☐ Prepare materials for the media in electronic version and give it to them at the event and send it to them afterwards.

When preparing this manual we consulted the following materials:

Pound, D. 2008. Stakeholder Dialogue – A good practice approach to participation. Training Manual. Dialogue Matters.

Tips and tricks on how to organise events. Platina Project Output. URL: http://www.naiades.info/platina/downloads

Some additional useful sites:

- Useful methods for workshops with stakeholders:

http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/browse+methods

- Some more tips on how to plan and implement working with different stakeholders:
http://www.revit-nweurope.org/selfguidingtrail/27_Stakeholder_engagement_a_toolkit-2.pdf

- Tips on how to plan and implement media relations and communication activities from the Natura 2000 management toolkit:
http://www.natura.org/toolkit.html

7. ANNEXES

1. Event planning timeline
2. Checklist for materials
3. Example of an invitation to event
4. Template for detailed event plan
5. Tips on writing a press release