

# Creating safe and inclusive spaces for discussing contro- versial issues online



Experiences and tools from the  
Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar  
2020

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# Background

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**How do we create meaningful and inclusive meeting places when we cannot meet?** What are useful tools and methods for discussing controversial issues online? Is it possible to find a common ground when we barely meet each other physically? These were some of the questions the participants at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020 explored together, and that form the basis for this publication. Through this publication, The European Wergeland Centre share experiences and tools from the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020, aiming to support young people in promoting diversity and intercultural understanding through online trainings.

## About the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar

The Thorvald Stoltenberg seminar is an annual seminar for young people engaged in democracy and human rights, organized by the European Wergeland Centre and Utøya. The seminar honours the legacy of the former Norwegian Minister of Defence, Minister of Foreign Affairs and diplomat Thorvald Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg, who passed away in 2018, was a pioneer for Norwegian peace diplomacy. He put great value in dialogue, often exemplified by his “kitchen meetings”, where he would invite state leaders and foreign ministers to his home to enjoy a cup of coffee, relax and have a talk at his kitchen table.

The dialogical approach to conflict resolution is very much in line with what Utøya is today: A place for people to meet, learn, exchange experiences, discuss, agree and disagree. Utøya has a long history of youth participation and international solidarity. It also holds a strong place in the Stoltenberg family. Therefore, EWC and Utøya invited youth leaders from different countries to the first Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar at Utøya in 2019.

Under the covid-19 pandemic, challenges such as polarisation, distrust in democratic institutions, violent protests, hate speech and hate crimes against immigrants, refugees and minorities have intensified. At the same time, it has become more difficult to meet and to address these challenges. Thus, arranging the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar in 2020 was very important, despite not being able to gather people at Utøya.

Through a two-day online seminar, 25 young people involved in activities promoting diversity and equality met for an exchange of experience, discussion of challenges and opportunities during the covid-19 pandemic, and to get inspiration and practical tools for further work. The aim was to support and promote ongoing initiatives in Europe to foster co-existence, trust, and dialogue among young people in diverse societies during the covid-19 pandemic.

*We hope this publication can support and inspire young people across Europe to continue promoting intercultural understanding, also when we cannot meet each other physically.*

### About the organizers

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is a resource centre on education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural understanding. It was established by the Council of Europe (CoE) and Norway in 2008, with a mandate to support member states implement CoE policies in practice. EWC designs and offers trainings and educational programmes to educational professionals and civil society actors all over Europe. EWC is a partner of Utøya and the 22. July Center on educational programmes on 22. July and education for democratic citizenship and human rights. [www.theewc.org](http://www.theewc.org)

Utøya is an open and accessible arena for commemoration, learning and engagement. It is the site of the terror attack on 22 July 2011. As part of the rebuilding of Utøya following 22 July 2011, the new memorial- and learning center, Hegnhuset, was completed during the summer of 2016. The learning center at Utøya offers a unique opportunity for young people to reflect on what democracy means for them, what are the challenges and threats to democracy, and how they as active citizens can promote democracy in their everyday lives. Utøya is managed through Utøya AS. The EWC and Utøya have facilitated several workshops for young people at Utøya since the opening of Hegnhuset in 2016. [www.utoya.no](http://www.utoya.no)

The seminar was financed by the Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO.

### About this publication

This publication does not embody a full account of the program at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar. Rather, we share some general experiences and good practices from hosting an online training and a few practical exercises from the seminar. The pedagogical underpinning of this publication is education for democratic citizenship/human rights education, and the experimental learning cycle.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we use the word “trainings”, which refers to activities or seminars where the aim is to learn together through experience. We also use the word “facilitation”, which refers to preparing, presenting and co-ordinating activities. Nevertheless, the content of this publication is relevant for all types of participatory meetings and seminars online.

The exercises in the publication build on the work of the team of trainers at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020: Joakim Arnøy, Coordinator Youth Work, Narvik War and Peace Centre, Ingrid Aspelund, Senior Adviser, The European Wergeland Centre, Ammal A. Haj, Vice President, Norwegian People's Aid Solidarity Youth and Inga Marie Nymo Riseth, Adviser, The European Wergeland Centre.

We hope this publication can support and inspire young people across Europe to continue promoting intercultural understanding, also when we cannot meet each other physically.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe (2015a)



# Facilitation of online trainings

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Good facilitation of online trainings builds on the same principles as facilitation in physical trainings.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, online facilitation means considering some other aspects. In this section we present a few lessons learned from the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020.

## Online seminars need careful planning and teamwork

Careful planning and good teamwork are of course important when organizing all types of events. However, organizing an online seminar for the first time can be stressful, and a detailed plan and close cooperation are keys to success. Have a detailed run-through the program beforehand and clarify who is responsible for which tasks (who sends the participants into Breakout-rooms, who is responsible for answering questions in the chat, who will assist participants struggling with technicalities and so on). This takes time but is worth it. We recommend 3-4 trainers/organizers for longer trainings. This way you also have the flexibility to support each other in case of technical issues or unexpected problems. You should also agree on a channel for communication within the trainer team, so you can easily communicate during the program.

If you are using a specific platform or some tools for the first time, make sure to test them properly before the training. On Youtube, you will find a range of introductory videos, for example on how to use different tools in Zoom. It is highly recommended to use some time on this.

## Creating a culture where everyone is seen and included

As a facilitator you strive to create a positive and healthy atmosphere, where diversity is respected and the participants feel safe and willing to share experiences, be honest and learn together. Managing this in an online training, is a little different than in when meeting physically. Keep in mind that a great amount of our communication is body language, and in online trainings this disappears. In addition, there is no mingling and connecting with each other in the breaks. As a result, participants might feel a higher threshold to speak and might be more easily distracted, compared to when gathered physically. One way of meeting these challenges is to write private, encouraging messages to participants in the chat, when they contribute to the conversation. Another suggestion is to join some of the group discussions, which allows you to interact closer than in the plenary discussions. Striking the balance: not too short, nor too long Time management in online trainings can be challenging. Because it is generally harder to concentrate for longer stretches of time in front of the screen, online trainings are usually shorter than when we meet physically. Consequently, you might not have room in the program to do everything you would like. You do not want to stretch the duration unto a point where participants are tired or bored. Rather, consider means of interaction that are refreshing and that saves time in the program. For example, could you cut some topics from the program of the training, and instead send out a reading or a video as a preparation task for participants?

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<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe (2015b)



### Vary the means of interaction

Variation in the means of interactions throughout the training have several benefits. It is a good way to keep participants interested and active, to include participants who are not so comfortable with speaking in plenary, and it might make it easier to manage time. You can vary between

sessions where everyone is supposed to participate actively, and sessions where participants listen to a lecture or speech. Choose one or two tools such as Miro, Jamboard or Mentimeter, where participants can contribute by writing or drawing. It is also a good idea to vary between plenary discussions and group discussions.



## Creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere

Creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere is crucial for having open and honest conversations on diversity, intercultural understanding, and controversial issues. Here are a few suggestions on how this could be done.

### Establishing norms getting in touch with each other before the seminar

The work on creating an inclusive and safe atmosphere starts before the training begins. Before the training, send out an email with a list of encouragements for how everyone can contribute to an inclusive and inspiring atmosphere, for instance something like this:

### Contributing to an inclusive and inspiring meeting

Prepare for the seminar almost as you would prepare for a seminar in a physical meeting place.

Here are some tips on how we can all contribute to an inclusive and inspiring meeting:

- Please come 10 minutes before the seminar is supposed to start: check that your laptop is charged, your microphone and camera is working and that your internet cable is stable.
- You might want to take notes: Have something to write on and with.
- Avoid distractions: make sure your cat is fed, your roommates know that you are busy, push notifications from your email are turned off and your phone is muted.
- Body language is an important part of communication, so please be ready to have your camera on. This is also important for creating a safe and inclusive space for discussions.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- Be active and ready to participate in the discussions.



Screenshot from the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020

A good idea could also be to initiate an icebreaker -activity before the training. For instance, you can make a Facebook Group or a Whatsapp Group and invite participants to join. Here you can encourage participants to share a picture, short video, mind map or sound clip where they tell the others a little bit about themselves. This way, the faces and the names of everyone is already a little familiar when you finally meet.

### Ice breakers and energizers

Ice breakers and energizers often take some time, but contribute to better conversations later in the program and should be prioritized. Here are a few examples of ice breakers and energizers which could be done in plenary or in smaller groups:

- Have a round of introduction where you also ask people to share one word describing how they feel today.
- If you are using Zoom, Teams or another platform where participants can rename themselves: Ask everyone to rename themselves to a human rights activist or someone else they admire. Go a short round where everyone explains which attributes about the activist they admire/appreciate, and why they chose this person.
- Tea Time: Before the training, ask everyone to bring a mug that they like/find special. Let everyone share the story of their mug, and why they brought it.
- Virtual Body Language: Allocate participants into smaller groups. Each group collectively decide 2 virtual body language signals they want to be used during the training. These are then introduced to the collective. (eg. Make a heart-shape with the hands, wave to greet, showing thumbs up). Afterwards, encourage everyone to use these signals throughout the training.
- Eyeball Yoga: Our eyes become tired of staring into the screen. Have a short break where you invite everyone to join a round of eyeball yoga. Start by asking everyone to look at their nose tip, then at something far away, look to the left, to the right, up, down and roll their eyes.
- Can you draw a triangle and a square in the air at the same time? Ask everyone to make two square-shapes with their index fingers, then triangle-shapes. Then: can they make a square with their left index finger and a triangle with their right index finger at the same time?



# Discussing controversial issues in online trainings

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In 2015, the Council of Europe published the teacher training pack *Living with Controversy - Teaching Controversial Issues Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE)*.<sup>3</sup> The training pack is designed to support and promote the teaching of controversial issues in schools in Europe. However, its content is relevant for anyone involved in activities where controversial issues are discussed – such as student groups, civil society organizations, youth clubs or other informal and non-formal and informal learning spaces.

Discussing controversial issues is a central part of the democratic process, and thereby relevant for anyone who wish to protect and promote a culture of human rights and democracy. It is relevant both for those facilitating meetings and discussions, and for those merely taking part in discussions. For the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar, we adapted activities from the Teaching Controversial Issues training pack to fit the online format and the target group of the seminar.

In the following, we shortly introduce controversial issues, especially focusing on how young people involved in activities promoting diversity and intercultural understanding can approach such issues. Then, we present some concrete tools and methods that can be used for self-reflection and for facilitating discussions on controversial issues online.

## What do we mean by “controversial”?

Controversial issues can be defined as “Issues which arouse strong feelings and divide opinion in communities and society”<sup>4</sup>. What is controversial depends on the context – it might vary with place and time; it can be local or global. Some issues are long-standing, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, while others are new, such as covid-19 regulations. You might find an issue very controversial, while your colleague or neighbour might see it as a normal part of everyday life.

## Why are controversial issues challenging to address?

As one can read from the definition, controversial issues arouse strong feelings and create or reinforce divisions between people. They tend to be complex issues with no easy answers, and often involve conflicting values and interests. Opening discussions on these kind of issues in an organisation or a non-formal meeting space raises difficult questions, such as how to respect people from different identities, backgrounds, and cultures, how does one deal with tensions, that might arise, and how does one facilitate a balanced discussion? To address a controversial issue in a group that strongly disagree with each other, demands quite a lot from the facilitator.



## Why address controversial issues?

For young people involved in activities promoting diversity and intercultural understanding, controversy might not be unfamiliar. Rather, it might be a normal and expected part of these activities. Despite the challenges, one should not shy away from the controversial issues. As stated in the training pack, *“learning how to engage in dialogue with people whose values are different from one’s own and to respect them is central to the democratic process and essential for the protection and strengthening of democracy and fostering a culture of human rights.”*<sup>3</sup>

There are several reasons for creating spaces to explore and participate in conversations about controversial issues. Here are some :

- Controversial issues are inherently significant for society – exploring these is important for every young person.
- Discussing controversial issues is part of the democratic process – it helps us to develop as democratic citizens, such as becoming open-minded, curious, willing to understand and respect others, and able to involve in democratic debate and peaceful conflict resolution.
- We are bombarded by information on controversial issues daily. Through media, and especially social media, controversial issues are often presented in partial and misleading ways. To have in-depth discussions on these issues with others can contribute to a balanced understanding.
- There are new controversies arising all the time – by learning how to deal with controversial issues now, you will be better prepared to deal with them in the future.
- Investigating controversial issues demands a range of critical thinking and analytical skills – it helps us to learn how to weigh up evidence, detect bias and make judgments based on reason and evidence.
- Engaging with controversial issues can make a positive contribution to our personal and emotional development – it helps us to understand our emotions and clarify our values, become better learners and more confident individuals.

## How to address controversial issues?

There is no simple response to these challenges, but here are a few practical suggestions .

Begin with yourself:

- Self-reflection can contribute to awareness of your own beliefs and values and how they are shaped by personal experience, and the potential impact this might have in discussions about controversial issues.
- Through raising your own awareness of the nature of controversial issues and the challenges they pose; you are better prepared to meet challenges.

When preparing to facilitate trainings or dialogue about controversial issues:

- Familiarize yourself with the context and the group, so that you are aware of potential sensitivities and can make adaptations.
- Use a range of strategies/methods for participation and discussion, to minimize the danger of bias and to open up participants for new ideas and values.
- Use time on creating an appropriate atmosphere for discussions where everyone feels safe to express their opinion. This is especially important online.
- Steer clear of the role of ‘knowledgeable expert’. Since controversial issues are complex and fluid, it might be more fruitful to act as a facilitator who encourages others to engage in dialogue, problem-solving and enquiry.
- Train yourself and others to identify bias.
- Plan for how to manage the discussion effectively.
- Involve other members of your organization/institution, so that you do not have to manage a complex issue alone.

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<sup>3</sup> Available for download in 20 different languages via this link: <https://theewc.org/resources/living-with-controversy-teaching-controversial-issues-through-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-edc-hre/> (Accessed 07.01.20)

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe (2016) p. 8

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe (2016) p. 11



# Activity:

## What are controversial issues and how do they make us feel?

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*This activity is originally from the training pack *Living with Controversy - Teaching Controversial Issues Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE)*, (Council of Europe, 2016 p. 40-41).*

*For the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020, we adapted the exercise for use online and for the target group of the seminar.*

### Aims:

- To explore the emotive nature of controversial issues and its implications for dialogue
- To explore different factors that make issues controversial, and how these can be heavily dependent on context

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Number of participants:** 15 – 30

### Tools and method:

- Use a platform that allows you to share your screen and participants to write on it. We used Zoom and the built-in annotate-function. Alternative tools are Miro or Jamboard.
- A tool that allows participants to brainstorm controversial issues. We used [www.mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com) and the feature for open-ended questions.

### Preparations:

- Prepare the tool you will use for the brain storming. If you choose to use [www.mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com): Make a presentation and choose the function “Open-ended questions” and fill in the question “What are controversial issues?”. Choose the preferred result layout, for example “flowing grid”. Make sure you tick of the box “Let participants submit multiple times”.
- Think through: Which issues do you think the group find controversial? What will they write during the brainstorming? In the first part of the activity, participants will write down issues they find controversial. You can use these issues as a basis for part 2 of the activity, or you can prepare some statements on beforehand.
- Google “Zoom Whiteboard” or “Zoom Annotation” for instruction videos on how to use these functions. The best way of learning is to try it out yourself beforehand. Invite a colleague or a friend to practice using the tools, before the training.

## *Controversial issues are issues which arouse strong feelings and divide opinion in communities and society*

### Instructions:

#### Part 1: Brainstorming

1. Introduce the session, for example by giving a definition of controversial issues. In Teaching Controversial Issues (p. 8), it is defined as “Issues which arouse strong feelings and divide opinion in communities and society”. Explain that in this session participants will explore what make some issues more controversial than others, the emotive nature of these issues and what implications it might have for dialogue.
2. Explain that we will start by brainstorming on what controversial issues are. The concrete task is to formulate, as very short statements, an issue, case, or example of something that is controversial in society. You can emphasize that this task has no correct answer, it is entirely up to the participants themselves and what they find controversial. All the contributions will be anonymous.
3. Ask the participants to access [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com), type in the code for your presentation and write down a couple of issues that they find controversial.
4. As soon as a few issues have been registered, you can share the screen with the results.
5. You can let the results hover on your screen a little, and let participants read for themselves. Read a couple of issues out loud, and use them as the basis for some reflections on what controversial issues are, for example:
  - a. What we see as controversial might vary between people, over time and across countries.
  - b. Different factors might contribute to making an issue controversial, such as media, recent events, political climate.

## What are controversial issues?

Mentimeter

Abortion	Topics which create heated debate due to opposing views	Black lives matter in Norway
The Palestina and Israel conflict	Israel Palestine conflict	Immigration
Animal rights vs. eating and consuming products from animals	Vaccines	Cultural Differences & Barriers, Cultural Assimilation and Integration

Screenshot, showing some of the controversial issues that came up at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar.

## Part 2: Hot or cold?

1. Explain that you have chosen a few of the issues as the basis for statements that you will show one by one. Participants will be asked to position themselves along a scale between “Cold” and “Hot” according to how comfortable they are discussing an issue. “Cold” means that you are completely comfortable talking about the issue and listening to someone else’s views. Hot means you are completely uncomfortable. In between are various, smaller degrees of comfort or discomfort.
2. If you are using Zoom, you can share a PowerPoint or use the built in Whiteboard-function. Make a scale between “Cold” and “Hot” on your whiteboard/PowerPoint, pose one statement at the time and ask the participants to position themselves along the scale by annotating on the screen. When all the participants have put their stamp on the screen, you can save the annotation and erase all the stamps. Then you can pose a new statement on the screen. Continue this way, until you have covered all the statements.
3. Questions for debrief:
  - a. What did you feel during this activity?
  - b. What makes some of the issues more challenging than others?

### Tips

1. At the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar, we used the “Stamp” tool. By using this tool, the participants are anonymous during the activity. This way, one can ensure that participants feel safe to express their opinion, also online, with limited time for building a safe space, for discussion and debrief. Alternatively, the “Arrow” tool can be used, in which the names of the participants are visible.
2. Participants that are using Zoom through a web browser on their computer, or who are using a phone or a tablet, might have difficulties annotating. Tell participants that struggle, that they can send a private message in the chat to one of your trainer-colleagues, who will annotate on behalf of them. They can write a number between 1 and 5, where 1 equals cold and 5 equals hot.
3. You might want to document the results of this activity. When using the annotate-function in Zoom, it is possible to save the annotations to your computer by pressing the “Save” button in the upper left corner.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION IN NORWAY



## CARICATURE DRAWINGS OF THE PROPHET MOHAMMED



Screenshots, showing some of the statements and participants' positions at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar.

### Suggestion

At the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020, this activity was concluded by a short PowerPoint presentation on the following questions:

- How can we define controversial issues?
- Why are controversial issues so challenging to discuss?
- Why address controversial issues?
- How to address controversial issues?

Having short presentations in between the participatory activities might be a good variation, not to “exhaust” the participants.

In the section of this publication about “Discussing controversial issues online” and in the training pack Living with Controversy - Teaching Controversial Issues Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE) you will find all the information you need if you wish to make a similar presentation.





## Activity: Circle of trust

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*This activity was introduced for the EWC at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar at Utøya in 2019, where trainer Dariusz Grzemny used it as part of a longer session focusing on stereotypes, prejudice and hate speech. For the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar in 2020, the activity was adapted for online use, and was part of a session on managing controversial issues online.*

### Aims:

- To explore different factors that make issues controversial, and how these can be heavily dependent on context
- To explore how our background and circle of trust might influence how we meet others and how we meet controversial issues.

***How diverse is the group of people you trust? How does this influence how you meet controversial issues?***

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Number of participants:** 15 – 30

### Tools and materials:

- All participants need a blank paper and a pen, or a blank word-document in their device.
- Use a platform that allows you to share your screen, and that allows participants to discuss in breakout rooms/smaller groups, for example Zoom.

### Instructions:

1. Ask participants to find a blank piece of paper (or open a blank document on the computer). Vertically, they should write down the names of 4-5 people they trust the most that are not family members. Emphasize that they do not at any point have to share this with anyone.
2. You can share your screen showing how the paper should look like:

#### Name

Person 1  
Person 2  
Person 3  
Person 4  
Person 5

3. When the participants have completed their list of names, the read out the following characteristics one by one: gender, age, level of education, nationality, ethnicity or skin colour, disability, sexual orientation. Ask the participants to write them one top of the paper, so that it looks like this in the end:

Name	Gender	Age	level of education	Nationality	Skin color	Ethnic background	Sexual orientation	Disability

4. Emphasize once more that participants do not have to show their list to anyone, and that the purpose of this activity is not to “arrest” anyone. Introduce the term “affinity bias” or “similarity bias”: the tendency people have to connect with others who resemble themselves.
5. Explain participants that they will now go into groups of 4-5 persons. Questions for group reflection:
  - How diverse is the group of people you trust?
  - Why do we have the tendency to trust people that resemble us?
  - How is this similarity bias connected to stereotypes?
  - What are the possible implications? For individuals and for societies?
6. Gather the whole group for a final debrief, ask every group to share some highlights from the group reflection.  
Question for reflection:
  - How does our circle of trust influence how we meet controversial issues?

### Tip for online facilitation

Participants might find it difficult to start the conversation and to organize themselves in the group reflection. If you are enough trainers, you could consider whether one trainer should join each group. If not, make sure that the participants note the questions for the group reflection and that they are ready to share highlights in plenary afterwards.



## Activity: World café

*This activity is originally from the training pack Living with Controversy - Teaching Controversial Issues Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE), (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 57-58).*

*For the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020, the exercise was adapted for use online and for the target group of the seminar.*

### Aims:

- To see how collective problem-solving can be constructive to improve one's understanding of controversial issues, and see an issue from different angles
- To reflect upon the digital meeting place, and how it can be made as safe and inclusive as possible

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Number of participants:** 15 – 30

### Tools and materials:

- Use a platform that allows you to share your screen, and that allows participants to discuss in breakout rooms/smaller groups, for example Zoom.

### Preparations:

- Allocate participants into groups, for example 5 groups with 4—6 participants.
- Collect images illustrating different controversial issues. The number of images should be the same as the number of groups, for example 5.
- Prepare 1 Google Doc for each image, containing the image and instructions for the exercise. Prepare 1 Google Doc with links to all the Google Docs with images.

### Image 2 - World Café

#### Instructions:

- Each round will last 5 minutes (20 minutes in total to visit each of the 4 images). The facilitators will notify you when it is time to move to the next Google Doc.
- In round 1, the groups will note down all the questions the given image raises for them regarding that image/issue. A potentially useful technique is to formulate at least one question each beginning with **What? When? Where? Who? How? Why?**
- In subsequent rounds the groups will try to answer the questions from the previous groups, but are free to add their own questions to each image.
- The last group to work with each of the 4 Google Docs is asked to also prepare to present to the whole group the main points raised. Presentations of max 2 minutes. We share on the screen each Google Doc after turn.

#### The rounds:

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
Image 1	Group 1	Group 4	Group 3	Group 2
Image 2	Group 2	Group 1	Group 4	Group 3
Image 3	Group 3	Group 2	Group 1	Group 4
Image 4	Group 4	Group 3	Group 2	Group 1



*Screenshot showing 1 of the Google Docs prepared for the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020*

## *Through collective problem-solving controversial issues can be discussed in a safe way*

### Instructions:

1. Explain the participants that you will now work with a concrete method that they can readily adapt and use in their own work context, both online and offline. It is particularly useful when you are dealing with current issues or something comes up unexpectedly.
2. Explain that participants will be split 5 into groups. Each group will be meeting in a Zoom Breakout Room, all the while working – after turn – in separate Google Docs. The group work ends when all the groups have worked in all the Google Docs.
3. Share a Google doc with link to all the Google Docs with images in the Chat. This needs to be done before sending participants to Breakout Rooms, as they will not have access to the Main Room's Chat from that point on. Make sure everyone clicks the link before sending them to their groups.
4. Each Google Doc contains an image of a controversial issue and instructions for the exercise. As follows:
  - Each round will last 4 minutes (20 minutes in total to visit each of the 5 images)
  - In round 1, the groups will note down all the questions the given image raises for them regarding that image/issue. A potentially useful technique is to formulate at least one question each beginning with **What? When? Where? Who? How? Why?**
- In subsequent rounds the groups will try to answer the questions from the previous groups, but are free to add their own questions to each image.
- The last group to work with each of the 5 Google Docs is asked to also prepare to present to the whole group the main points raised. Presentations of max 2 minutes. We share on the screen each Google Doc after turn.
5. Debriefing is conducted in plenary. Proposed questions:
  - What have you learned during this exercise?
  - Has the exercise given you an increased understanding of controversial issues and their significance?
  - Which advantages or disadvantages do you see with this exercise?
  - How could you use this exercise in activities you are involved in?



# Evaluating and reviewing

Reviewing is an essential part of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Remember to allocate enough time for reflection throughout the program, as well as in the end. The following activities can be used at the end of the training, to make participants reflect on the learning experience and to get some quick feedback on the training.

Spider chart using [Mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com)

Use Mentimeter.com and the spider chart-function. Ask participants to rate different aspects of the training from 1 to 5. For example: Programme, Performance of the facilitating team, Usefulness of the seminar, Methods used, My own participation.

## Making a value tree

At the commemoration and learning-centre at Utøya you will find the Value Tree. Visitors at Utøya can hang a note in the branches of the tree with their own words to commemorate those killed in the terror attack 22. July, something they value, or think is important, or a message to others visiting Utøya. The tree is a powerful symbol of our collective wish to remember hurtful events of the past, while doing our best to contribute towards a better present and future. When meeting online, it is possible to make a similar value tree.

Use Google Jamboard and make a jamboard with a picture of a tree in the middle, ask participants to use the “post-its” to write a short message each to denote their motivation, wishes, commitment, or inspiration stemming from this seminar.





*We do not learn from experience;  
we learn from reflecting on experience*

*John Dewey*



Screenshot from the value tree made at the Thorvald Stoltenberg Seminar 2020

# References

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