



# **Co-Laboratory guidebook**

**Virtual Exchange training for Higher Education**

Designed by EVOLVE Team

# Acknowledgements

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## Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the online training on Virtual Exchange created and published under open licences by **EVOLVE Team**. EVOLVE (Evidence-Validated Online Learning through Virtual Exchange) is an Erasmus+ project which aims to mainstream Virtual Exchange (VE) as innovative practice in Higher Education (HE). Please visit our website to learn more: [www.evolve-erasmus.eu](http://www.evolve-erasmus.eu)

The purpose of this course is to help the participants embrace Virtual Exchange (VE) - **a class-to-class education program in which geographically distant groups of students collaborate online over a sequence of tasks (in pairs or small groups) with the support of educators and/or facilitators.**

Virtual Exchange projects can be implemented in a variety of contexts including:

- teacher training
- pre- or post-mobility
- content delivery, also across disciplines
- developing transversal skills (e.g. global citizenship, digital literacies, intercultural competence)
- language education
- Intercultural learning.

This training has been designed to be repurposed for **HE educators from any discipline who are interested in integrating class-to-class VE as an element in academic courses they teach.** The original version of the course was designed and delivered on a Moodle platform.

You can **preview all the course materials** and **download** the full course as a **module** (IMS Common Cartridge) which you can **install in your own Moodle, Canvas, Blackboard or Brightspace VLE** to adapt it to your own needs at <https://evolve-erasmus.eu/training-resources/>.

All the training tasks and resources have been used with two different groups of academic faculty from various higher education institutions from across the globe and received very good comments. Detailed training evaluation reports are available from the project website [HERE](#).

The purpose of the current handbook is to **assist instructors in making the most of the training content**. The sections below provide comments on the practicalities of the various aspects of the training including the content of the modules, tasks and types of interaction and suggested technologies.

We hope you find these resources useful :-)

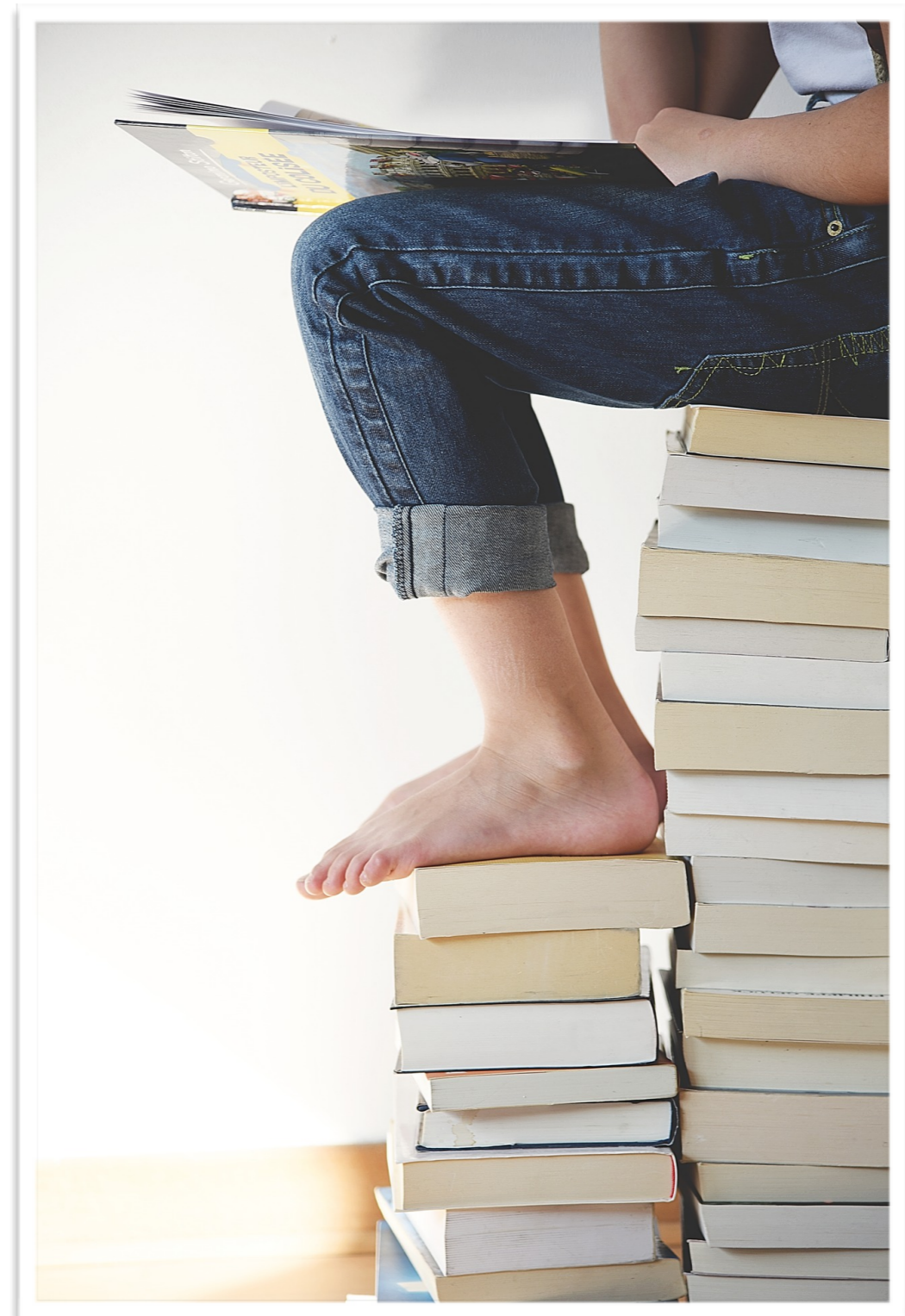
Happy learning!  
**The EVOLVE Team**



# 01 Training objectives

The aim of this training is to assist academic faculty in launching their own **class-to-class exchanges**. In particular, in this course participants are guided to:

- learn and experience what Virtual Exchange (VE) is and how it can be implemented in their institutional context;
- learn about different types of VE and the tasks used;
- study examples of real-life VE scenarios;
- experience the use of various tools and communication channels used in VE;
- learn how to integrate pedagogy and technology in VE;
- discuss the challenges involved in VE and the solutions to them;
- reflect on their progress and their own experiences.
- launch their own class-to-class VER
- study VE from the perspectives of critical digital literacy and intercultural competence





The coursework has been divided into weekly modules, each of which consists of **reading and viewing tasks, online group discussions**, suggestions for **individual reflections**, as well as **regular videoconference meetings**. All the resources can be freely reused and modified to adapt to needs and demands of the host institution. The course can be published on the university Moodle platform, or as an online Canvas course, depending on local preferences.

The average workload for course participants is estimated at approx. **3 hours per week**, but can be either reduced or prolonged depending on the participants' needs.

Detailed tips and suggestions have been attached to the descriptions of each of the modules. We also link out to the original resources published as OER on our website. Feel free to explore them to get the flavour of the training.

## 02 Targeted participants

The course has been designed with **Higher Education teachers, administrators and internationalisation officers** in mind. While educators can work on the scenarios of their own projects others can explore the experience of virtual exchange to aid their understanding of how it can be used. Experiential learning is a vital part of this course and those implementing it need to commit lead tutors to be present in the environment to actively encourage interaction.

Apart from academic faculty interested in designing and their own class-to-class VE projects launching, the training can also be used with Internationalisation officers and other stakeholders who can develop a better understanding of what Virtual Exchange is and, with that, contribute to successful implementation of VE or virtual mobility in their institutions. These include **educational and blended learning developers, teacher trainers and professional development supporters, internationalisation officers and education managers**. Their perspective and unique needs

have been addressed in instructions to selected reflection tasks.

We do encourage instructors to **invite participants' prospective VE partners** to the training, so that they can work towards creating tasks for a real VE project.





## 03 Training structure

The content of the course has been divided into six weekly modules covering the major concepts related to the implementation of VE. Their order is suggestive rather than definite and, again, can be reshuffled or even accessed individually, depending on the local context.

The sections to follow provide an overview of each of the modules, with practical tips and suggestions for course instructors.

Soft start: **Before you Begin**

Module 1: **Pedagogy of Virtual Exchange**

Module 2: **Task design and Technology**

Module 3: **Managing Challenge**

Module 4: **Critical Digital Literacy**

Module 5: **VE and Intercultural Communicative Competence**

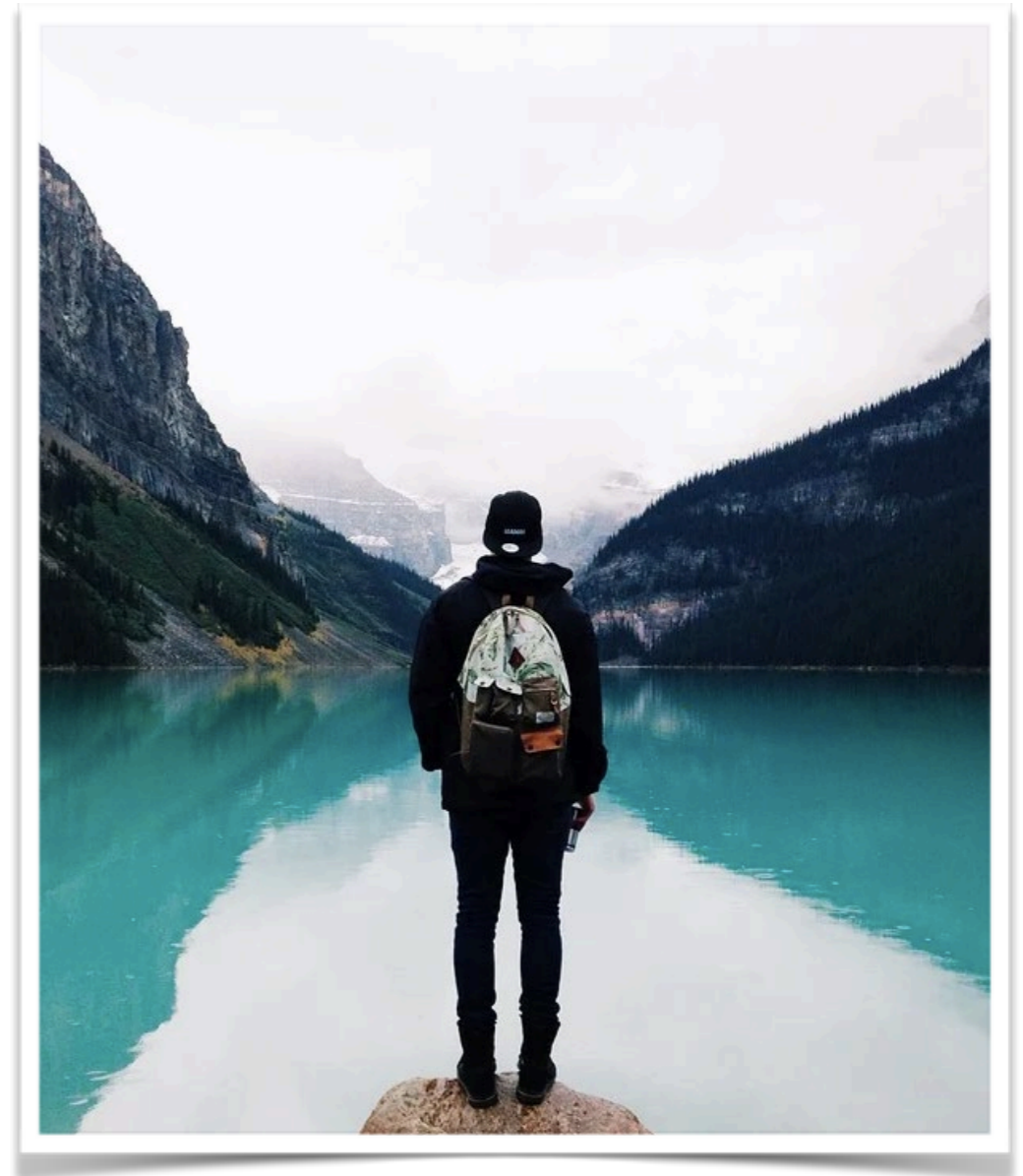
Module 6: **Facilitated Dialogue**

## 04 Co-Laboratory Reflection Tasks

**Reflection** is a very important component of VE projects and any other form of **experiential learning**. It is through reflection that participants see their experience in new light and develop a new perspective. Reflection also helps turn critical incidents and tensions into a learning experience.

Each weekly module contains a reflection task which can be explored in various ways. For instance, participants can be encouraged to keep a log or a diary. This can be done through a document or through an online e-portfolio tool such as [Mahara](#) - a popular e-portfolio tool which can be incorporated into most learning platforms.

Reflection questions that we suggest in this course can also be explored through various forms of online or F2F interaction such as **discussion forums, tools for video discussions or even during the synchronous meetings**. Their overall purpose is to make participants mindful of the journey they will be on.



[See a reflection task for Module 2.](#)

## 05 Synchronous Sessions

It is advisable to carry out weekly synchronous meetings. Apart from their role in highlighting particular parts of content, they play a very important social role, which has been stressed out by the participants of our two international cohorts.

As tools come and go, we do not intend to recommend any particular solution. It is important, though, to make sure the tool is intuitive and reliable in terms of securing participants' data.

Here are EVOLVE tips:

- make sure the starting time is friendly to participants' various time zones;
- If only possible, prepare at least two different time slots for participants to choose from. They should be advertised at least a week before the due day. It might be a good idea to publish a schedule of all the meetings early in the course;
- synchronous meetings can be used to enhance the groupness feel in the course. Taking a group photo and publishing it to the platform is a friendly reminder of the get-together time
- some of the videoconferencing software offer the feature of sending groups/pairs of participants to separate rooms. An opportunity to work in smaller groups is beneficial for participants' bonding and is highly appreciated.

## 06 Technicalities

We suggest uploading the resources to an institutional VLE (virtual learning environment) such as **Moodle** or **Canvas** and modify them to match the local needs.

Please observe the **licence requirements** which are attached to the resources. You are invited to remix the resources in a way that makes them more suitable for your context but please observe the Share Alike requirement and license your new resources with the same type of licence. You can read more about [Creative Commons licences here](#)

As far as possible we have tried to ensure that **the resources are easily reused** but in some cases you may have to adapt a resource to better fit your VLE or your context. Also, as the course is being released in spring 2020, we are very much aware that some of the resources may get dated with time and we strongly recommend **updating them on a regular basis**.

For specific guidelines on how to upload the content onto your university server as IMS Common Cartridge format please visit our website at <https://evolve-erasmus.eu/installing-ims-cc/>.

## 07 Overview of Training Content

The following pages provide an overview of the modules, resources and activities designed or repurposed for the Co-laboratory training.

In module descriptions we link out to the resources published online on our website. Please feel free to explore them.

# Introductory module: Before you begin

**EVOLVE TIP:** We strongly recommend saving at least a week for this module as it should be seen as a soft start. Saving time for personal introductions and learning the ropes is a good investment in participants' course productivity further along.

The overall purpose of the module is to introduce participants to the learning environment, course outline, requirements and to trigger the community feel. The space can also be used to introduce participants' reflective space (e.g. Mahara).

The following activities are strongly recommended to enhance participants' social presence in the course:

- **Creating a course profile**
- **Personal introductions**
- **The basics of course navigation**



# Personal introductions

**Personal introductions** are the first step towards creating a community feel within the course. The basic task of making participants introduce themselves and interact with others can be performed via various tools and customised. We suggest starting with the simplest form of text introductions in a **DISCUSSION FORUM** using the VLE discussion tools, through to creating **PADLET** posts or via video-recorded **FLIPGRID** posts, as suggested in the training materials.

As there may be accessibility or availability issues with some tools, they need to be considered and addressed by course instructors.

## **Important:**

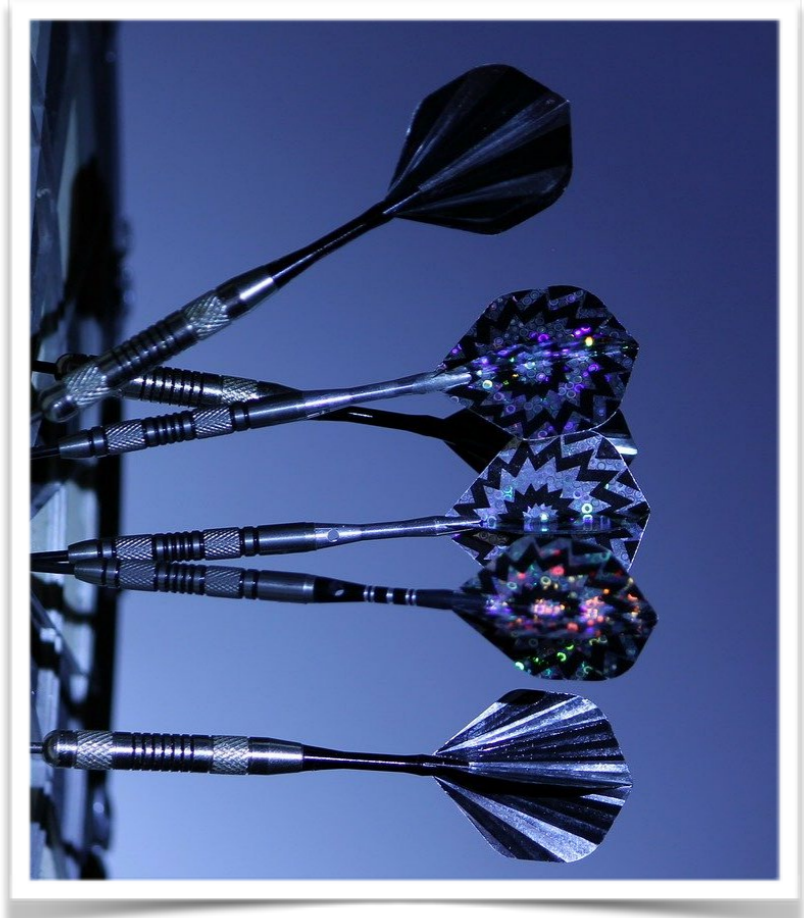
In this course we link out to a **public FLIPGRID group** that participants can join. While this is a quick and simple option, participants will need to be informed about public availability of their posts. For training purposes we strongly recommend the instructor(s) to set up their own **FLIPGRID threads** with access restricted to a particular cohort.

The social aspect can be additionally highlighted during the first **synchronous session**.

# Module 1: Pedagogy of Virtual Exchange

## In Module 1 participants:

- become familiar with the concept of Virtual Exchange, various formats of VE and their applicability to various academic contexts;
- study real-life examples of task sequences in VE in various academic disciplines and reflect on their applicability to their own context;
- become aware of different types of tasks and their purpose;
- reflect on teacher and student roles in a VE environment.



## EVOLVE TIP:

This module is extremely rich in content and in its full form may take 2 weeks to complete. If participants are going to engage in the process of designing their own exchanges, we recommend starting it right in this module (see: [First Steps to designing your own exchange](#))



# Module Content

## Resources and activities in Module 1

What is Virtual Exchange

Why Implement VE

Types of VE and VE providers

Activity 1.1 Real-life examples of task sequences in VE

Reflecting on task sequences

Activity 1.2 From information exchange to product creation tasks

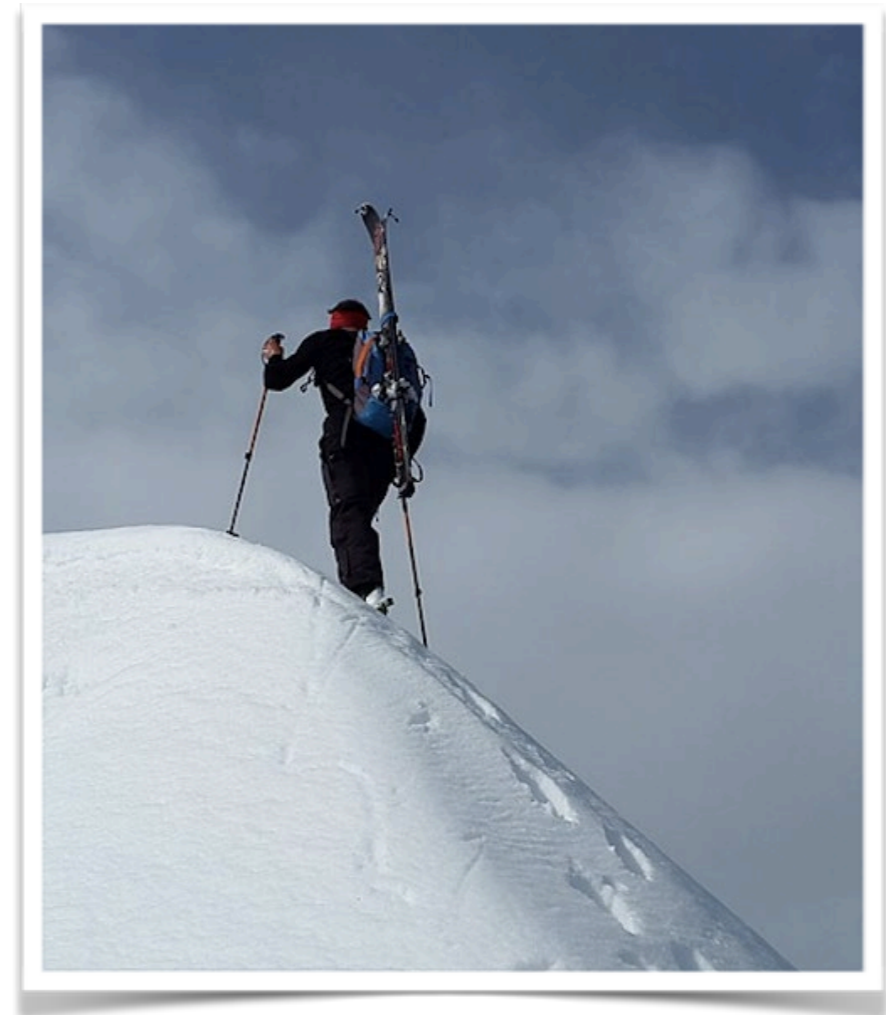
First steps to designing your own exchange

Module 1 Reflection Task

# Module 2 Task Design and Technology

In Module 2 participants

- **specify learning objectives** for their targeted VE;
- learn to distinguish and design various **types of tasks** used in VE;
- become familiar with a selection of **tools and communication channels** and decide useful in their respective VE;
- consider adequate **tools** to support **communication, collaboration and product creation** in their VE projects.



## EVOLVE TIP:

While designing this module we had in mind that technology is one of the most commonly reported VE challenges! This is why we model various uses of tools and applications throughout the whole training, showing them in action.

In this module we fine-tune to choosing technology to support particular VE projects.

Please note Activity 2.2, in which participants are to share their favourite and well-tested tech tools and post them to a pallet wall.

# Module Content

## Resources and activities in Module 2

Learning objectives come first!

Activity 2.1 Learning objectives in your VE

Activity 2.2 A toolbox for Virtual Exchange Teachers

If you are working with a partner... .

We shape our tools and our tools shape us - an inspiring talk by Wilson Miner

Module 2 Reflection task

Additional Resources for Modules 1 & 2

# Module 3 Managing Challenge

In Module 3 participants cast a closer look at **challenges that instructors and participants alike may experience in a virtual exchange project**. In particular they:

- explore some **real-life VE challenge scenarios** and discuss them from the perspective of challenges and tensions;
- discuss challenges that may be encountered in VE projects and **strategies for solving them**;
- see tensions as **opportunities for learning**.



# Module Content

## Resources and activities in Module 3

Challenge and misunderstandings in VE

Activity 3.1 Face the challenge!

Forum discussion for Activity 3.1

Activity 3.2: Your envisaged VE - Dreams and Nightmares

Forum discussion for Activity 3.2

Module 3 Reflection task

Additional Resources for Module 3

# Module 4 Critical Digital Literacy

In **Module 4** participants explore the tools and choices we make when designing online learning because, as John Dewey writes in [Schools of To-Morrow](#):

*“Unless the mass of workers are to be blind cogs and pinions in the apparatus they employ, they must have some understanding of the physical and social facts behind and ahead of the material and appliances with which they are dealing.”*

The major objective of Module 4 is to open our eyes to the dynamics of the “solutions” we find and question how they impact on our teaching.



## Resources and activities in Module 4

[What is Critical Digital Literacy](#)

[Critical Digital Literacies through Virtual Exchange - interactive presentation](#)

[Who shapes the future of learning technology - video lecture](#)

[Who shapes the future of learning technologies - a forum discussion](#)

[Critical pedagogy by Sean Michael Morris](#)

[Critical Digital Literacy starts with Critical Pedagogy - please contribute](#)

[Task ideas for critical digital literacy skills development - a collaborative wiki task](#)

# Module 5 Intercultural Competence and VE

One of the major reasons behind teachers' implementation of Virtual Exchange is its role in triggering **intercultural learning**.

In **Module 5 of Co-Laboratory Training** participants look at two ways in which teachers can support intercultural learning in their VE projects. The first of these involves **providing pedagogical mentoring to students during their work together** and the second refers to the type of tasks which students are asked to do together.



In Module 5 course participants

- become aware of the intercultural **learning opportunities and challenges** which can emerge in Virtual Exchanges
- learn about various **types of tasks that promote intercultural competence development**
- explore the importance of the **teacher's role in facilitating intercultural learning** in virtual exchanges.



## **Module 5 Resources and activities**

Introduction to the Intercultural Competence Module

Task 1 Pedagogical mentoring for intercultural communicative competence

Intercultural forum 1

Task 2: Tasks for intercultural Learning in Virtual Exchange

Intercultural Forum 2

# Module 6 Facilitated Dialogue

Facilitated Dialogue (FD) is yet another form of Virtual Exchange. It is a **structured conversation through which participants can share their thoughts and work towards mutual understanding**. It is mediated by a skilled facilitator who helps participants overcome communication barriers and engage in productive conversation.

It is particularly important when you work with people representing various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, which is the case in VE projects.

Becoming a skilled facilitator is a long process which cannot be fully explored here. In Module 6 our intention is to familiarise participants with the concept of Facilitated Dialogue and its basics.

The best way to learn about Facilitated Dialogue is to experience it through a facilitated session.

For more information and training opportunities, please visit <https://sharingperspectivesfoundation.com/programme/facilitation-training/> and <https://www.soliya.net/>



# Module Content

## **Module 6 Resources and activities**

What is Virtual Exchange and facilitated Dialogue

Before a facilitated session

Connecting the dots

Module 6 Reflection task

# Final recommendations to course instructors

## Dear Colleagues,

- As the course was released in spring 2020, we are very much aware that some of the resources may get dated with time and we strongly recommend checking and **updating them on a regular basis**. This applies both to external resources and tools.
- The activities we suggest can be performed via **various tools**, depending on participants' digital competence or local conditions. Please see our choice as suggestive rather than final.
- As we explain at some point, reflection is a very important component of VE. We strongly encourage to engage participants in weekly reflective activities to get the taste of how reflection enhances learning.
- All the graphics used to illustrate the course and this guidebook have been published as public domain (CC0) in [Pixabay](#) and [Pexels](#) - online repositories of free graphics.

We hope you find our resources useful :-)

The EVOLVE Team