



Swedish Civil
Contingencies
Agency

REPORT

Digitalisation of Modules Basic Course and Technical Experts Course, 2021

A trainers' approach



Title: Digitalisation of Modules Basic Course and Technical Experts Course, 2021- A trainers' approach

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Section: Cooperation Training Section

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Preface

Due to covid-19 epidemiological situation across Europe in 2020 and 2021, there was a long term inability of face-to-face delivery of the courses within the European Civil Protection Training Programme. Based on the European Commission guidance, Lot 2 Consortium, conducting Modules Basic Course (MBC) and Technical Experts Course (TEC) started the process of adapting and transforming MBC and TEC courses into digital form in order to offer participants a possibility to train and learn by attending digital courses.

Digital courses cannot fully meet all the learning objectives of face-to-face learning. It can however present a good substitute and bring new opportunities for the participants. From the methodological point of view, digital course cannot be designed simply by translating the physical course into a digital platform. A new mind-set is needed for everyone, course staff and participants. In order to ensure a good digital education, it is needed to think about the whole process.

We sincerely hope that good practices, tips and tricks compiled in this report will be of good use for all engaged in the digital training process in the field of civil protection, be it at European or national level. We also look forward to receive feedback and possible amendments, which MSB would be pleased to incorporate into the next edition.

Ljubljana, 01/03/2021

Lund, 01/03/2021

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Introduction

This report is the result of two workshops, conducted by Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) in collaboration with other partners and lecturers and trainers in the MBC/TEC Lot 2 roster.

Why workshops on digitalisation?

In order to support MBC and TEC transformation process, two interactive workshops on this topic were organised in January and February 2021. The purpose of the workshops was to give course management, lecturers, trainers and role-players methodological support transforming and delivery of digital MBC and TEC courses.

Method of the workshops

The workshop was divided into 4 topics with a short inject and semi-structured group discussions. Topics were chosen from previous experiences of converting courses and found to be central in the process. Each topic was then discussed and carefully noted in smaller groups. The notes form the fundamental material for this report. Kajsa Ekedahl, MSB facilitated the workshop assisted by Michael Porsgaard, Porsgaard consulting.

Demarcations

The report is a compilation of statements and ideas shared among participants and should be read in that context. The contents should not be read as guiding principles from any of the consortium organisations but as the collective knowledge of experienced trainers and lecturers made visible.

Reading instructions

The report is following the logic of the workshop topics. The material has been used to define key challenges and a number of collaborative findings from the participants. At the end of each chapter, you will find the guiding questions. A selection of slides from the workshops has been compiled in the appendix.

Topic 1: Alertness in the online course

The aim of this session was to find and discuss tools to keep the participants alert and interested during the online course.

The challenge is...

...to keep the participants alert and perceptive during the whole course

...to make everybody be a part, to feel needed, to feel important

...which calls for more variation and more activity – we must keep the participants alert

Finding #1

TIME (AND COFFEE) MATTERS – BUT DON'T BE GREEDY

Good timing and planning is important. Long lectures in a digital setting will make you lose out of participants' engagement. Also, be considerate about number of times you do group work. Keep group work short and frequent. With small hourly breaks, learning will be more active. Try to think beyond traditional teaching! Before breaks, encourage the participants to leave the computer and have a walk around (why not add some physical exercise) or give them a task that has to be completed away from the keyboard.

Information is vital, always be clear about how long a session will last and breaks need to be ensured no matter what. Reflect on the intensity of the days – is it possible to vary the intensity? And most importantly, as much as the trainer must be very disciplined about time, don't be greedy! Put the ambitions on the right level and give time when needed.

WHAT WE CAN DO BEFORE THE LESSON

"A good idea to receive a hand-out before the course in order to be a bit prepared, important to have a lot of short breaks, a clear page numbering, A great deal of interaction by using question tools or game-learning-platforms."

Finding #2

INTERACTION IS CRUCIAL AND NEEDS VARIETY

To keep the participants active and motivated is a different task in the digital setting. It takes a different effort to build the personal relationship, the focus needs to be shifted and discussions in smaller groups creates more familiarity than large plenary settings. Remember that everybody needs to be included and get a feeling of activity and variety. In the digital setting the trainer may have to take the role of a moderator more frequently, in order to ensure that the participants take an active role. When presenting, understand and use participants first names and change the voice tone when presenting.

You can use interactive tools to in order to keep the training alive. For example, the chat can be used for questions during the lecture. You can also use specific, targeted questions to different persons or change your emphasis/voice tone when asking these questions. Another way is to set open questions early so all participants have to think of a reply to keep them engaged. If possible, consider using different media such as film and radio. Flip the classroom by giving tasks to do during the day/evening on their own, especially when conduction a longer course.

It is important that participants should not be distracted with other activities during the sessions, such as regular work. They should have the opportunity to be fully engaged and focus only on the course. However, we have to understand that we are in the participant's home environment and they may be distracted, it is normal.

If participants feel confident, it is easier for them to interact. To offer a 'meet and greet' the day before the course, where you can also test your equipment and connection. If possible, engage technical support and keep the cameras on!

WHAT WE CAN DO DURING THE COURSE

"Get-to-know-each-other-coffee or coffee-rooms, so that you can actually socialize during the breaks. This needs to be planned and scheduled otherwise everyone will run off. When organizing coffee-rooms, prepare simple questions to get the discussion going."

Finding #3

TECHNOLOGY IS FOR ALL AND USE IT WISELY

A good internet connection is a prerequisite to avoid losing time and the interest of participants due to technical issues. It is also important to have a decent quality of audio-visual content.

You can make recommendation for using 2 instead of one or the use of tablets to move around. However, at the same time remember that access to high-end tech may not be possible for all participants.

Let the participants ask questions in the chat – let one person keep an eye on the chat all the time (and raised hands). There are many interactive tools freely available on the internet but make sure everyone feels confident in using what you choose.

Get interactive early on in the WS/training, do polls (advantage, you can do it directly in many platforms), max 45 minutes. A questionnaire or word cloud tool is an option, but do not overuse tools and try them before so you know the tool. Use two staff, one to keep an eye on the chat/questions while the other facilitates. Ask organisations to provide a space for a good learning environment with a good internet connection.

WHAT WE CAN DO DURING THE LESSON

“Keep in mind possible obstacles: network problems, lack of IT skills. Interactive tools need to be introduced, as if it's not used due to lack of understanding it's useless.”

Finding #4

METHODOLOGY CREATES FLOW (AND DON'T SHUN RULES)

Methodology is a broad concept. Here it is used in the meaning of mode of conduction in relation to using digital platforms. As mentioned above, to have a common understanding of camera and screen policy – when to share screens and when to turn off your camera creates a secure learning environment. Turn slides off when discussions are taking place.

Group work can be arranged in multiple ways. You may want to agree on specific rules in the smaller groups as well and be open to using group rooms in different ways. For example creating mini breakout rooms for a smaller set questions or tasks. Break out and then come back together to discuss and present. Provide a mixture of methods (such as bee hives) when using breakout rooms for group work or smaller group discussions. Have open questions rather than yes/no questions, and make use of videos with reflection questions and then breakout rooms to discuss it and summary in plenary (if possible all groups).

A chat function is also a common feature of digital platforms. It is good to agree on a disciplined or clear use of chat function, preferably at the start of a session. If

possible, allot one person to monitor the chat. The chat function can be used for asking questions - count 1-2-3 then everyone replies with a written answer.

As a trainer your own alertness will set the group standards – be there, visually, mentally and with an active voice. Focus on the training and avoid keeping your work mail on etc. In face to face training you might be working a lot with movement and bodily expression. In a digital setting the options are limited and you may want to find new personal tricks. However, don't rely on digital features such as the personalized background to do the trick for you. Agree on clear backgrounds from both presenters and participants, e.g. a relaxed background for informal and a professional background when presenting.

Discussions were guided by the following questions and injects:

- How do we know that they are alert?
- How do we encourage questions?
- How do we avoid screen exhaustion?
- Share your methods on keeping the participants alert during long days?



Topic 2: Group dynamics in the online course

The aim of this session was to find and discuss tools for creating and maintaining good group dynamics in a situation where the participants do not meet in person.

The challenge is...

...that dynamics are different from FACE TO FACE training

...there are limitations to building relationships

...to find balance between introverts and extroverts > involving everyone!

Finding #1

DIVERSITY IS A STRENGTH, ACKNOWLEDGE IT!

To strengthen group dynamics, you can ask participants to reintroduce in the small group with their names correctly pronounced, country and one interesting fact about themselves.

Make sure that you address participants in a way that is within their comfort zone and be aware of the cultural and gendered differences that will intersect in the group. Throughout the course there will be formal and informal situations.

As much as we need a common learning discipline - don't be too strict! Have an open attitude and an open and friendly climate!

Finding #2

PLANS ARE NOTHING; PLANNING IS EVERYTHING

Plan formal as well as less formal injects. I.e., an informal icebreaker session is good to start with. Keep it low tech and simple. Some things can be more detailed than other things, and don't forget that planning is the whole sum of the parts. An example of this is how selection of teams for the groups/exercise teams needs to be very detailed to support overall group dynamics in the online environment.

Adjust your planning to the context. For group work and small group discussion, keep the same group if the session/course is short; consider a different participant grouping for longer courses. Plan for enough time for discussions and group work.

Plan for flexibility. If the questions cannot be answered directly, they can be put on a notice-board and be taken care of as soon as possible/ before the end of the day. Exit tickets over coffee in the end of the day, etc. Also, use the chat/save the chat for the possibility of getting track of all the questions.

WHAT WE CAN DO BEFORE THE COURSE

“In the handout before the course, also add a short presentation of each participant (at least name and organization).”

Finding #3

TECH IS HERE TO STAY – MAKE FRIENDS WITH IT

Be mindful that technical ability may influence an individual's involvement with the course/group and thus the group dynamic. Ensure participants are inclusive in the online tech environment. Ongoing IT tech support for participants was mentioned above in the context of alertness. An alternative is to open the platform 30/45 minutes before official start each day to support informal chat etc. and thus re-enforce group dynamics by providing a chance to socialise. If you have to prepare other things, open up early and give a possibility to ensure that everything is working, and then leave time for a cup of coffee. Provide an IT manual for participants on systems to be used and make sure they keep it close during the course.

Know your workspace! As a trainer, it is crucial to know the platform used, how to raise your hand, how questions are taken care of, and any other features you want to use or anticipate others will use.

“If they have sissies with tech, no problem. EMPATHY is key.”

Finding #4

PRESENCE MATTERS!

We have already talked about mental presence. Digital presence throughout the course matters as well. The optimal setting is that another staff member/trainer follows each session to monitor group dynamics for daily reviews. You can arrange regular evening meetings with course staff with focus on group dynamic online environment.

Be there for participants too! Trainers/course staff/team trainer should be available in evenings (one to one) to any participant to meet/address any questions etc. During the day be available during group discussions and if it is possible to be two – let one keep track of questions and risen hands.

Digital presence is also tiring. A way to alleviate social exhaustion is to let everyone think about the tasks on their own before discussing in groups.

TOWARDS SELF-LEADERSHIP

Give the members of the group different areas of responsibility – who take notes, someone is the timekeeper, there must be a leader/moderator, who sums up etc.

Discussions were guided by the following questions and injects:

- Is there anything we can do to make social contact between the participants easier?
- Do you have any suggestions of methods to encourage good, active and constructive group discussions?
- How do you manage questions from the participants in a good and effective way?



Topic 3: Tips and tricks of the trade

The aim of this session was to share previous experiences and give examples of good practice.

The role of the trainer – prepare, but don't be square

Planning, preparation, groundwork – we have many words for the things we love (or see as important at least). What does this mean for the trainer? What does it mean in a before – during – after perspective? Below you will find some tips and tricks. Some of these actually contradict earlier findings. This only shows how training and learning is highly personal and contextual and that the co-creation with the group is unique.

- Always check and test the tools/connections (perhaps do a check-up the day before)
- We recommend pre-learning before the start of the course. This will make the participant more alert – however, not too much time because our time is limited. Also, plan enough time for reflection (before – during- after the course).
- You should let the participants take some initiative, not everything needs to be completely guided. Participants should also be able to agree on certain modes/approaches to work by themselves.
- Schedule should be flexible and adapted to the performance of the participants. This does however require a lot of coordination in the background of the platform (by course staff).
- Avoid activities during breaks because they are so short, maybe have one reflection question but not more than that.
- As you come to the course, you can make use of group discussions to share & summarize the participants' impressions from the e-learning according to different themes (e.g. the “mechanism”). This can be done based on clear instructions on what to present in the “bigger plenary”. However, sometimes there is not much time to prepare - so we can have some time inside the course for self-studies as well.
- Everything related to concept or theory can be prepared, the online time can preferably be time for interaction, group discussions etc.
- All the material that we are sending out should be clear and pedagogical.
- Our experience is that you should not share the exact presentation for the course (that could actually pre inform the participant so they are then not so engaged in the actual lesson).

- It should be clear for the participant the amount of time expected for preparations before the course. This needs to be well communicated.

“A break should be a break. However, to prepare for a discussion by reading, listening, watching something is a good idea but it needs to be scheduled.”



Tools and methods

The digital environment is not only limiting, it creates new possibilities with a digital toolbox that seems to expand at a continuously increasing pace. Recent years gamification has conquered more and more space in digital and F2F settings alike. Tips and tricks on tools mentioned among workshop participants were both general and specific. Here we focus on general statements.

- It's a good idea to add games, almost everyone likes to compete.
- Flipped classroom is an effective way of teaching/learning.
- Make use of “world café” (thematic groups that can be facilitated by using an online collaborative tool to mimic the traditional table) and then move around and look at the outputs of other groups.
- Participants would also have individual self-learning tasks, such as the online pre-course, and partially individual homework. The exercise part of the course should definitely be done in groups.
- Case studies and thematic meetings (split the participants in 3-4 groups, let them work with a subject, and then present it to the other teams in turns).
- Q&A sessions (where the participants have a chance to ask any question that may have come up during the week).
- Use a digital questionnaire game to check up on individual work.
- Give the participants “homework” and discuss in small or big groups.
- Use tools for word clouds or simply the chat function to give everyone an opportunity to say something.
- Be creative! Can you use “walk and talk” with phone?
- Play music during breaks.

“One could use more of the concept of “blended learning”. Lectures/theoretical input can be done before as e-learning. Also, if putting a lot on e-learning we have to have some kind of a check-up on the retention and possibility to explain/clarify issues so we can ensure that the participants can demonstrate what they have learned (that we meet course objectives)!”

Discussions were guided by the following questions and injects:

- Are there tasks the participants can do on their own, for example during a longer lunch break or at the end of the day?
- What can the participants do on their own before the course? What is necessary to do together during the course? Is there a reason to rethink the schedule?
- Do you have a good tip to share? A tool, a method, something you experienced as successful, fun, educating.



Topic 4: What is good digital training/education?

The aim of this session was to summarise good practice for digital training and education from a broader view.

Course participants' views

DIGITAL EDUCATION NEEDS A NEW MINDSET

"Digital course cannot be designed simply by translating the physical course into a digital platform. A new mind-set needed for everyone, course staff and participants."

GOOD DIGITAL EDUCATION IS...

"You need to think about the whole process. The selection of participants is very important – there needs to be a bit of pre-knowledge also from digital training."

LEARNING IS SOCIAL!

"Training and education is co-creation, meaning that participants are not an audience – learning is social!"

BE CONSIDERATE ABOUT EVALUATION

"The main question is the measure of the success of the course. Evaluations should be carefully adapted and participants encouraged to share their feedback (thoughts, ideas and frustrations) during the course."

THE BIG 5 “DOS” AND “DON’TS”

PLEASE DO:

1. Keep sessions short and clear!
2. Ensure variety in methods and tools!
3. Keep your camera on!
4. Limit group size!
5. Ask for feedback frequently!



PLEASE DON'T:

1. Use tech that complicates!
2. Keep students passive!
3. Stick to one-way communication!
4. Disrespect time!
5. Forget the emotional dimension among participants!



Also, consider when to...

...use more than one platform – in longer courses you need a variation of tool

...repeat instructions

...be flexible about time and settings – anyone can have a bad day!

And don't forget...

...a break is a break is a break!

...to have realistic ambitions!

...always meet the objectives

Appendix

The presentation



**Teaching/training/learning/
role-playing - Online**

**Workshop ToT
Online Methodology**

**26 January/1 February 2021
Zoom**

UPRAVA REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE  ZA ZAŠČITO IN REŠEVANJE  Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency  AUSTRIAN RED CROSS  Federal Ministry Republic of Austria Interior 



About the workshop

- **Why** this workshop, aims and objectives?
- Four topics
- Introduction – group discussions – conclusions
- **All** experiences are valuable, good or bad
- Active Participation is expected
- Resulting in a handbook with tips, tools and methods for you to utilize



Topic 1: Alertness in the online course

Presentation
Group discussions – 4 in each group.
Break around 9.00
All together

Topic 2: Group dynamics in the online course

Presentation
Group discussions – 4 in each group
15 min break around 9.45
All together

Topic 3: Tasks and methods, tips and tricks

Presentation
Group discussions – 4 in each group.
Break around 10.40
All together

Topic 4: Summary – what is good digital training/education

Presentation
Group discussions – 4 in each group.
All together

Summary of the workshop, reflections of the day
12.00 End of workshop at the latest

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ZA ZAŠČITO IN REŠEVANJE



Swedish Civil
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About you

Short presentation in form of –

- Name, role in LOT2, experiences with online teaching or learning

Digital Tools

Online teaching and learning is dependant on digital tools – to create a classroom, to share documents, for educational tools and methods

- What digital tools are you familiar with?



Alertness

- The aim is to keep the participants alert and perceptive during the whole course
- This calls for more variation and more activity – we must keep the participants alert
- To be a part, to feel needed, to feel important
- How do we know that they are alert?
- How do we encourage questions?

Alertness cont.

- Share your methods on keeping the participants alert during long days?
- How do we avoid screen exhaustion?

Group discussion

- Choose your designated breakout room (next slide)
- Decide who in the group will take notes and who will lead the discussion (same all the time or new for every topic – you decide)
- Discuss the questions 15 minutes
- Take a break

Group dynamics - online

- One weakness often pointed out with digital education is the lack of social encounters and network building.
- The aim is to create groups where everybody can make their voice heard
- We want vivid, constructive and creative discussions
- We like when the participants connect and extend their networks
- We aim for a good discussion climate in a group with new encounters or mixed new encounters and colleagues

Group dynamics cont.

- Is there anything we can do to make social contact between the participants easier?
- Do you have any suggestions of methods to encourage good, active and constructive group discussions?
- How do you manage questions from the participants in a good and effective way?

Group discussion

- Choose your designated breakout room (next slide)
- Decide who in the group will take notes and who will lead the discussion (same all the time or new for every topic – you decide)
- Discuss the questions 15 minutes
- Take a break

Tasks and methods, tips and tricks

- We want to use the online time effectively
- It is good to have shorter days online than face to face
- We need to find methods that work online instead of just copying our face to face concept

Tasks and methods, cont.

- Are there tasks the participants can do on their own, for example during a longer lunch break or at the end of the day?
- What can the participants do on their own before the course/asynchronous? What is necessary to do together during the course/synchronous? Is there a reason to rethink the schedule?
- Do you have a good tip to share? A tool, a method, something you experienced as successful, fun, and educating?

Group discussion

- Choose your designated breakout room (next slide)
- Decide who in the group will take notes and who will lead the discussion (same all the time or new for every topic – you decide)
- Discuss the questions 15 minutes
- Take a break

Summary

Good education is always good education. Or is it?

Much is similar between good face to face education and online education - but there are some differences

What is the hallmark of good digital education?

Summary cont.

- How would you describe good digital education?
- What are your big “don’t’s” with digital education?

Group discussion

- Choose your designated breakout room (next slide)
- Decide who in the group will take notes and who will lead the discussion (same all the time or new for every topic – you decide)
- Discuss the questions 15 minutes
- Take a break

That's it! Thank you all!

- Remember to send all your notes to kajsa.ekedahl@msb.se
- Kajsa will gather all the wise thoughts and ideas from both workshops, and compile these into a digital tool for you to use - a handbook

Participants in the workshops and contributors to this report

Name	Organisation	Function
2021-01-26		
Terry Webb	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Beate Holthusen	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Anders Oberg	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Monika Boutros Fischer	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
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Andrej Košir	<i>Slovenia</i>	Role player
Matej Kejžar	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Inger Johanne Tjoflaat	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Jože Pogačar	ACPDR	Role player
Milena Dobnik Jeraj	ACDPR	Consortium Lead, MBC Course Director
Mitja Kosić	Slovenia	Role player
Gordon MacMillan	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Panayiotis Liassides	DG ECHO	Observer
Hannes Sillober	Austria	Role Player
2021-02-01		
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Ruud de Krom	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
Peter Månsson	Consultant	Lecturer/Trainer
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Jennie Virén	MSB	ToT Facilitator
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Luka Duh	ACDPR	Technical Support
Danaja Visković Rojs	ACDPR	Consortium and MBC Course Administrator
Almira Geosev	BMI	Observer
Jörg Waldner	Austria	Role Player
Christian Gaertner	Austria	Role Player
David Wran Schumer	ARC	Lecturer/Trainer



In cooperation with:

