

The DEBATE method

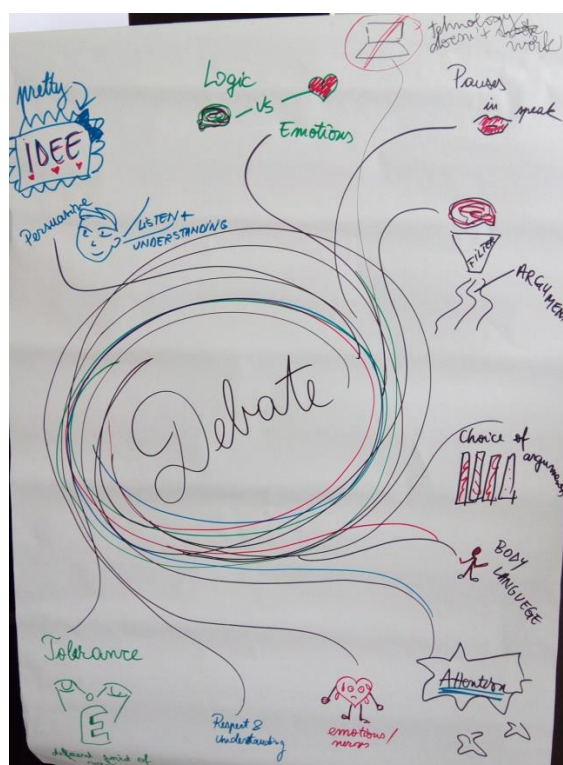
– Guide –



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Table of contents

Introduction.....	2
Conceptualization of the method	3
What is the debate?	3
Learning objectives of the model.....	6
Necessary human, material and time resources.....	8
Preparing for the debate	9
Formats of the debate. Various uses	12
Classical debate	12
World School Debate.....	13
Fun Debate	14
Fishbowl.....	16
PROS vs. CONS	17
Evaluating the effectiveness of the method / of the learning results.....	17
Tips and Tricks for users	18
Resources	20



Introduction

Every human being is born with a potential to communicate that is developed and improved all lifelong. Child's ability to communicate is first assumed by the family, which provides basic elements and tools. It is then followed by school, where communication is viewed in terms of competence and enters a long and infinite process of development. In the course of this long and complex process, the school is joined by other formative contexts, such as media, groups of friends, professional associations, etc. The fact is that the individual is constantly placed in communication contexts and also in the situation of developing his/her ability to communicate and use it in his/her own benefit for knowledge, socialization, relationship, development ...

Considering its potential for human development, structured communication, in various forms, is used in many contexts of formal and non-formal learning. One of the methods of non-formal education that makes full use of communication, in its all forms of expression, is the **Debate**. At the intersection of verbal with nonverbal and paraverbal, the debate derives its importance from cognitive, emotional, volitional and relational development, but also from *loisir* activities. Given the complexity and the potential of the debate, it has been defined, conceptualized and used as a method of non-formal education. The present guide does not aim to provide arguments for the status of non-formal education method of the debate, as it is already recognized from the point of view of the assumed objectives, its ability to be used on an infinite range of topics and in relation to a large variety of target groups, in order to develop specific competences (in terms of communication and content).

The present guide rather aims to provide tools for more or less experienced users than to provide ideas/topics for debate. The topics for debate can be inspired by any field, depending on the learning contexts of the participants, their interests and their development needs. The guide is intended to be a useful tool for organizing a debate, distributing and assuming roles in the debate, structuring argumentation, so that the speech delivered to an audience to be a convincing one.

The Guide points those elements considered relevant to the debate and provides suggestions for using it for learning. The guide answers to the interests and curiosities of many users of the Debate method and, in particular, to those who use it in projects supported by the Erasmus+ Programme. The statement is supported by the numerous information contexts that Erasmus+ projects themselves offered for documentation and also by the CONNECTOR 2017 event, which has been a real basis for information, documentation and reflection on the Debate method. With this in mind, the guide is dedicated to the participants in the DEBATE group at the CONNECTOR 2017 international event and to the trainer Paul Ardeleanu, who have managed to create real contexts of reflection, confrontation of ideas, clarification of concepts and effective debate. Picking from this group the message that accompanied us every day of CONNECTOR 2017, we pass it, together, to all readers of this guide:

„You are a great DEBATOR!”

Conceptualization of the method

The debate, in a broad sense, is a discussion on a particular topic, between people who have different views on it. Used since ancient Greece, the debate is today one of the non-formal educational methods with multiple benefits on the cognitive, volitional and affective development of those who use it. In order to understand its complexity and usefulness, we point out several general concepts that are beneficial to any user of this method, whether he/she organizes a debate or is actually involved in its development.

*The debate
involves
communication
in all its forms.*

What is the debate?

- ⇒ confrontation of ideas between two teams on a particular topic, using structured arguments
- ⇒ it involves the participation of a *judge* (a neutral person who does not participate with arguments in the debate) who decides which of the teams provided more convincing arguments

Organizing and running a debate can be viewed as a courtroom, where the teams involved in the debate have the roles of the *lawyers*, and where the decision on the debated issue is taken by the *judge*, according to the arguments provided. There are different points of view on the debated topic, both of which can be real, valid, and true. The role of the judge is not to decide which team is right, it is not to establish the truth about the topic discussed, but to decide which of the teams/parties brought more convincing arguments. This detail fundamentally differentiates the educational debate from the competitive one. Within the educational debate, it prevails the ability to argue on the topic, as within the competitive debate, it is the rightness that prevails.

*educational debate
vs
competitive debate*

The debate must be viewed from two *perspectives*, which are complementary:

- from the perspective of the *process*, the debate is a structured way followed by the participants in order to confront their ideas; it has clear rules for organization and performance and, in order to achieve the goal, the participants follow the default algorithm/path;
- in terms of *content*, the debate represents a resource for informing and structuring ideas for all participants (whether they are members of the debate teams, judges or the public); taking these into consideration, we must recognize the debate as being able to influence opinions, beliefs and how things work.

There are some **specific elements** of the debate that require a good understanding of those who use it as a non-formal education method.

Specific elements of the debate	Description	Characteristics
Statement / Affirmation	A statement on which there are different points of view, which is open to interpretation Eg: Pupils' homework should be abolished	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> controversial significant questionable durable includes only one idea
Affirmative vs Negative	The interpretations on the statement may be included in two distinct categories: agreement or disagreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the existence of opposition clear positioning
Constructive	The argumentation includes important points of view of the team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focused synthetic internal coherence (according to the team's arguments)
Rejection	Reconstruction of the discourse on the basis of the challenged arguments, rejection of the counter-arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> substantiated external coherence (as an answer the counter-arguments of the opponent team)

Involvement in a debate calls for participants' **ability to argue**, and this capacity is built through documentation, organization and exercise. Documenting is essential for building a relevant point of view on a topic, but also for developing skills for communicating and formulating ideas, so that they are clear, plausible and coherent. Organization is necessary to structure the thinking and the statements. A good organization of thought leads to statements, according to a logic and a structure adapted to the topic and to the audience. Exercise involves using the arguments in different contexts (based on documentation and organized statements), in a repetitive and systematic manner, so that to lead to developing the ability to provide solid views on a topic.

On argumentation

- What are the features of a good argumentation?

A good argumentation is **SEXI** because it: **S**ays something about the debated topic,
provides **E**xplanations on the chosen perspective,
provides **e**Xamples that support the statements,
has an **I**mpact on the audience

- How to find good arguments?

A good argument is a real **TEST** that each participant to a debate has to pass, in terms of: allocated **T**ime for structuring the information and choosing the representative points of view;
sharing **E**motion, which establishes a link between the speaker, the topic and the public;
Significance of the topic for the speaker and for the audience;
Transfer of information realized by the speaker.

- How to prepare the argumentation?

Each speaker has his/her own style of work, search and organization of arguments, which he/she adapts to the context. More common among the participants in the debates is their positioning at one of the levels of the "LMD system", which represents the option for a:

- long **List** of arguments and choice of the most relevant
- realizing a **Mind** map of the essential aspects
- Discussions** with the members of the team

➤ How to build the argumentation?

Participating in a debate involves to provide arguments within a speech that must be clear, brief, coherent and convincing. For this, the participants in the debates, depending on the context, the topic and the learning objectives of the debate, organize their discourse in different ways. In any case, the discourse is not a sequence of aspects that spontaneously come to mind, but a sum of statements that require organization and structure, so that they are coherent, impactful, and convincing.

There are two ways of organizing the speech that have already proven their effectiveness and can be successfully used in the debates.

- **BOMBER B** model

This model of speech organization has well-structured stages that are in a logical succession and in a cyclical organization (starts and ends with a moment of surprise capturing and retaining attention on the topic).

Stages of the model BOMBER B	Description	Share of time allocated
BANG!	It is the starting moment that captures the attention; it may consist of a question, a short story, impact/shocking elements (short and clear, possibly statistics), a provocative statement, an interesting quote.	10 – 15 %
Opening	Starting elements by which the speaker: presents him/herself, announces what he/she will present, argues why the topic is important to him/her.	
Message	Presentation of the topic under debate, detailed presentation of the speaker's point of view on the topic; it includes the message and related explanations.	75%
Bridge	Linking the message to the audience's interests; if there is an abstract content, it shall be connected to the reality; involves (emotional) involvement of the speaker.	
Examples	Relevant examples are offered for the topic discussed, adapted to the public.	
Recap	The essential elements of the speech are recaped, in a synthetic form, easy to remember for the audience.	10 – 15%
BANG!	Ending with a strong statement, in order to keep the audience's attention and interest concerning the topic.	

- **Pros vs Cons** Model

It is a model structuring of speech, in which the speaker provides arguments for both aspects, perspectives and approaches on the topic. The allotted time is divided into two parts, as equal as possible, the speaker providing in the first place the Pros on the topic, then the Cons. Being given by

the same speaker, the discourse with pros and cons on a given topic is more difficult due to the positioning of the speaker on the one side or the other of the arguments to be provided. The model is not used to identify the right answer to an issue, but to analyze it from all perspectives. As such, this model of speech discourse is extremely useful for developing thinking, critical thinking, analytical ability, creativity, and so on.

Learning objectives of the model

As a method of non-formal education, the debate is organized and developed, in particular, with the purpose of educating and developing competences, abilities and skills. The method can be successfully used by teachers, trainers, coaches and facilitators in their activities, within formal or non-formal education and training contexts. It can be adapted to multiple topics, can be used in various fields and with people/trainees of different ages. The success of using the Debate method lies in the ability of the organizers to adapt the way in which the debate is carried out to the specific nature of the group of participants.

The call for debates, in the context of learning and training, can meet multiple and varied goals, depending on the needs of the trainees group and their development interests. In view of this, the debate can be used to:

- Develop communication skills (verbal, nonverbal, para-verbal) and speech structuring
- Train and develop active listening and critical thinking skills
- Develop the capacity to be open/having an open mind to the opinions of others
- Develop empathy
- Strengthen investigation and analysis skills
- Improve the argumentation skills, the ability to persuade
- Develop team work and cooperation
- Develop group organization and leadership skills
- Develop self-confidence
- Improve the capacity of emotional management
- Develop spontaneity
- Spend time in a pleasant and fun way

Taking this into account, the method can be successfully used in a multitude of contexts and fields, so that the concrete learning objectives we propose to the trainees are achieved. Through the debate, the participants will be able to:

- Communicate information on a given topic
- Demonstrate the efficiency of an algorithm or approach
- Evaluate points of view, opinions, paradigms
- Organize certain information
- Evaluate different points of view on a topic
- Prepare a speech
- Develop an idea to convince
- Compare different points of view

Contexts for using the method

The Debate method can be used in multiple contexts, in order to confront different ideas on a topic. Beyond the parliamentary or presidential debates, they have a clear learning function and this confers the possibility of using the method in various contexts, as a learning tool. The method can be used successfully in activities with young people and with adults, in formal and in non-formal activities. The areas covered by the Erasmus+ Programme provide various contexts and target groups for which the Debate method can be efficiently used, having an impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries.

No matter how general are the contexts we mention for exemplification, they cannot include all the frameworks and circumstances in which this educational method can be used. Still, let's try to provide some examples:

- Meetings, activities, training programs for the development of personal skills: youth exchanges, adult training programs, teacher training sessions;
- Meetings, activities, training programs for the development of professional skills: teacher training programs, information/training sessions or study visits for youth workers, mobility of pupils in vocational and technical education;
- Teaching activity carried out within the formal education system;
- Scientific meetings of experts to develop intellectual products (documentary resources, online platforms, interactive guides, etc.);
- Meetings of those in charge/interested in identifying specific needs/directions for action of defined groups or organizational development.

The possibility of using the Debate method in learning and development contexts is broad, but, in order to be effective, the use of the method should not only take into account the external context elements (in which it is used) but also the internal context (the logic of its own organization). Thus, in order to use the Debate method, as a non-formal method of effective education and learning, the organizers should pay due attention to setting the context in which it takes place, implying the following:

- Time ⇔ it is necessary to reserve enough time so that all relevant aspects can be discussed; good time management is needed so that the two sides confronting their opinions are given equal time slots, in order to present the point of view and the for the right to reply;
- The topic ⇔ addresses the general issue that represents the basis for formulating the statement to be debated; must be relevant to the participants and consistent with their interests;
- The public ⇔ includes the indirect participants in the debate, who "set" the speech of the participants in the debate; the speech is built so that the participants can express their views on the topic discussed, but also to gain as many supporters as possible among the public/audience;
- Objectives ⇔ beyond the general purpose for which the debate is organized, it has a set of learning objectives that must be formulated in clear, concrete and measurable terms; depending on the group, they are formulated by the participants or by the organizers of the debate; the objectives must be known and assumed by the participants in the debate so that their realization and, implicitly, the learning process is achieved with the active and conscious participation of the participants;

- The right tool ⇔ The main tool of the debate is *communication*; its use remains at the speaker's choice: what he/she says; how he/she says; under what forms (verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal);
- The format ⇔ debates can be organized in different forms and the choice must be adequate to the topic discussed and to the specific nature of the group of participants in the debate (for details on the different forms of organizing the debate, please see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debate#Competitive_debating);
- The statement ⇔ is a clear and concise sentence that facilitates the positioning of the participants on one side of the two opposing perspectives; the arguments of the participants in the debate are built based on the statement;
- Roles ⇔ vary according to the format of the debate and are determined from the beginning of the debate, so that until the conclusions are formulated, each participant knows and realizes the contribution made in the debate;
- Conclusions ⇔ they have to be formulated at the end of a debate to remind the relevant issues; it is necessary to formulate them clearly and synthetically in order to increase the ability to convince the public.

Necessary human, material and time resources

The Debate method can be organized easy and with low costs. In order to organize a debate, we need:

- people equipped with the ability and the willingness to communicate,
- a common communication language,
- a topic of interest to them, of which they have some knowledge
- clearly defined time (not a standard time)

The human resource equipped with the ability to communicate (in the language of the debate) is an essential element of any debate. Positioned on one of the two perspectives of the topic under discussion, the human resource is the provider and beneficiary of the activities realized within the debate. Without using material resources, the participants themselves produce knowledge, learning, development for themselves and for the audience. Not everyone has the same roles, not everyone has the same ability to formulate arguments, organize speech and convince, but this variety contributes to the beauty and attractiveness of the method.

The human resource involved in an educational debate includes the **participants in the debate**, grouped, as a rule in two teams, with different points of view on the topic discussed. However, there are other roles to be assumed in the context of organizing and/or carrying out an educational debate. Participants in the debate are involved in a confrontation of ideas, but they need a neutral person who decides which arguments have been more convincing. Depending on the format of the debate, this role may be played by one or two so-called *judges*, who analyze all the arguments and make the final decision. However, this role can also be played by the **public** who attends the debate and can join the team that provides more convincing arguments. The ways of using the available human resources are related to the creativity of those who organize the debate, but also to the specific nature of the topic discussed.

From the perspective of the debate, *the material resource* represents an aspect that can be neglected, but not excluded. The friendlier the debate space is to the participants and more appropriate to the topic/group of participants, more valuable will be the debates to the beneficiaries. The organization of a space that reproduces elements specific to a courtroom or the use of an unconventional space for debating can be equally fruitful for the beneficiaries, the essential condition being the suitability for the group, in particular, but also for the topic discussed. For some forms of organizing and carrying out the debate, a timer or an hourglass may be needed if the argumentation time is strictly set.

The time resource is relevant for organizing a debate, but its use is flexible. Relevant is the fair distribution among the teams of the time reserved for the debate, so that everyone can express their point of view. Carrying out a debate varies according to the form of organization and the number of members of the discussion teams. What needs to be pointed out here is the time resource that has to be devoted to the actual preparation of those who engage in debates, in order to acquire, consolidate and develop communication skills (verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal) through exercise in various contexts.

Preparing for the debate

Preparation of a proper debate can be done in a relatively short time, but preparing to be a good communicator/speaker involves knowing all types of communication, awareness of their value for providing the desired message, practicing all forms of communication so that they represent a support towards conveying the message, without limiting or distorting the content.

When choosing the way to organize the discourse, it is necessary to keep in mind that not only words convey messages, but also the attitude, posture and movements, voice tones, etc. Taking these into account, non-verbal communication and paraverbal communication are the two types of communication that must not be overlooked by any speaker who deliver a speech.

Non-verbal communication

Without insisting on the arguments regarding its importance in communication, we emphasize its major role in supporting the information conveyed. Albert Mehrabian (1971) considers that, while conveying a message, only 7% of the impact is due to verbal communication while the rest is the effect of *vocal* elements (rhythm and volume) - 38% and of *body movement* (gesture, posture, mimics) - 55% . We use all these elements in a natural way, but if we want an increased impact on those whom we address, we need to keep in mind what we say beyond words. We are naturally equipped with the ability to communicate through voice and movement, and we naturally use them, even if they are useful to the audience or not (for example, the use of mimics and gestures in a telephone conversation or by sportscasters during a match). These elements help us only to support our point of view, they support the verbal part and the communicator can use them consciously for his/her own benefit. We do not support here the need for excessive and continuous focus on the modelling and management of non-verbal communication elements that would probably lead to communication failure. We support the need to become aware of the power of the non-verbal

communication has on the way in which the audience perceives the message, and implicitly, the need to educate the ways in which we address others, so that the conveyed message has an impact.

Elements of non-verbal communication

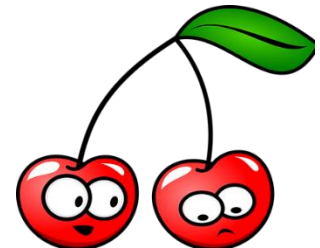
Facial expression

It provides the first impact and accompanies the entire communication. The need to use facial expressions is reconfirmed by the frequent use of faces in virtual communication to support and synthesize the message and the implicit experiences.



Visual contact

It must be maintained as long as a connection is established with the one we are addressing to, then it has to be switched. A long-term visual contact with a person distracts the focus from the message to one's own person ("Why does he/she look so much at me, do I have something on my face, what does he/she want to say to me?").



Posture

"Stand upright!" is the message that every speaker must convey to him/herself; the right position of the body expresses safety and strength. Any other posture of the body (bent forward, arrogant) will not be in favor of the conveyed message.



Gestures

Need to be used for interactive communication; need to be varied so that to keep the audience's attention and interest; are naturally related to verbal communication and support it (helps the person who speaks to better express the message).



Movement

required; must be adapted to context; do not run in front of the audience; do not stand like a "statue" in front of the audience; the movement is natural, with movements from one side to the other of the room and a slight advancement to the audience.



Paraverbal communication

In any communication, it is equally important to convey the message and to communicate the mood of the speaker to the audience. Located in the speaker's voice and managed through it, paraverbal communication has several elements that, as in the case of non-verbal communication, can be

refined, so that to be used for the benefit of the audience. It is worth noting that, in any oral communication, **the voice is the equivalent of the word.**

Elements of paraverbal communication

- **Speech pause.** Marks the end of an idea and the start of another. Absence of sound in speech leaves the whole space of communication to nonverbal and paraverbal. It is necessary that pauses are not long and not too often because they sacrifice communication, but they are necessary to mark the end of an idea and to give the public short moments of reflection, to emphasize ideas or to intervene. Without these short speech pauses, communication becomes tedious and hard to follow by the audience.

inflections ⇔ bold letters
- **Voice volume.** Increasing voice volume equates, in written communication, with the use of the larger font size of the letters. The voice volume must be adapted to the space but also to the audience; can express emotion (low voice volume), agitation, nervousness (increased voice volume). As a rule, we tend to speak in public more slowly than we usually do; the voice volume can be adjusted through exercise and good management of the space and the audience we are addressing to. To practice: use a 6-8-step (imaginary) scale and ask a group to tell you at what level your volume is. Try adjusting the volume until you get unanimous appreciation. At first, you may not be comfortable with the volume requested by the audience, but it represents the audience's will and, by exercise, adjusting the voice volume to the public will naturally occur.

varied tonality ⇔ colored letters

voice ⇔ word
- **Voice inflections.** Marks some points. It is useful for emphasizing elements and can be used by changing the voice pitch. Easy to confuse with the tonality variation, but specific to inflection is the ability of the speaker to easily move from one voice to the other, to combine them so that the message is modulated.
- **Tonality variation.** It marks the highlighting of some aspects and their delivery in a more attractive form. Voice tonality equates to the depth of speech. A linear speech, without tonality variation fails to maintain the increased attention and attractiveness of the message. It's like music, where we have high notes and low notes.

pause ⇔ paragraph
- **Rhythm variation.** It is used to draw the attention to some aspects, in order to allow for a moment of reflection. The rhythm of the voice shows us how fast or how slow we speak. Beyond reflecting the speaker's mood, it is important to use it in the speaker's interest. As all other elements of paraverbal communication, the rhythm of the voice should be adapted to the audience, but also to

increasing the volume ⇔ increased font size

the topics addressed. We cannot speak at a high intensity over a considerable period of time to a group whose capacity of attention and concentration is limited (a group of pupils, for example), just as we cannot speak slowly to a group that has an increased capacity to focus and, eventually, has some information on the topic discussed (a group of experts in a field).

To imagine that these elements are different would represent a hilarious and restrictive approach, as they are permanently interconnected, interdependent and juxtaposed. All act at the same time and all can be modelled and refined, so that the message conveyed is supported by paraverbal elements and not limited, countered or contradicted by them.

How can you control your voice? It is a question that comes naturally in view of the above, but also whenever we are in front of a public, whatever its specific nature. There are different strategies that can be useful for modeling and controlling voice: recording voice and listening to the recording; reading out loud; exercises for voice.

rhythm variation = s p a c e s
b e t w e e n l e t t e r s

Formats of the debate. Various uses

Depending on the specific nature of the discussion group, the topic debated, the creativity of the facilitator/organizer of the debate, it may take different forms. Next, we will refer to a few examples, which are more common in practice, without claiming that we offer the most relevant examples. However, they have been tested and exercised with practitioners, trainers, facilitators in the fields covered by the Erasmus+ Programme and all said that the method, in any of its forms of organization, can be applied to the groups they work with, during their daily activity (pupils, young people, adults, professors).

Classical debate

It is a form of organizing a confrontation between arguments related to a topic. The classical debate is not about seeking out the truth, but about confronting ideas, in view of a learning objective, in which winning is based on well-formulated arguments, able to convince the audience. Taking this into account, the choice of the topic debated and especially its formulation are extremely important for a debate. There may be an agreement or disagreement on behalf of the public in regard to a statement and points of view that overlap/intersect. Thus, the debate aims precisely at this common part.

Organization: Space is organized so that two teams can talk directly, face to face. The public has an observer role and will decide which of the teams provided more convincing arguments.

Participants: Two teams consisting of an equal number of participants are formed. One of the teams will support the affirmative perspective on the topic discussed, and the other team the negative one.

Rules: Participants talk alternatively, one per each team, and have a limited time to express their point of view. Each participant has the role of countering the arguments offered by the previous speaker. There is a pre-set time in which everyone expresses their views. The public has the role of choosing the team that offered the most convincing arguments.

Development: The debate's topic and its rules are announced. The teams are set up to support the affirmative and the negative perspective on the topic discussed. Teams have time to confront and organize ideas, then choose the relevant arguments. Each team decides the order in which the team members will present the arguments. Arguments are formulated at the team level, but each speaker must use those arguments that contradict the arguments of the predecessor (member of the other team). The last speaker of each team has a double task: to provide arguments and to point out the essential elements of the arguments provided by the entire team.

Debrief: It is the public that decides, by vote, which team brought more convincing arguments. The vote can be organized in different ways: raising hands, writing on stickers, intensity of applause etc.

Variations: The decision on the team that provided the most convincing arguments can be taken by a *judge*. The number of participants in each team must be equal, but it may vary depending on the group from which the participants are selected, on the topic etc.

World School Debate

This form of organizing the debate is close to the classical debate, which is why we will point out the specific features and, especially, the rules of organization and development.

Organization: World School Debate involves organizing two teams that in practice and formally call themselves "government" and "opposition."

Participants: Each team includes three members, with different points of view on the topic being debated. There is a *judge* who determines which of the teams offered more convincing arguments.

Rules: There are clear rules of organization, presentation, intervention and time set to present the views. Detailing this way of organizing the debate highlights the rules specific to different stages.

Development: World School Debate represents a form of competitive debate that follows the following structure:

Affirmative perspective	Negative perspective
Argument 1	Counter-argument 1
Argument 2	Counter-argument 2
Argument 3	Counter-argument 3

Teams' interventions	Time	Responsibilities of the speaker	Rules for participants
Team „government”: Affirmation 1	8 min.	Introduces the topic discussed, defines key issues, sets tasks, provides arguments	The other team may request intervention after the first minute and not before the last minute of the intervention; The speaker may accept or reject the intervention.
Team „opposition”: Affirmation 1	8 min.	Expresses agreement to the framework proposed by the first speaker, advances counter-arguments to the speaker's speech, states its own arguments	
Team „government”: Affirmation 2	8 min.	Provides new significant arguments, supports the point of view of the teammate	
Team „opposition”: Affirmation 2	8 min.	Provides new relevant arguments, supports the point of view of the teammate	
Team „government”: Affirmation 3	8 min.	Provides counter-arguments to the statements of the opposing team and summarizes the fundamental issues expressed by the team	
Team „opposition”: Affirmation 3	8 min.	Provides counter-arguments to the statements of the opposing team and summarizes the fundamental issues expressed by the team	
Reply of Team „opposition”	4 min.	Points the key arguments	Expressed by the first or the second speaker. No interventions from the other team is allowed.
Reply of Team „government”	4 min.	Points the key arguments	

Debrief: The decision is taken by the *judge* after the analysis, synthesis and brief presentation of the perspectives proposed by both teams.

Fun Debate

It is a form of debate which, without diminishing the demands of the argumentation and educational value of the method, invites to fun, movement and direct interaction.

Organization: Participants will be divided into 3 groups, as they position themselves in relation to the topic discussed: agreement = YES; disagreement = NO; neutral/without a well-defined point of view = MAYBE. On the floor, it will be marked an area, in which the participants in the debate will place themselves (physically, they will stand within the marked area).

Participants: A relatively large group of people can participate at the Fun Debate. Management of the large group of people may raise some difficulties, but good knowledge of the rules and their compliance contribute to overcoming this difficulty.

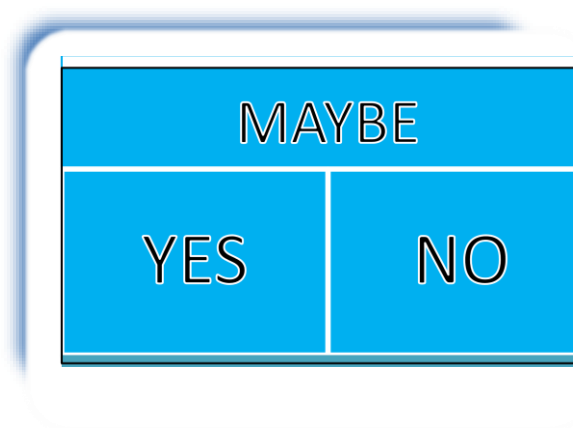
Rules: Participants take turns to speak, one per team, with a clear perspective on the topic debated (participants in YES and NO groups).

Each participant in the YES and NO teams expresses his/her short, brief views within a short timeframe set from the beginning (1 minute, for example).

Each participant offers at least one argument on the topic discussed and may speak more than once, provided the intervention is a response to the intervention of the opposing team or further to his/her own team's intervention.

Development: The topic under discussion and the rules on which the debate is carried out (choosing the team that starts the debate, the time allocated to each speaker, etc.) are announced.

Alternatively, YES and NO team members offer arguments to support the point of view on the topic under discussion. The choice of the order of the speakers is given by the thread of the discussion, and in order to ask for the floor, the participants raise their hands.



Each speaker tries, through the arguments offered, to gain members for his own team from the other two teams (the opposing team and the MAYBE team). Once a participant has been convinced by an argument, he/she steps into the area of the team (YES or NO) that convinced him.

After all participants offered at least one argument, the debate may end or may continue until all views have been expressed.

Debrief: Members of the team MAYBE, who did not pass during the debate in one of the other two teams, deliberate which of the teams provided more convincing arguments, in order to be declared winner of the debate. It is up to this team to pinpoint the essential aspects of the debate (the main arguments presented), but also to motivate their choice for the winning team.

Variations: the number of participants in each team may be limited; the time to present arguments allocated to the entire team may be limited; passing from one team to another may be allowed only once or whenever the argumentation is favorable to the transfer.

Fishbowl

It is a method of group communication aimed at involving the participants in the debate "in a double role: on the one hand, active participants in a debate, on the other hand, observers of the interactions that take place" (Pânișoară, 2008, p. 360).

Organization: It is necessary to arrange the seats for the participants in a circle, in the center being placed, face to face, 3-4 chairs for each team involved in the debate.

Participants: Two small teams of participants (3-4 members each) having the same/opposed points of view on the topic discussed, will be placed in the center to start the debate. The other participants, representing the public, will be able to join the debate by choosing one of the two teams.

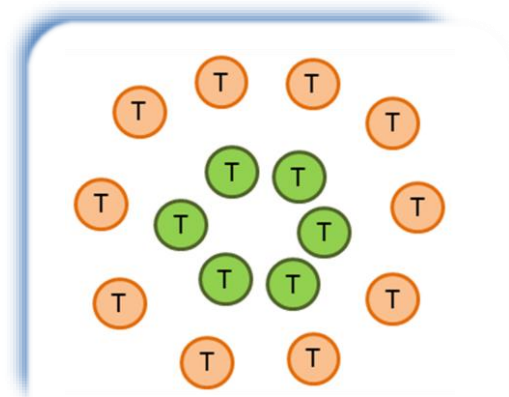
Rules: There is a limited and predefined time for debate (for example, 10-15 minutes). Participants take turns to speak only when the "microphone" is available and can take it. Participants who are placed on the sidelines can only join the discussion by replacing one of the speakers placed in the middle, after he/she has expressed his/her point of view. The person who wishes to join the debate must replace a member of the team whose point of view he/she supports.

If there are no substitutes for the members of the debate groups, they will continue to offer arguments until the default time has elapsed.

There is no need to present arguments successively by the representatives of each team. Two arguments supporting the debated statement can be presented successively. The order of presenting the arguments is set by the participants themselves by raising their hands to join the discussion or taking over the "microphone" if no other speaker has been previously announced.

The public has the role of deciding, by vote, on the presented arguments.

Development: The topic discussed and the rules of the *fishbowl* are announced. Two teams of 3-4 participants are organized, on a voluntary basis, supporting one or the other points of view on the topic debated. The number of participants in the two teams must be equal. The participants sit on the chairs in the middle and start the debate. The team presenting the first arguments can be set randomly or based on predetermined criteria (the youngest/oldest participant, the participant whose first name is in alphabetical order, etc.). Each speaker expresses his/her point of view only if he/she has access to a "microphone", an object that will ensure the order of the speakers and will prevent the participants from speaking simultaneously. When he/she finishes his/her argument, the participant leaves the "microphone" that can be taken over by a member of his/her team or a member of the opposing team. Once he/she has expressed his/her point of view, a participant may be replaced by someone in the audience, who announces the intention to join the debate by touching the shoulder of the person he/she wants to replace. The latter, whether it has arguments to present or not, gives up the place to the person who expressed his/her intention to join the debate.



When a participant in the debate wishes to express a new argument and there is already a speaker, he/she raises the hand, so that there is an order in expressing the points of view. Therefore, there may be more participants in the debate waiting for their turn to the "microphone".

If no participant in the audience announces his/her intention to join the debate, it continues with the existing participants until the time set in the beginning elapses.

Debrief: In the end, all participants are involved in determining the dominant perspective. They vote which of the two points of view expressed by the teams was more convincing. The vote can be organized in a variety of ways: by raising hands, awarding balls, displaying stickers on two panels, etc.

Variations: The "Fishbowl" can be open or closed to the public/limited to a certain part of the audience, out of which new participants can be accepted. Moreover, the "Fishbowl" can be organized with roles/points of view that are determined from the beginning or by changing the roles/points of view.

PROS vs. CONS

It is a form of organizing the debate that is particularly useful for a good and complex analysis of the given topic.

Organization: It does not require specific organization of the space or particular seating arrangements for participants.

Participants: It can be organized with one or more participants.

Rules: Each participant, within a well-defined timeframe, presents arguments both in favor and against the topic discussed.

Development: Individually, the participants presents points of view that are in favor and against the topic discussed. For one minute, each participant must present both arguments, in a convincing manner.

Debrief: The public or a designated *judge* decides on the most relevant arguments, both in favor and against the topic discussed.

Variations: Pros and cons can be organized in pairs (one participant presents the pros and the other presents the cons); pairing can be combined with the fishbowl technique.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the method / of the learning results

The learning outcomes of participating in a debate or its effectiveness concerning the beneficiaries can be assessed by various methods, depending on the purpose of the evaluation, the period in which the method has been used by the beneficiaries and the specific nature of the group of beneficiaries.

- In order to determine the achievement of the learning objectives after using the Debate method in a learning context, the following can be used:
 - Focus group discussion with the participants in the debate; by using structured and semi-structured questions certain aspects can be identified, such as: the ability to organize and convey information, the ability to prepare a speech, the skills necessary to organize and lead a group, willingness to accept different ideas and the ability to build arguments;
 - Assessment sheets, where participants have to answer to specific issues that provide information on the ability to compare different points of view, to organize information, to formulate relevant arguments, etc.
- To investigate a specific issue/competence that can be developed through debate (for example, the ability to argue) within a well-defined specific group:
 - Systematic and structured observations made on the basis of fact sheets that include clear and relevant items;
 - Indirect, participatory remarks; can be achieved if the facilitator of the group stays in permanent contact with the debate group and can constantly observe it;
 - Longitudinal analysis; the group of participants in the debate can be included in a panel that is observed/investigated over a considerable period of time, with specific tools (questionnaires, for example).

Whatever the method of investigation, it is necessary to refer to an initial stage of competence, from which its development begins through the use of the Debate method.

- To investigate the utility of the method for the personal or professional development of the participants
 - Questionnaire-based survey of different beneficiaries
 - Focus group discussions
 - Individual interviews with the participants in the debate
- To investigate the satisfaction of the participants in the debate
 - Satisfaction questionnaire
 - Individual or focus group interviews
 - Informal talks with the participants, immediately after the debate
- To investigate the utility for indirect participants in the debate
 - Questionnaire-based survey
 - Standardized forms that provide data on the contexts in which the indirect beneficiaries used the information gained as participants in the Debate

These are just a few examples that can continue. We emphasize once again the importance of clearly establishing the purpose of the assessment, so that the methods and the tools used provide the most relevant and comprehensive information on the issues under investigation. Furthermore, it should be emphasized the importance of using the information obtained from the evaluation to improve the activity of the participants in the debate, of the facilitators, of the *judges* and of those who use the Debate method.

Tips and Tricks for users

Previously, we insisted on the specific nature of the method, on the possibilities of organizing and developing the method and on the specific nature of the roles played by different participants. We shall not repeat here the essential points of the Debate method, but we would like to make a brief review of some issues that might be useful when we are involved in a debate (whatever our role is).

For **participants** in the debate:

- ✓ Leave your creativity and logic to act!
- ✓ Speaking in public does not exist! There is talking to the people and making a connection with each of the people you are addressing to.
- ✓ During the oral communication, do not forget the nonverbal and paraverbal messages! They can support your speech or may outshine it.
- ✓ Look for relevant, powerful arguments, but combine them with emotion, in order to impact the public/the audience.
- ✓ Use any debate as a new learning context.
- ✓ When you participate in a debate, use the slogan "I am a great debator!".

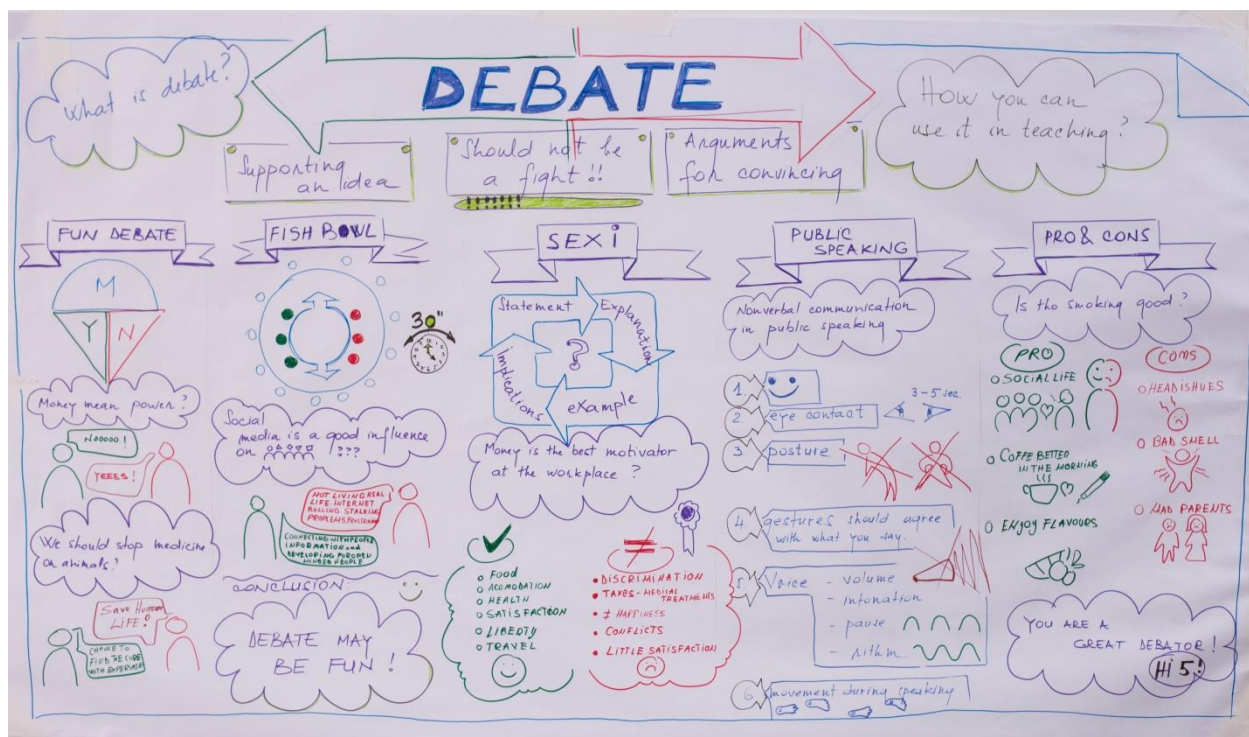
For **facilitators / organizers** of the debates:

- ✓ If the participants in the debate do not know each other, choose to introduce them to colleagues. They will thus be taken out of their comfort zone and they will start from the very beginning to speak to an audience. Get information on participants' abilities to speak in public and the ability to manage nonverbal and paraverbal communication.
- ✓ The rules based on which the debate takes place must be presented briefly and clearly. Depending on the specific nature of the group, short theoretical elements can also be stated.
- ✓ At the end of a debate, encourage the participants to express what they felt, how they felt, what they learned.
- ✓ Choosing the format of the debate represents a difficult task, it requires analysis and good knowledge of the educational and formative potential of the debate group.
- ✓ When possible, involve the participants in the debate in choosing the topic discussed. Their interest and involvement will be increased.

For **judge**:

- ✓ Whatever your point of view on the topic, be neutral and evaluate the argument.
- ✓ Follow each point of view carefully, but also its coherence.

Good luck!



Resources

Bibliography

Mehrabian, Albert (1971). *Silent Messages* (1st ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Pânișoară, I.O. (2008). *Comunicarea eficientă*, Iași: Editura Polirom.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debate#Forms_of_competitive_debating

Sources of inspiration for debate topics:

<http://ardor.org.ro/debatebase/>

Communities of practice:

<http://speakersclub.eu/>

<http://ardor.org.ro/>

<https://centraldebateclub.wordpress.com/>