

## Critical Success Factors to Facilitate Online Learning

### Summary of the Capacity Building Sessions in Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany and Italy

Critical success factors	Main obstacles	Possible solutions
<b>Technical and technological equipment</b>	Choosing inappropriate e-learning platform and/or communication channels Using complex tools Lack of expertise in using the technology No preparation before the learning sessions Problems accessing and using the content Using licenced software Insufficient capacity of the network infrastructure	Use intuitive tools for learning Use check-lists to make sure that technical requirements are met and equipment is tested before the course Introduce a mandatory “zero lesson” to get to know the technology to be used Practice the tools Use free software Ensure asynchronous alternatives Have IT support on stand-by
<b>Organisation</b>	Timely dissemination of important information Accuracy of the provided information All necessary resources are available	Use a single point of communication for everything regarding the organisation of the course Prepare the syllabus/calendar carefully and announce it in advance

	<p>Students might 'get lost' regarding course structure, activities, and deadlines</p> <p>Hard to determine when and for how long students will engage with the content</p> <p>Instructors lose the flexibility to adjust the content pace</p> <p>The instructor is (theoretically) accessible 24x7</p>	<p>Announce information on regular basis and at the same time, so it becomes a habit and trainees expect "briefing"</p> <p>Maintain clear communication and a shared calendar</p> <p>Maintain FAQ section or wiki</p> <p>Use selective release of content that is made available in the learning management system</p> <p>Organise well the file structure and be attentive to file formats and names</p>
<b>Instructional design</b>	<p>Lack of pedagogical skills and knowledge</p> <p>Lack of methodical and didactical skills</p> <p>Not well-chosen methods that do not support learning</p> <p>Not well-prepared content (e.g. too complex, without examples, without options to practice)</p> <p>Not student-oriented learning</p>	<p>Educate trainers in pedagogy, methodical and didactical skills</p> <p>Create appropriate environment and materials</p> <p>Use adequate teaching methods</p> <p>Set clear timeline</p>
<b>Social interactivity</b>	<p>Heterogeneous groups</p> <p>Different levels of knowledge about the topic</p> <p>Different learning styles</p> <p>Loss of communication</p> <p>Not enough physical and social contact</p> <p>Lacking non-verbal and informal communication</p> <p>Lacking feedback</p>	<p>Enable quick and easy way for communication</p> <p>Use synchronous communication (e.g. webinars)</p> <p>Use camera and sound to foster social connectivity</p> <p>Create a forum for non-content discussions</p> <p>Use blended learning (a face-to-face section at the beginning helps to create proximity)</p>

		<p>Create groups that maximise opportunities for knowledge transfer (e.g. groups with similar level of knowledge)</p> <p>Online learning needs goals, structure and clear rules linked to the learning objectives</p> <p>Prereading materials, so learners get "on the same page"</p> <p>Introduce an 'All About Me' topic</p> <p>Encourage members to ask questions and engage them in the conversation</p> <p>Foster group dynamics and communication</p> <p>Use different tools and formats to foster engagement</p> <p>Use ice-breaking techniques</p> <p>Respond promptly to every question</p> <p>Ask questions in order to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation</p> <p>Ask for feedback</p> <p>Flipped classroom approach</p> <p>Individual approach to learners to get them up-to speed</p>
<p><b>Motivation</b></p>	<p>Motivation is hard to maintain in digital environment and can get easily lost</p> <p>Lack of motivation of the trainer/ facilitator (e.g. to follow up progress, to give advice and feedback on the way)</p>	<p>Define clear and attainable goals</p> <p>Agree in advance on the "rules of the game"</p> <p>Control external factors that can negatively affect motivation</p> <p>Increase group dynamics and contacts</p>

		<p>Facilitate communication and make it more personal so people can feel comfortable working with each other</p> <p>Regularly summarise and synthesise discussions, tasks, individual progress</p> <p>1:1 meetings and discussions to reach out to students</p> <p>Involving parents when working with young children</p>
<b>Assessment</b>	<p>Some forms of assessment (e.g. content recall) do not work in online environment</p> <p>Preventing plagiarism</p> <p>Difficult to determine individual contribution especially in group assignments</p> <p>Collecting learners' feedback</p>	<p>Use techniques that test the learners' ability to synthesise (not just recall) information</p> <p>Provide smaller and more frequent assessments and spread assessment activities across the course</p> <p>Consider using face-to-face exams</p> <p>Provide opportunities for learners to evaluate the online course both at mid-point and at the end of the course</p>
<b>Appreciation</b>	<p>Teaching is satisfying because one can see the learners' reactions, and this is partially lost online</p>	<p>Use blended learning</p> <p>Use synchronous communication (e.g. webinars)</p> <p>Encourage personal feedback</p>

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