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# **FEPS TRAINING MANUAL**

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# FEPS TRAINING MANUAL

The Training Manuals belong to the toolbox of the FEPS European training Lab. The skill boosters in the annex of this manual were designed and delivered during the Congress of the Party of the European Socialists in Amsterdam in October 2026.

## The purpose of the FEPS Training Manual is to:

- Offer insights into the FEPS Training Activities
- Enable sharing methodologies
- Provide paths to multiplication
- Support FEPS Members in their strive to enhance their own training capacities

## The material can be used by Members and Trainers:

- In its entirety or partially
- In English or translated

## Social media:


- If you / your organisation / your pool of trainers decide on using this material, we would be grateful for reference to FEPS and notification.
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# **SKILL BOOSTER MANUAL**

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# DEFINITION OF A SKILL BOOSTER

Within the FEPS Trainers Pool Programme, skill boosters are designed as short and focused training sessions aimed at equipping European progressive actors with practical skills and strategic insights that help strengthen progressive ideas and political action across Europe.

A skill booster is a concise training format that combines a short theoretical framing with practical tools and exercises. The theoretical component introduces a key concept, framework or perspective, which then serves as the basis for practical exercises carried out during the session. The aim is to equip participants with approaches and methods that help them tackle specific political challenges and contribute to advancing progressive goals.

Unlike longer training programmes, skill boosters concentrate on a clearly defined topic and focus on providing participants with a small set of actionable tools rather than a broad theoretical overview. The emphasis is on translating ideas into practical skills that support progressive communication, organising, campaigning or policy engagement. In most skill boosters, the theoretical introduction is intentionally brief and serves primarily to provide a conceptual lens for the practical exercises that follow.

Skill boosters are typically designed as 60-90 minute sessions and are often delivered during conferences, training events or political gatherings where time, space and equipment may be limited. In many cases, these sessions take place as open activities within larger programmes.

Because of these conditions, skill boosters need to be designed to function in even limited training environments. Trainers cannot always rely on a fixed group of participants, stable group dynamics or fully equipped training rooms. Participants may arrive after the session has already started, while others may leave before the end due to competing programme activities.

For this reason, the format should remain simple, flexible and easy to follow. Activities should not depend on complex logistics or extensive preparation. Ideally, training should be deliverable with minimal materials, such as paper and pens for participants and a flip chart or whiteboard for the trainer. While presentation slides may support the session, they should not be essential for training to function.

Providing participants with a short printed handout or flyer summarising the key ideas or tools introduced during the session can also be helpful. Since some participants may join the session midway through, such materials allow them to quickly grasp the core concepts and follow the discussion more easily.

**Ultimately, the goal of a skill booster is to equip progressive actors with practical tools, fresh perspectives and greater confidence to address contemporary political challenges and advance progressive ideas.**

# HOW TO SELECT A SUITABLE TOPIC

Selecting the right topic is one of the most important steps in designing a successful skill booster. Because the format is limited to approximately one hour, the topic should be clearly defined, practical and directly relevant to the political challenges faced by progressive actors.

A skill booster should focus on one concrete skill, challenge or strategic question, rather than attempting to address a broad thematic field. Trying to cover too many issues within a short timeframe can make training superficial and difficult to follow. Instead, trainers should identify a specific issue where participants would benefit from gaining new tools, strategies or perspectives.

One useful way to identify potential topics is to reflect on the current challenges and opportunities facing progressive movements in Europe. Trainers may consider questions such as the following:

- What political or communication challenges are progressive actors currently facing?
- What emerging political trends or narratives require new responses from progressives?
- Are there successful examples, approaches or strategies that progressives could learn from?
- Is there an issue that requires a fresh or unconventional approach to move the debate forward?

Thinking creatively and "outside the box" can help identify topics that resonate strongly with participants. Sometimes the most engaging skill boosters emerge from rethinking familiar challenges from a new perspective or adapting ideas from other fields, such as civil society organising, communication practices or movement building.

Another useful approach is to examine current political debates and emerging phenomena. Topics that are timely and relevant are more likely to engage participants and stimulate meaningful discussion. At the same time, the topic should be framed in a way that allows participants to gain practical tools or approaches, rather than only discussing the issue in abstract terms.

Skill boosters work best when there is a clear link between conceptual framing and practical application. Even within a short training format, participants benefit from first understanding a basic idea or framework before exploring how it can be applied through discussions, reflections or exercises.

**Finally, it is important to keep the scope of the session realistic. A skill booster is not intended to provide comprehensive expertise on a topic. Instead, the aim is to offer participants a focused introduction and a small set of practical tools that support their ability to advance progressive goals and respond to political challenges in their own contexts.**

# HOW TO SELECT THE CONTENT AND ADJUST IT TO A LIMITED TIME

A skill booster is not a shortened version of a full-scale workshop. You should fit one topic into 60-90 minutes. The biggest mistake a trainer can make is to try to fit too much content into a short session, which could lead to a rushed lecture, leaving participants overwhelmed without much knowledge retention. The best-designed skill booster is focused on one thing and does it well.

"What could participants DO after a one-hour workshop that they couldn't before?" is a crucial question one should ask while designing a skill booster. This backward design rule can shift the focus from pure trainer knowledge to participants' abilities.

One sentence should be enough to describe your skill booster, and if you can't do it, there is a good chance that you are trying to put too much into it. Goals should be very precise and observable.

This one sentence should state a purpose like in this example:

*"After this session, participants will be able to create a script and record a 60-second reel using engaging language."*

And it definitely should not sound like this:

*"This session covers public speaking, audience engagement, short-form video theory and creative writing."*

We can certainly achieve the goals from the first sentence in one hour, but certainly not from the second one, which would require a whole day if not a weekend workshop. This leads us to a very important rule: every piece of content you include must be essential for achieving the selected goal. Everything else is just noise and should be cut.

With a clear purpose for the skill booster, write down everything you think is relevant to the topic. Every concept, theory, example and so forth. Then filter it out brutally using three proposed layers:

- 1. The inner layer or must have:** this is the core of your skill booster. Think of it as knowledge and skills that are essential for finishing the practical exercise and walking away with a usable skill. This is the only layer you deliver during the session.
- 2. The middle layer or should have:** this is the context that deepens an understanding of the topic but is not necessarily needed during the workshop. It can be sent beforehand in invitation emails, handed out as a one-page brief or delivered as follow-up resources. If you have time, you can push a bit of that during the session. Try not to.
- 3. The outer layer or could have:** this is additional context, background theory, related topics or further reading. You can package it as a handout or a set of links sent after the workshop.

This filter technique is not about "dumbing down" the content, but rather about respecting the cognitive limits

of participants. Research consistently shows that after roughly 10 minutes of passive input, attention drops sharply, so working memory can only process a limited amount of new information at once. Retention of this information will collapse when we overload it.

One main skill, a maximum of three key points supporting it and enough time to actually practice is what you are aiming for in a successful skill booster.

During a 60-minute workshop, every segment must earn its place. Here is an example structure, which can differ drastically based on the specific topic:

**Introduction and framing (5-8 minutes):** give the context, explain what you will do together during the workshop and why it is important. Briefly describe the purpose and structure of the session. If you are working with a new group, this is the moment for a micro-contract (you can check in the Training of Trainers Manual what a "contract" is). Just a quick agreement on how you will work together, for example: phones away; mistakes are welcome; we will learn by doing; and mutual respect.

**Theoretical input (10-15 minutes):** deliver only the bare minimum theory needed to actually complete the exercise. Keep in mind that this is not a lecture; it should be a brief, focused explanation. Avoid abstract definitions in favour of real-life examples. Break it into short chunks mixed with moments of interaction in between.

**Practice (25-30 minutes):** this is the most important piece of the skill booster and is discussed in detail in the next section.

**Debrief (10-12 minutes):** focus on helping participants to identify what they will take away and how to apply it best. Share observations and reflect on the exercise.

**THE GOLDEN RATIO RULE FOR A SKILL BOOSTER: NO MORE THAN 30% INPUT; AT LEAST 70% ACTION.**

In 60 minutes, you will not have enough time for a full needs assessment in the room, but you certainly can spend 2 minutes on a quick pulse check to find out how confident participants are about the topic (you can ask them to put it on a scale of 1-5 by a show of hands) and calibrate where to place the emphasis without changing the plan.

### Tips:

- If you are on the fence, cut more content instead of practice time. Participants remember what they did, not what they heard.
- Prepare a "parking lot". It can be a flip-chart sheet where you write down topics that come up during the session but fall outside its scope. Every input is valued without derailing the session.
- Test your timing. Deliver practice sessions at least once and be honest with timing.
- Prepare a one-page handout or follow-up email with the content you've filtered out. A skill booster is a starting point, not a dead end.

# HOW TO INCORPORATE THE PRACTICE

Practice in a skill booster is the centrepiece of the session. The theoretical frame exists just to give enough context for participants so they can meaningfully engage with the exercise. This is the single most important design principle for this format.

Start designing the exercise first, then build the theory around it. This approach will separate a good skill booster from a mediocre one.

Ask yourself at the beginning of the design process, "What exercise can participants do during the workshop to actually learn and perform the skill I am teaching?" Once you get that, work backwards, asking yourself about the minimal theoretical input they need to complete the exercise. With this approach, you will naturally achieve the right balance of roughly 30% input and 70% action.

The most powerful tools in a skill booster are the insights and expertise provided by participants. They bring their own unique experiences, contexts, best practices and problem-solving approaches. The most impactful exercises are those where participants learn from each other.

Divide participants into small groups (preferably pairs or trios in a one-hour format, if suited for the exercise), and while they work, shift your role from lecturer to coach. Circulate, listen and offer targeted support if needed. This way, you can use your time where it has the highest impact.

A strong skill booster exercise has at least five characteristics:

- 1. It requires the skill to be performed, not just discussed:** if you are teaching how to write a reel script, participants should write a reel script.
- 2. It produces something "real":** each participant should have created something they can take with them – a draft, a plan or a first attempt at solving the problem.
- 3. It uses real cases:** knowledge applied to a personal context stays with people.
- 4. It is repeatable without a trainer:** a clear and simple structure should allow participants to perform the exercise on their own after the session is over.
- 5. It has clear written instructions:** verbal explanations can be forgotten during the exercise; write them down with a key focus on a goal, time frame and expected output.

In a short format, participants need to move to action immediately, with real-time pressure. This naturally involves a bit of stress and the risk of making mistakes. Your role is to establish as quickly and clearly as possible that the skill booster is exactly the place to make those mistakes. Say explicitly in the first few minutes that this is the place to try things, get them wrong and learn from the experience.

**An exercise without a debrief is just an activity.** During the debrief, participants can step back, reflect on the exercise and draw conclusions to forge practice into learning. In a skill booster, the debrief can't be long, so you need to focus on an effective structure where participants can identify one key lesson from the exercise and share it with the group. You can also use simple questions for the room: "What worked well?" "What was harder than expected?" "What will you do differently next time?"

**Tips:**

- Design the exercise first, then build the theory around it.
- Keep groups small, preferably two to three people.
- Give participants a brief moment for individual reflection. Even 60 seconds of quiet thinking can work miracles.
- Share the exercise template or framework with participants so they can reuse it.



# HOW TO MAKE IT INTERACTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY

## The importance of interactive and participatory learning

At progressive conferences, political meetings and so forth, speeches and lectures (sometimes followed by question sessions or discussion panels) are a common feature. However, interactive/participatory workshops have a number of advantages compared to these more passive forms of information transfer.

Firstly, learning improves when participants actively process information rather than simply receive it. Active participation requires learners to explain concepts in their own words, relate them to their experiences, work through practical examples and reflect on new ideas. Research in neuropsychology and education confirms that these activities strengthen memory and understanding. Needless to say, this is especially the case for mastering skills in a skill booster workshop.

Secondly, participatory learning has a social benefit. In workshops, participants can challenge the assumptions of others, compare perspectives and jointly solve problems, allowing learning to occur through dialogue rather than one-way transmission. And after such workshops, participants can exchange contact details and keep in touch.

And thirdly, most people that are active in progressive circles have knowledge and experience that could be useful to others. Interactive and participatory workshops make optimal use of the prior knowledge and practical experience of participants.

## Some techniques for interactive and participatory workshops

### 1. Activating all participants

In discussions and interactive presentations, it is often the same people ("usual suspects") that will respond. Participants that are naturally a bit more shy or less outspoken, or need more time to think, will tend to stay passive. To ensure all participants feel confident to speak up and the group is not dominated by a few participants, there are a number of techniques.

- Give **preparation time**. After asking a question, ask participants to take a minute to think and write down their answer, and tell them you will ask some random participants what they wrote down. This will activate all participants, and it is the simplest way to reduce anxiety and the fear of being "put on the spot".
- Use **non-verbal methods** like sticky notes, coloured response cards or Mentimeter to allow participants to share their thoughts without being forced to speak out. After collecting the responses, you can ask participants for further explanation.
- The **think-pair-share** technique asks participants to first reflect individually on a question and write down their thoughts. In the next step, they discuss their thoughts with a partner, and finally share their insights with the whole group. This technique ensures that everyone has time to think and reflect with their peers before having to speak up in front of the group.

- Use **peer interviews**: let participants interview each other, then tell the group what the viewpoint/opinion/experience is of the person they interviewed. It is often easier (and may feel safer) to explain somebody else's opinion to a group than your own opinion.

## 2. Role play

Role plays allow participants to practice skills in a safe environment and experience different perspectives. It is a great way to act out a realistic situation, such as facilitating a meeting, responding to criticism or negotiating a decision.

Role play can be involve a simple scenario, such as negotiating a price in pairs. You can also make use of more complex simulations, for example, a role play where the participants play the roles of representatives of various countries that have to come to an agreement about an issue.

Role play can be a lot of fun. However, this technique requires careful preparation. If possible, hand out brief, written scenarios describing the setting and the goals, limitations and motivations of the various "roles". Assign tasks to the watching audience, such as focusing on non-verbal behaviour, to keep them actively involved in the learning process. And keep it short, so it does not become tedious or run off-topic.

Although participatory workshops always require a safe environment, this applies especially for role play. First of all, never force participants to participate in role play in front of the whole group; only use volunteers. Set ground rules, such as allowing a time-out or "pass" if participants feel stuck or uncomfortable. You can also consider having (part of) the roles played by yourself or a co-trainer, to increase realism and reduce the pressure on participants to act. And make sure that you use some icebreakers or other "light" starting activities to create a relaxed atmosphere before starting the actual role play exercise.

## 3. Rotating group work (world café)

In a "world café", participants are divided into small groups (typically 4-5 people) and seated at separate tables. Each table has a different question or idea. Participants discuss the question or idea and write down their thoughts on a flip chart at their table. After a set time (typically 15-20 minutes), they move to another table and build on the ideas of the previous group. This helps generate diverse perspectives and collective insights. You can choose to appoint a "table host" for each table to assist in the conversations and explain the previous conversations to new groups, but this is not strictly necessary.

## 4. Debating techniques

Debating is great way to involve participants. Short debate games can simply be used as an icebreaker, debate can be used to explore topics in more depth, or debating skills can even be the central aim of the skill booster. Either way, there are multiple debate (game) techniques, ranging from short and simple to more elaborate. A few examples:

- In the **"if I rule the world"** debating game, a speaker must state what they would do if they were in charge of the world (or the country or football canteen), then defend this to the rest of the group or a selected opponent. This can be useful As a fun icebreaker activity or to practise persuasive speaking.
- In the **"balloon debate"**, three to four participants are assigned important historical persons (e.g., Albert Einstein, Marie Curie and Columbus) or they represent a certain trade (e.g., a dentist, farmer and painter). They are then put together in a hot air balloon that is slowly losing altitude and is about to crash. One of them has to jump out to save the others. Each participant has to argue to the audience why their chosen character should be saved. This exercise is a great way to practise persuasive speaking. It can also act as a fun icebreaker activity.

- A **pro/con** debate can be used to discuss a controversial topic with the entire group and practise, for example, argumentation techniques or respectful disagreement. The group is divided in two subgroups and assigned a point of view for or against a certain topic. The groups get ten minutes to prepare their arguments and possible counterarguments. The first group presents their arguments, followed by the second group. Both groups then get the opportunity to ask clarifying questions, followed by counterargumentation.

These are just a few examples; there are countless other examples of debating techniques, games and exercises online.



# 10 TIPS IF YOU WANT TO CREATE A SKILL BOOSTER

## 1. Make sure the topic is *relevant*

Make sure your skill booster is relevant to the audience. This may seem obvious, but it is not always self-evident. Try to understand what problems your intended audience has to deal with and what they could use in terms of skills. And shape your skill booster in such a way that these problems can be brought forward. People will quickly disengage if they are bombarded with irrelevant information (such as lengthy introductions) or are required to carry out activities that are irrelevant to the problems that they are dealing with.

## 2. Make sure the *goal* of the skill booster is clear

Nothing kills the mood like vague and confusing objectives. Make sure that both in the announcement of your skill booster and in the first minute of explanation you make it very clear what the goal(s) of the workshop is and how you are going to work on it.

## 3. Make the skill booster properly *challenging*

Challenge your participants with Goldilocks in mind: if the challenge is too easy, your participants will be bored, but if it is too hard, they might become frustrated and discouraged. Always do a test run with a practice audience, evaluate the results and modify your skill booster as needed.

## 4. Give your participants some *autonomy*

People usually perform better if they feel a sense of control over their own learning. Also, you make best use of the combined experience and knowledge of the participants if you give them some freedom in their choice of topics. So make sure the skill booster includes some elements where the participants can work on their topic of choice, or give them the choice of different options to present their results.

## 5. Focus on one *concrete skill*

Short workshops work best when they focus on a single clearly defined skill (e.g., facilitating a discussion, responding to misinformation or building consensus). Avoid trying to cover too much content. Participants should leave the workshop with one skill they have actually practiced, rather than several concepts they have only heard about.

## 6. Use *realistic scenarios*

Democratic skills are best learned in situations that resemble real-life political practice. Use short role plays, case studies or scenario exercises based on situations participants may encounter in real life. This helps participants immediately see how the skill applies in practice. Ideally, participants leave the workshop with a specific skill that they can immediately put into practice in their (political) work.

### 7. Create a respectful and inclusive atmosphere

Democratic skills can only be practiced effectively in an environment where participants feel safe to speak, disagree and experiment. Encourage respectful dialogue, ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and be attentive to participants who may be less confident about speaking up. But also make sure there is room for respectful dissent or constructive feedback, because you can only learn from mistakes if they are addressed. You can even include an element where participants are actually invited to be critical, such as a devil's advocate session.

### 8. Allow time for reflection and feedback

At the end of the skill booster, take a few minutes for participants to reflect on what happened. Ask questions such as: What worked well? What was difficult? What would you do differently next time? Peer feedback can also be very valuable, as participants often learn as much from each other as from the trainer.

### 9. End with a concrete takeaway

Conclude the workshop by summarising the key insights and encouraging participants to apply the skill in their own contexts. A simple checklist, tip sheet or short action plan can help participants remember and use what they learned after the workshop.

### 10. Have fun!

It is much easier to be an active participant in an activity that is fun and enjoyable. Use gamified elements such as a friendly (team) competition or creative exercises. Have a small, fun reward for winning teams or individuals. If you feel up to it, include some jokes in your explanation (but only if you feel confident doing this; it is better to have no jokes than lame jokes!).

## FURTHER READING

- **The Practice Space.** An educational non-profit organisation that offers free online tools and resources for communication, debating skills, presentation skills and so forth.
- **Becoming a Better Politician.** A political trainers' manual by the Max van der Stoel Foundation.
- Pavelin, K., S. Pundir and J. A. Cham (2014) "Ten simple rules for running interactive workshops". PLoS Computational Biology, (2)10: e1003485. DOI: [10.1371/journal.pcbi.1003485](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1003485)

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# ANNEXES

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# ANNEX 1: CONFRONTING A POPULIST IN THE WILD SKILL BOOSTER

**Theme:** encountering populists in the wild

**Duration:** 60-90 minutes (easily adaptable timewise)

**Target audience:** progressive activists, political staff, party members, civil society actors and participants attending progressive training events or conferences.

## Overview of training

This skill booster helps participants recognise and understand common populist arguments and why such narratives often resonate with audiences. It then introduces practical tools for responding to these arguments and redirecting the conversation toward progressive narratives and solutions.

## TRAINING STRUCTURE

### 1. Welcome and introduction (5 minutes)

The trainer briefly introduces the purpose of the session and explains that the training focuses on practical tools for responding to populist arguments in political discussions.

Participants are informed that the session will combine short theoretical insights with practical exercises. The trainer emphasises that the goal is not to "win" debates, but to understand the logic of populist argumentation and respond in ways that reinforce progressive narratives and encourage constructive dialogue.

### 2. Warm-up exercise: Quick decision poll (5-10 minutes)

Participants take part in a short interactive exercise designed to demonstrate how people often make quick decisions based on intuition.

The trainer asks participants a series of questions where they must quickly choose between two options (A or B) by physically moving to one side of the room.

Examples include simple or humorous questions that prompt fast reactions.

The exercise illustrates how people often rely on intuitive thinking when making decisions. This provides a natural transition to the theoretical explanation that follows.

Questions you can use:

**What would you take with you to a deserted island?**

- A) Music
- B) A compass

**Would you rather receive:**

- A) €1 million today
- B) €6,000 per month for the next 15 years

**A day care centre introduced a fine for parents who picked up their children late. What happened next?**

- A) The number of late pick-ups decreased
- B) The number of late pick-ups increased

(The correct answer is B.)

**3. Theoretical framing: System 1 versus System 2 thinking (10-15 minutes)**

The trainer introduces the basic idea from Daniel Kahneman's theory of two cognitive systems:

- System 1 – fast, emotional, intuitive thinking
- System 2 – slow, rational, analytical thinking

The trainer explains that populist communication often appeals to System 1 thinking by using emotional language, simplified narratives and "us versus them" framing. Participants briefly discuss examples of how such communication appears in political debates in their own countries.

**4. Recognising common argumentative fallacies (10 minutes)**

The trainer introduces several common argumentative fallacies often used in populist rhetoric, such as:

- false dichotomy;
- straw man argument;
- ad hominem attack;
- appeal to popularity; or
- slippery slope argument.

For each example, the trainer briefly explains how the argument works and why it can be misleading. Participants are invited to reflect on examples they may have encountered in political discussions.

## 5. Practical exercise: Responding with the five-step model (10-20 minutes)

Participants work in pairs and simulate a short political conversation. One participant takes the role of a populist speaker using one of the fallacies introduced earlier. The other participant practices responding using a structured five-step approach:

1. Take in – acknowledge the statement and show you heard it.
2. Take out the sting – respond calmly, sometimes using humour to defuse tension.
3. Short reaction – briefly challenge the flawed argument.
4. Own message – present the progressive perspective or narrative.
5. Question – invite reflection and bring the discussion back to the topic.

After a few minutes, participants switch roles, so both have the opportunity to practice the method. The trainer circulates between pairs and provides guidance where needed.

## 6. Wrap-up and reflection (5 minutes)

The trainer briefly summarises the key ideas from the session:

- Populist rhetoric often relies on emotional framing and logical fallacies.
- Recognising these patterns makes it easier to respond constructively.
- Structured responses can help redirect discussions toward progressive arguments.

Participants are invited to share one takeaway from the session or one idea they plan to apply in future discussions. You can use sticky notes for this.

## Materials needed

- Flipchart or presentation slides (optional).
- Printed handout summarising the key concepts (optional). (Disburse handouts only during the practical exercise (Section 5), so the participants focus don't keep reading the handout in the beginning.)
- Paper and pens for participants.
- Sticky notes.

# ANNEX 2: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, BUT MAKE IT ICONIC

**Theme:** engaging with a youth audience on political and social topics

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Target audience:** progressive activists, political staff, party members, civil society actors and participants attending progressive training events or conferences.

## Overview of training

This modular workshop is designed to help participants effectively engage with a youth audience on political and social topics. The goal is to move beyond traditional communication methods and align with the interests and preferred formats of young people to create authentic and impactful messaging. Training is built around three core pillars: **channels (where?); topics (what?); and translation (how?).**

## Materials needed

- TV/projector with speakers (a Bluetooth speaker is OK).
- Board, sticky notes and markers.
- Printed handouts of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- Printed meme templates, blank sheets and pens.



## TRAINING STRUCTURE

### 1. Welcome and introduction (10 minutes)

- The trainer introduces the modular structure of the workshop.
- **Context:** briefly define "youth". In the context of EU policies and statistics, this generally refers to individuals between the ages of 15 and 29.
- **Warm-up energiser:** the trainer asks three questions or statements and asks participants to choose between "agree" and "disagree" by physically moving around the space. A sample statement to use is: "Young people don't care about traditional politics".
- **Positive example:** showcase a successful youth-influenced campaign backed with data.

### 2. Part 1: Channels – "where?" (15 minutes)

- **Theoretical framing:** discuss where the audience is. Data shows that 42% of young Europeans aged 16-30 (and 45% of teens aged 16-18) now get their news primarily from social media platforms, surpassing television. Provide raw data from EU surveys.
- **Practice exercise (youth hubs):** provide participants with sticky notes and markers. Ask them to brainstorm and map out the key spaces where young people gather. Have them stick their ideas on the board, sorting them into two distinct categories: "online communities" (like specific social media platforms) and "IRL events" (in real life).
- **Debrief:** ask about places they are present and active, which of them are the hardest for politicians/activists to get on, and if they acknowledge a gap between where youth are and where they are absent.

### 3. Part 2: Topics – "what?" (15 minutes)

- **Theoretical framing:** to capture attention, communication must focus on topics youth are genuinely interested in. Describe briefly what SDGs are.
- **Practice exercise (SDG mapping):** hand out a printed list of the SDGs. Ask participants to mark the five topics they believe are most important to young people today.
- **Debrief:** ask if the chosen topics are the same they are using as talking points in social media, what they think is important but needs to be left out because the youth is not interested and which one is hardest to talk about with the youth.

#### 4. Part 3: Translation – "how?" (15 minutes)

- **Theoretical framing:** simply being present on a channel isn't enough. The style of communication is critical. Focus on translating complex political ideas into authentic, accessible and engaging content. Discuss how formats native to youth platforms (like memes and short-form video) are exceptionally effective. Emphasise that humour can normalise difficult topics, while authenticity and personal storytelling resonate most.
- **Practice exercise (content creation):** participants choose one of two creative exercises. They can either:
  - use pre-printed meme templates to translate key political ideas into engaging visual jokes; or
  - work in small groups to record a short, impactful video clip (using a simple storytelling arc) to be shown on the TV/projector.
  - The goal is to turn their learned concepts into authentic, youth-friendly content.
- **Debrief:** ask what was the hardest point during translating a hard political topic into a meme/video; is this form of communication "dumbing down" important topics or a necessary tool, and what is one thing they will incorporate into their next post on social media?

#### 5. Wrap-up and final debrief (5 minutes)

- The trainer briefly summarises the intersection of the three pillars (channels, topics, translation) and thanks the participants for their creative input.



# ANNEX 3: SLOGAN WRITING WORKSHOP

**Goal:** produce positive and humorous slogans that stimulate people to look at issues from a different perspective

**Background:** our progressive movement often struggles to take control of the narrative. We often respond in reactionary or defensive ways. This skill booster workshop uses an engaging brainstorming method developed by Loesje in the Netherlands. The method aims to produce positive, thought-provoking, humorous narratives (or slogans) that can be used in (online) campaigns, rallies or gatherings. The slogans produced should encourage people to look at chosen issues from a different (and in our case progressive) perspective.

**Target audience:** youth organisations, progressive activists, political staff, party members, civil society actors and participants attending progressive training events or conferences.

**Duration:** 60-90 minutes (easily adaptable timewise). If you have limited time, you can skip the warm-up.

**Group size:** 10-15 people per subgroup. The bigger the subgroups, the longer it takes to go "full circle". If you have just 60 minutes, divide the group in subgroups of 10 participants; if you have more time, you can increase the group size. Do not go below 10 people per subgroup. You need one trainer per group.

**Materials needed:** pen and paper, coloured markers, sheet with writing tips (1 copy per participant), and a printer if you want to showcase the slogans after the session.

**Considerations:** this skill booster works best if participants can write slogans in their own language. If you want to carry out this session in a non-English language, you will have to translate the sheet with writing tips.

## TRAINING STRUCTURE

### 1. Welcome and introduction (5 minutes)

Seat the participants in a circle around a big table and hand out paper and pens and the sheet with writing tips. Introduce yourself (and your co-trainer(s) if applicable). Tell the participants that they will introduce themselves at a later time during the session.

Explain why it is important for the progressive movement to take control of the narrative and tell our own, positive story instead of being reactive. By shifting from a reactive stance – which often mirrors the opposition's framing – to a proactive one, progressives can define the values, norms and vision for the future, rather than just defending against attacks.

Explain that during this workshop, participants will experience a technique that is based on collaborative creativity and results in short, funny, positive and thought-provoking slogans (one-liners or short texts). The slogans can be printed on posters or stickers and used in various campaigns, and they are perfect for today's meme culture.

## 2. Warm-up (time permitting; 10-15 minutes, depending on group size)

Tell the participants that you will start with a warm-up exercise to boost creativity. You will talk them through the process (no slides needed). It is important that the participants work in silence. Keep a fast pace (i.e., 10-15 seconds per turn). Tell the participants:

1. On a blank sheet, write down the first word that comes to mind (at the top of the paper).
2. Pass the sheet to the person sitting to your left; take the sheet from the neighbour to your right.
3. Write down a word that you associate with the word your neighbour wrote. Don't think too hard; just write the first thing that comes to mind. Write the new word under the old word.
4. Pass the paper to the left again, take the paper from your right-hand neighbour again and write down a word that you associate with the last word. *[Repeat this process until participants have their original paper again.]*
5. Encircle the three words that you like most, and pass the paper to the person on your left again.
6. Make a sentence with the three encircled words, and pass the paper to the person on your left again.
7. Make the opposite sentence of the previous sentence (e.g., "moon" becomes "sun" and "happy" becomes "sad"). Pass on the paper to the person on your left again.
8. Exaggerate the last sentence; make it really extreme. Pass the paper to the person on your left again.
9. Turn the last sentence into a proverb.
10. Read the proverbs to each other.

## 3. Procedure for the main workshop (40-60 minutes, depending on group size)

1. Seat the participants in a circle around a big table and hand out paper and pens and the sheet with writing tips.
2. Ask the participants to write down a topic that they want work on, as well as a question that they have about this topic. These can be serious issues (e.g., "housing" – how do we provide affordable housing to everyone, or "green energy" – how do we stimulate green energy production), but "light" topics can also be interesting to work on (such as "autumn" – how can you make it fun, even though the days are getting shorter).
3. Do a quick round where everybody explains their topic of choice to the group and what their personal relationship to the topic is.
4. Each participant passes the paper with the topic and question to the person sitting on their left.

5. All participants read the topic and question and write down one or more short one-liners, using the writing guide. Write in a mind-map fashion, with short "blurbs" scattered across the page. Ask the participants to work in silence, as this stimulates the creative process.
6. When ready, participants pass the paper to the person on their left and take the paper from the person to their right.
7. Participants read what has been written previously and add their own one-liners. Encourage participants to modify, combine or contribute to what has already been written. If the paper gets full, indicate with an arrow and continue on the back.
8. Repeat until all participants have their own topic again.
9. Hand out coloured markers to the participants and ask them to encircle the one-liners that they really like. There can be as many circles as they want, but only one per one-liner.
10. After doing this, pass on the paper again to the person to the left. Repeat until all participants have their own topic again.
11. Ask participants to read out loud the one-liners that have three or more circles.

#### 4. Wrap-up and reflection (5 minutes)

Collect all papers and thank participants for their contributions.

Time permitting, ask participants how they experienced the workshop and if they would like to make use of this technique in their (political) work.

Summarise the importance of active, positive progressive narratives (versus reactive and defensive responses).

Tell participants that they can receive the "fruits" of the session if they leave their email addresses. In addition, you can print out the most popular and engaging one-liners and put these up around the premises.

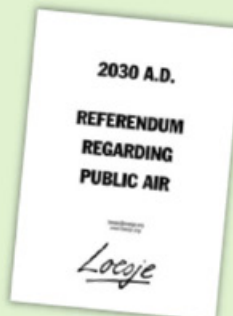


# Writing guide



## ASSOCIATE

Which words, images, and/or ideas come to mind when you think about the writing topic? For example, Moses, refugees. You can use these words to create a positive-critical sentence.



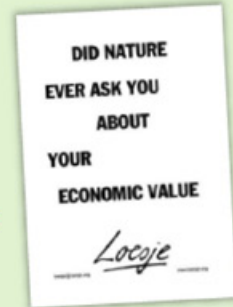
## EXAGGERATE

Make the topic bigger than it actually is. Turn a puddle into an ocean, a kiss into a wedding, or a ray of sunshine into a heat wave. Attract attention by making something small into something very big.



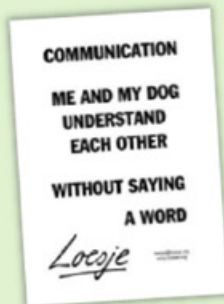
## THINK OF SOLUTIONS

Think of a solution to the problem. This can be very unrealistic, but also very simple.



## TURN AROUND

Say things in a different way. Change the topic. and the direct object. Make the strong weak and the weak strong..



## COMPARE AND SIMPLIFY

Compare the topic with something everyone can imagine. Sometimes it becomes funny when you explain it in a simple way, or the meaning becomes clearer.



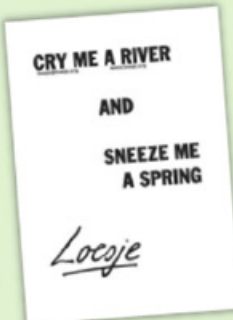
## ENCOURAGE

People sometimes need a little push, some encouragement. Write your sentence in such a way that people take action. Give them that little push to do something.



## QUESTION

This can be a critical question, but it can also be simple or a bit crazy. If you ask people a question, they immediately start thinking about an answer.



## PROVERBS

Every language has many proverbs and sayings. Try to come up with new ones or change existing ones to make them relevant.

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