

.. CONNECT IN DIGIT@L TEAMS

PROJECT BY STUDENTS
AT THE HOCHSCHULE FÜR KOMMUNIKATION UND GESTALTUNG

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GEFÖRDERT VOM





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TIME ZONES

CHALLENGE

When working together synchronously across national borders, team members may live in different time zones. This can lead to scheduling confusion and cause meetings that need to be scheduled at different times of the day for some people. These times of day may differ from the usual working hours of the project members.

SOLUTION

Check the time difference between your country and the ones of the other project members, before each meeting. You can arrange the different time zones on your computer desktop to keep track of all time differences. Communication regarding an upcoming meeting is also important. Therefore, the subject of the meeting, as well as the date, time and time zone of the inviting party should always be included in the corresponding e-mail. In addition, the message should include the access link and, if available, the meeting-ID and the meeting password. The necessary information depends on which tool is used for the meeting. If the time zones are very far apart, you can schedule meetings in a way that the inconvenient working hours alternate between the project members.



EXAMPLE

Team DigiGuide invites you to a planned Zoom meeting.

Topic: DigiGuide Meeting

Time: 18 March 2021 19:30 Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/i/81469099729?pwd=ak5VWUR6ailscFNYMDZhRWJaUEp3UT09

Meeting-ID: 814 6909 9729

Passcode: 123456 Ouick dial mobile

- +19294362866,,81469099729#,,,,*123456# United States of America (New York)
- +12532158782,,81469099729#,,,,*123456# United States of America (Tacoma)

Dialling in according to current location

- +1 929 436 2866 United States of America (New York)
- +1 253 215 8782 United States of America (Tacoma)
- +1 301 715 8592 United States of America (Washington DC)
- +1 312 626 6799 United States of America (Chicago)
- +1 346 248 7799 United States of America (Houston)
- +1 669 900 6833 United States of America (San Jose)

Meeting-ID: 814 6909 9729

Passcode: 123456

Search area code: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcqGMa58Zp

Kind regards



FIRST MEETING OF THE PROJECT MEMBERS

CHALLENGE

The project members may not know each other at the beginning of a project and have to face the challenge of developing a group feeling.

SOLUTION

When planning the meeting, always consider how well the project members know each other. In new groups, you should plan a small introduction round at the beginning to encourage digital communication in a playful way. You can find some suggestions by clicking the icon. When some individual people already know each other well, make sure to bring them together with other people, for example, via breakout sessions in video conferences. At the beginning, there should always be a moderator to drive the conversation among the members forward. Reviewing the results of the last meeting and looking at common goals also helps to build a sense of shared purpose.



DETAILED DEFINITION OF GOALS

CHALLENGE

An imprecise definition of goals does not lead to the desired result and conflicting goals can arise.

SOLUTION

Ensure that all parties communicate their cooperation goals as clearly as possible. This can prevent any conflicts and enable motivation to achieve common goals. Elaborate goals and milestones together and make them available to the participants at any time. One goal might be the project's deadline. An intermediate goal could be the deadline for completing the research for the project. In addition, you should schedule group meetings with a reflection on what has been achieved and a preview of upcoming goals, so that all participants have these clearly in mind and can work together.

GOAL DEFINITION

In the process of defining a project goal, it is important that the deadline for the successful outcome of the project is clearly communicated. In addition, certain tools that are needed to achieve the set goal. Furthermore it should be clearly defined so that every project participant has the same idea of the final result.



LANGUAGE - INTERNATIONAL

CHALLENGE

Not all participants in a collaboration speak the same languages; even with a common working language. Some members may therefore feel more insecure than others.

SOLUTION

Keep language barriers as low as possible, e.g. with the balance principle: if it is possible, all project members may speak in their native language, if everyone understands each other's native language. Otherwise all team members speak in a foreign language or someone is hired to translate. This way the language base is balanced. Sometimes it is unavoidable that some people speak their own language but others don 't. To avoid such an imbalance, it is important that the group leader points out a language barrier and makes sure that all members speak the same language. Provide your project members with a glossary before the meetings begins. Another option is to agree on a common language. In most cases, meetings will then be conducted in English.

.. ARRANGE A DIGITAL AND INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION

ADVICE

If you have problems to communicate, you can find a good online translator here.





I ANGUAGE - NATIONAL

PROBLEM

Linguistic misunderstandings can also occur within a nation. The different regions often have different terms, dialects and idioms.

LÖSUNG

This situation can also be seen as an opportunity. It allows you to start a first conversation and each project member gets the chance to introduce him/ herself. Use the linguistic differences to get to know each other better. What are the characteristics of your dialect? Everyone can talk about their dialect and the linguistic differences, such as certain terms. Encourage your project members as the team leader to talk to each other despite any communication difficulties. You can also jointly appoint a moderator who will intervene in case of comprehension problems in order to keep the conversation going.



LET'S START

Before the meeting, find out who are the nations participating in the project and what language the project participants speak. Make a list of common phrases so that members can get to know the other languages and each other.

EXAMPLE

FRENCH	GERMAN	GREEK
Salut, comment ça va?	Darf ich dir Peter vorstellen?	Χαίρομαι που σε γνωρίζω.
saly,komã sa va?	'darf 'ıç 'di:ɐ̯ 'pe:tɐ 'fo:ɐ̯ʃtɛlən?	'çerome pu se ɣno'rizo.
Translation: Hello how are you?	Translation: May I introduce Peter to you?	Translation: Nice to meet you.

Don't forget to write the phonetic spelling of the respective language, so that each participant can pronounce the sentences more easily and correctly in the foreign language.



CHECKLIST

- Have you taken the different time zones into account when scheduling the appointments?
- Are all meetings clearly communicated including date, time zone and subject?
- Have you defined the goals and intermediated goals of the meetings precisely?
- □ Have you created a glossary with all the important terms?
- $\hfill\Box$ Have you thought about how you want to encourage communication?
- ☐ Are you open towards meeting new people?



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INTERNET ACCESS

CHALLENGE

In some areas the internet connection is worse than in others, which can complicate working together. Due to possible sound and image problems it is not apparent if important information is being lost among project members.

SOLUTION

You should be aware of the fact that meeting participants may not be able to participate smoothly if their internet connection is unstable. In this case, ask them to turn off their camera, as this will reduce the amount of data they use. Check your internet connection before an upcoming meeting and switch to a better network if necessary. In advance of the meeting, create a contact list with each project member's phone number and a valid e-mail address. That way, you can also let other participants know about occuring problems during a meeting.



INTERNET ACCESS



ADVICE

Inform other people in your household when holding an online meeting so that they can log out if necessary. In addition, it is important to take notes during the meeting and documenting all the important information regarding the project. The notes should be written by a different project member for each meeting. In order to avoid confusion, you should provide a template that all note takers should follow. Give your project members about 48 hours after the end of the meeting to tacitly approve or veto the notes. You can find more on the topic writing notes in the chapter "How to cooperate digitally" on the topic "Keeping meeting notes" (Page 40).



HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

CHALLENGE

Certain work steps require special hardware and software that may not be available to all participants.

SOLUTION

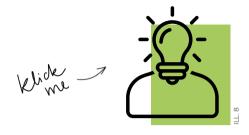
Think about which hardware and software is necessary for the project and provide the participants with a list, links and passwords in time. This way, they can prepare the necessary equipment for your group sessions or purchase any equipment that is still missing. They can let you know when not all members have the necessary equipment and you can reschedule or assign tasks that require special equipment to people who do have it.

Also agree on software that is accessible to all project members in order to share information to everybody. In some countries, various services, such as Google, are not available.

.. PREPARE
YOUR VIRTUAL
WORKSPACE

ATTENTION

Some applications require each project member to create a separate account before they can be used. If this is a problem for some participants, direct them to join the meeting via the browser. To join the meeting via the browser, you only need the meeting link. If you have the meeting ID and password, send it to the project members in case there are problems with the link.



TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

CHALLENGE

Due to the large number of video conferencing programs, it is difficult to find one that all project members can handle. This means that you have to adapt to the different skills of the project participants.

SOLUTION

If you choose the tools and platforms on your own, inform participants ahead of time what will be used. If necessary, provide tutorials or instructions on how to use them or offer individual help to pick up the project members and show them that you understand their problems.



ADVICE

Provide your phone number or email address in case of problems. A good overview of the different video conferencing tools can be found by clicking the icon.



ACCESS TO PLATFORMS AND DATA PRIVACY

CHALLENGE

Many countries have strict privacy policies, meaning that some tools and platforms are not allowed to be used at their universities.

SOLUTION

Find out early which tools and platforms you are allowed to use at your university (IT usage regulations). Find compromises in the form of shareable tools and platforms between project members. In case of doubt, use open-source-programs and materials under "free licenses".

ADVICE

Make sure to choose a video conferencing program that supports most of the common operating systems (Windows, Mac, possibly Linux) and pay attention to the level of data protection and the requirements for the participating countries!

Before starting the project, find out which data protection regulations have to be taken into account for the respective tools. If the members are from different countries, please also note that individual regulations apply to each country.



CHECKLIST

- Is your internet connection stable? If not: From where can you log in instead?
- \Box Have you received / sent the access data for the meeting?
- \square Is the necessary equipment for the meeting available?
- Which tools or platforms may and should be used for your international cooperation?
- Have you already familiarized yourself with the platforms that will be used in your meeting?
- ☐ Have you established a video conferencing program for your meetings?
- \Box Have you created a contact list?
- ☐ Are your favorite snacks and drinks waiting next to your computer?



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DIFFERENT VALUES AND STANDARDS

CHALLENGE

Values and norms, such as punctuality or politeness, can differ greatly internationally. These differences can lead to sensitive discussions and conflicts, as each participant has different expectations of their counterparts.

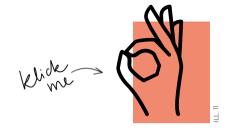
SOLUTION

Before a meeting, you should prepare yourself for your counterpart and check what you should pay attention to. Questions such as "what is customary in the respective culture?" or "what is considered polite or impolite in the respective culture?" will help you prepare. Furthermore, you should familiarize yourself with the existing form of society, basic values and norms. This way you can prepare yourself in advance for possible differences of views and potential conflicts.



By clicking on the icon you can find a video that illustrates the different cultural values and norms.





NON- AND PARAVERBAL COMMUNICATION

CHALLENGE

Gestures and facial expressions, such as nodding the head, making eye contact, or a gesture with the hands, are interpreted differently internationally.

SOLUTION

You should inform yourself in advance about the gestures and facial expressions that have a meaning in the respective country. These vary from culture to culture. You can avoid misunderstandings, impolite behavior and embarrassing "faux pas" by doing your research beforehand.



ADVICE

The Internet is a great way to learn about facial expressions and gestures from all over the world



DIFFERENT WORK METHODS

CHALLENGE

The way people work and plan often varies from culture to culture. Differences can be seen, for example, in terms of working hours, length of breaks, relationship building and the importance of work in life.

SOLUTION

For upcoming intercultural meetings, learn about the way the other countries work. Typical examples of differences are the working hours or the work ethic of the country in question. Building trust and relationships among the participants of the meeting can also be of great importance. Agree with your intercultural team on common times, working methods, planning steps, procedures and task distribution. This can prevent misunderstandings or even disappointments.



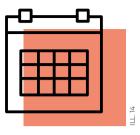
STRENGTHEN SENSE OF COMMUNITY

CHALLENGE

Virtual meetings often have no opportunities for informal exchange. The sense of community can suffer as a result.

SOLUTION

Arrange breaks with your team. Schedule time for informal exchanges or joint activities. You can also have lunch together virtually, review what you've learned, and talk about private matters. To get to know the different cultures of the participants better, you can also talk about the typical dishes of the culture.



INTERCULTURAL COMPLIANCE WITH LIABILITIES

CHALLENGE

Different cultures have different understandings of commitment.

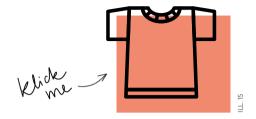
SOLUTION

Work out a structure with your team before the first meeting that will help guide you and the others. Agree with the meeting participants on fixed and confirmed times, such as soft deadlines and hard deadlines. Everyone should stick to these.



ADVICE

For participants from other cultures, you should ask them when something, such as a date, is considered binding.



OBSERVANCE OF DRESS CODES

CHALLENGE

In different cultures, there is a different understanding of which attire is appropriate or considered appropriate in a meeting.

For example, the understanding of business attire, the appropriate skirt length, or the appropriate color choice varies by culture.

SOLUTION

Dress codes should be discussed before the meeting. Find out about the "do's" and "don'ts" of dress codes in different cultures.



ADVICE

As far as possible, you should still be true to your own style of attire that you can identify yourself with.

GAME

The game is suitable to help participants to get to know each other and allow them to gain insight into each other's countries and cultures.

WORLD TOUR

LIFE PATHS ON THE MAP

- 1. All participants receive a link to a virtual map.
- 2. There, they first enter places that were relevant in their lives (place of birth, places of school and university education, places of internships, vacation destinations, etc.).
- 3. Each place is given a landmark with the matching name and color of the group member.
- 4. Participants explore their maps together. The exchange can take place via chat or video conference.





CHECKLIST

- ☐ Do you know where the participants come from?
- Have you informed yourself about these countries, for example, with regard to cultural customs such as greetings, (un)courtesies and working methods/morals?
- Have you established fixed working methods for the cooperation with all participants?
- □ Did you plan common breaks for an exchange?
- Have you chosen appropriate clothing? Are you prepared to address and directly clarify possible misunderstandings?



VARIETY OF COMMUNICATION 35 **PLATFORMS** MULTI-CHANNEL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COMMUNICATION PLAT-36 **FORMS USE OF THE CAMERA FUNCTION** 37 USE OF THE MICROPHONE 38 **USE OF THE CHAT FUNCTION** 39 **KEEPING OF A MEETING** 40 PROTOCOL 42 **GAME** 43 **CHECKLIST**





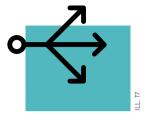
VARIETY OF COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

CHALLENGE

Being on too many communication platforms can cause important information to be lost and can often make communication unnecessarily difficult. For example, using too many communication platforms can make it difficult to find specific shared information.

SOLUTION

Decide with your team on a shared platform. This should allow video conferencing as well as individual and group chats. This way, there is only one information channel that is manageable and the risk of information being lost is reduced. Possible communication platforms include Microsoft Teams or Zoom.



MULTI-CHANNEL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

CHALLENGE

Within a communication platform, communication can take place through various channels, such as via the microphone or the individual and group chat function. This multi-channel communication can lead to distraction, agitation and confusion.

SOLUTION

Define which communication channels are used for which content. Regulate the use of the camera, microphone and chat. It should be ensured that there is no deviation from the originally agreed function. Appoint a person in the team who is responsible for monitoring compliance with the agreed functions. In this way, orderly communication can be regulated during the meeting.



USE OF THE CAMERA FUNCTION

CHALLENGE

Due to cameras being switched off and the resulting lack of facial expressions and gestures during communication, misunderstandings can occur in virtual meetings.

SOLUTION

Dare to use the camera function. If you can see each other in the meeting, misunderstandings due to missing facial expressions and gestures can be avoided. Virtual collaboration can be simplified that way. In addition to that, a greater sense of community is enabled.



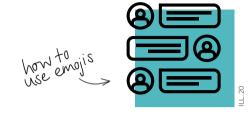
USE OF THE MICROPHONE

CHALLENGE

Permanently switched on microphones in a meeting can cause disturbing noises. In addition, participants speaking in a jumbled manner can make joint communication difficult.

SOLUTION

Turn on your microphone only while you are speaking and turn it off again immediately afterwards. This helps to avoid interfering noises. Furthermore, the "raise hand" function can be used to guide the order of the conversation. Agree on common speaking rules.



USE OF THE CHAT FUNCTION

CHALLENGE

Too much frequent and unregulated use of the chat function in the individual and group chat can lead to distraction and disturbance during the meeting.

SOLUTION

Agree on what the individual and group chat will be used for. For example, the group chat can be used for general questions. The individual chat, on the other hand, can be used for content-related, personal messages. To enhance the chat with emotions, emoticons can be used here. However, the possible different interpretation and social function of emoticons should be taken into account

It may be useful to designate a person who will monitor compliance with the chat rules, oversee the content of the group chat, and alert the meeting moderator to issues arising from the chat. This can prevent distractions and disruptions in the meeting.



KEEPING OF A MEETING PROTOCOL

CHALLENGE

When people are absent from the meeting, there may be an uneven level of knowledge with regard to the rules and content that have already been defined.

SOLUTION

Agree on a person to take the notes, who will record what was discussed within the meeting and any new agreements. The language in which the notes are taken should correspond to the language of the meeting and be understandable for everyone. In this way, people who were not able to attend the meeting can inform themselves afterwards. This ensures that the same level of knowledge is maintained at all times.

ADVICE

The template on the following page shows a possible example of how such a meeting protocol can be kept.



KEEPING OF A MEETING PROTOCOL

Protocol From Items on the agenda: Accountable: То First name, last name, department First name, last name, department, city Agenda item 2 Ms. Smith First name, last name, department, city Location City First name, last name, department, city Telephone T+ 00 (0)0 00 00 00 00 Copy First name, last name, department, city F+ 00 (0)0 00 00 00 00 Items on the agenda: Accountable: First name, last name, department, city E-mail Agenda item 3 Ms. Smith name.sumame@compandy.com Characters 0-500 Date 3/15/21 Miscellaneous: Subject: Title Place/Date of the meeting: Ulm, 3/15/21 Outlook: Start: 8:30am; end: 10:30am Recorder: Participants: Absent: Items on the agenda: Accountable: Agenda item 1 Ms. Smith Signature of the recorder:

GAME

The following game can help to learn how to use the chat function and the microphone:

SPIN A STORY

As the moderator, you assign each person a number, starting with one.

Person 1 starts a story by writing a direct message (max. 2 lines) to person 2. Once person 2 has received the message, they continue the story in a direct message to person 3 (without the first part), and so on ...

At the end, read out the whole story in the correct order. At this point, the participants turn on their microphone in the assigned order, read their received part of the story, and then turn off their microphone again.

If you have a large number of participants, it may be advisable to set up break-out sessions in which the participants are divided into small groups of about 5 people. The game is easier to run in this size of a group.



CHECKLISTE

- \square Have you selected a suitable platform with your group?
- Have you agreed with your group which communication channels will be used for each purpose?
- ☐ Is your camera turned on?
- ☐ Have you turned off your microphone while others are talking?
- \Box Are you aware of the use of the "raise your hand" function?
- Are you aware of the chat rules and the functions of individual and group chat?
- ☐ Has a logger been appointed?

LIST OF FIGURES

ILL.1	world clock by Creative Stall from the Noun Project
ILL. 2	Meeting by Adrien Coquet from the Noun Project
ILL. 3	goal by Justicon from the Noun Project
ILL. 4	Language by The Icon Z from the Noun Project
ILL. 5	Checklist: Checklist by Vectorstall from the Noun Project
ILL. 6	internet by Chintuza from the Noun Project
ILL. 7	Software by Kiran Shastry from the Noun Project
ILL. 8	understand by priyanka from the Noun Project
ILL. 9	Access by Phạm Thanh Lộc from the Noun Project
ILL. 10	Religion by Nithinan Tatah from the Noun Project
ILL. 11	ok hand by Till Teenck from the Noun Project
ILL. 12	working hours by Jejen Juliansyah Nur Agung from the Noun Project
ILL. 13	Community by mungang kim from the Noun Project
ILL. 14	calender by Yeasir Ahmed from the Noun Project
ILL. 15	Clothes by Khaerun Nazmi from the Noun Project
ILL. 16	platform by Eucalyp from the Noun Project
ILL. 17	one to many by SBTS from the Noun Project
ILL. 18	Video by rajakumara from the Noun Project
ILL. 19	Microphon by Mega Agustina from the Noun Project
ILL. 20	chat by MonoGraphic from the Noun Project
II I 21	online meeting by Soremba from the Noun Project

SOURCE DIRECTORY

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IMPRINT

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