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VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

VIRTUAL EXCHANGE TRAINING TOOLKIT
DELIVERABLE D2.1

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V-EXCHANGE - VIRTUAL EXCHANGE FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND DIGITAL SKILLS

Project: 101252513 - ERASMUS-EDU-2025-VIRT-EXCH-WB

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RIFE
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR FUTURE EDUCATION

YRCI
Youth Rights & Citizenship Initiative

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Funding Statement and Disclaimer

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Disclaimer

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

This guide has been prepared as a training and implementation resource for the V-EXCHANGE project. It is written for educators, youth workers, facilitators, and institutional coordinators who will design and lead Virtual Exchange activities. The content may be adapted by partner institutions according to their local teaching context, participant needs, available digital tools, and institutional policies.

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The V-EXCHANGE Consortium

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Research and Innovation for Future Education (RIFE)	Albania	Partner — non-formal education, inclusion
Youth Rights and Citizenship Initiative (YRCI)	Albania	WP4 lead — Communication, Dissemination & Policy

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About This Guide

The Virtual Exchange Training Toolkit is a practical guide for educators, youth workers, and facilitators who want to create meaningful online international learning experiences. It is designed for the V-EXCHANGE project, but it can also support other institutions and organizations that wish to introduce Virtual Exchange into courses, youth programs, or civic learning initiatives. Virtual Exchange is often described as online collaboration across borders. That description is accurate, but incomplete. A video call between two classrooms is not automatically a Virtual Exchange. A shared online document is not automatically collaboration. A discussion about culture is not automatically intercultural dialogue. Good Virtual Exchange requires design, preparation, facilitation, reflection, and follow-up.

This guide therefore combines theory with practical examples. Each chapter opens with intended learning outcomes, explains an important concept, shows how it appears in real facilitation, and offers reflection questions and practice tasks. The tone is intentionally practical. The aim is not to turn facilitators into experts in educational theory overnight, but to give them the confidence and structure they need to lead safe, inclusive, and engaging Virtual Exchange activities. The guide is especially relevant for educators and youth workers who support learners with limited access to physical mobility. Many students cannot travel abroad because of cost, distance, family responsibilities, disability, visa issues, work obligations, or other barriers. Virtual Exchange cannot replace every part of physical mobility, but it can make international learning available to many more people. At the end of the guide, facilitators will find a final assessment and a certification framework. These can be used for self-checking, training completion, or certification within the V-EXCHANGE project.

How to read this guide

You can read the guide from beginning to end, or use individual chapters when preparing a specific activity. If you are new to Virtual Exchange, start with Chapters 1 to 6. If you already have experience, focus on Chapters 8 to 17, which address intercultural dialogue, inclusion, facilitation, assessment, risk management, and sustainability. Chapters 20 and 21, the certification framework, and the annexes support training delivery and quality assurance.

What You Need to Know About Virtual Exchange

This summary gathers the toolkit's most important points in one place. Use it as a quick orientation before reading the full chapters, or as a refresher before you design or facilitate an exchange. Each point links to the chapter where it is developed in detail.

- **It is a method and a mindset.** Virtual Exchange is a structured, facilitated online learning experience — not a webinar, guest lecture, or informal chat. Its five defining features are that it is structured, facilitated, interactive, collaborative, and reflective (Chapters 1–2).
- **It widens access.** Virtual Exchange brings international learning to students who cannot travel because of cost, distance, work, family, disability, or visa barriers. For many learners in the Western Balkans it is the first realistic route to an international experience at all (Chapter 1).
- **Five pillars hold it together.** The V-EXCHANGE model combines structured online collaboration, intercultural dialogue, digital skills development, civic and global learning, and reflection. These should appear across the design even when the topic changes (Chapter 3).
- **The facilitator designs conditions, not lectures.** Set clear tasks, roles, and visible outputs; support inclusive participation; manage time; and diagnose silence rather than rushing to fill it (Chapters 4 and 12).
- **Design beats improvisation.** Strong exchanges have clear learning outcomes, a purposeful task, defined roles, a visible shared output, and built-in reflection. When a breakout room goes silent, treat the task as the problem, not the students' motivation (Chapters 5, 6, and 16).
- **Intercultural dialogue is a skill, not a tour of traditions.** Help participants ask better questions, listen with curiosity, notice assumptions, and reframe generalizations into specific, experience-based language (Chapter 8).
- **Choose tools for inclusion, not novelty.** Design mobile-first and low-bandwidth, always provide an asynchronous route, and offer audio-only, chat, and text options so an unstable connection never means exclusion (Chapters 9 and 11).
- **Use AI and gamification responsibly.** AI can support translation, brainstorming, and reflection, but must not replace students' own thinking, and participants' personal data should never be entered into AI tools (Chapter 10).
- **Assess the process, not only the product.** Recognize participation, collaboration, intercultural learning, and reflection alongside the final output, and use formative, peer, and self-assessment (Chapter 14).
- **Evaluate in order to improve.** Turn feedback into concrete design changes, and align session-level data with the project's indicators (Chapter 15).

- **Plan for risk.** Keep a simple risk register with prevention and backup for tools, access, language, and engagement (Chapter 16).
- **Make it last.** Recognition (course outcomes, ECTS, and certificates), curriculum integration, and an active community of practice are what sustain Virtual Exchange beyond the project (Chapters 17 and 18).
- **Certification confirms readiness.** Facilitators can be certified through a four-part assessment — a knowledge check, case-based questions, a practical design task, and a reflection — which feeds Milestone MS8 and Deliverable D2.5 (Chapter 21).

How This Toolkit Meets the Project Objectives

This deliverable (D2.1) is the foundation of Work Package 2. It is written so that it directly serves the four WP2 objectives and connects to the other WP2 deliverables that build on it — the Train-the-Trainer Workshops (D2.2), the Online Learning Modules (D2.3), the Educator Community of Practice (D2.4), and the Facilitator Certification Reports (D2.5).

WP2 objective	How this toolkit delivers it	Where
Equip educators, youth facilitators and trainers with the skills, methodologies and digital tools to implement Virtual Exchange	Competency-based chapters with measurable learning outcomes, worked cases, tool-selection guidance and ready-to-use templates	Ch. 2 – 13; Annexes 1 – 6
Develop interactive and innovative training materials tailored to Virtual Exchange facilitation	Reflection points, practice tasks, case studies, gamification and AI guidance, and a Western Balkans application section	Ch. 3 – 10; Regional section
Provide structured professional development for long-term sustainability	Implementation roadmap, community-of-practice model, competency progression and a full certification framework	Ch. 14, 18, 19, 21; Annex 12
Foster a network of trained facilitators beyond the project	Community-of-practice routines feeding D2.4, and certification feeding D2.5 and the collaboration network (WP5)	Ch. 18; Certification framework

Alignment with DigCompEdu

The toolkit is aligned with the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu). Each chapter is tagged with the competence area it develops, so facilitators, workshop trainers and module designers can trace how the toolkit builds recognized European educator competences.

DigCompEdu area	Focus	Chapters
1. Professional Engagement	Context, reflective practice, collaboration, sustainability	1, 15, 18, 19, 20
2. Digital Resources	Selecting, creating and managing digital tools and spaces	9, 10
3. Teaching & Learning	Designing and facilitating structured online learning	3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13
4. Assessment	Assessing process and product; feedback; certification	14, 15, 21
5. Empowering Learners	Accessibility, inclusion, differentiation, active participation	8, 11
6. Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence	Digital collaboration, responsible AI use, information literacy	8, 10, 13

Crosswalk to the six Online Learning Modules (D2.3)

Deliverable D2.3 (led by UNIEL) develops six self-paced e-learning modules. This toolkit is the source content for those modules: the table below maps each planned module to the chapters and annexes that supply its material, so the toolkit and the e-learning course reinforce one another rather than diverge.

Online Learning Module (D2.3)	Source chapters & annexes in this toolkit
Module 1 — Digital pedagogy for Virtual Exchange	Ch. 2, 3, 7
Module 2 — Online facilitation techniques	Ch. 4, 6, 12
Module 3 — Intercultural communication & global citizenship	Ch. 8; Annex 3
Module 4 — Collaborative learning & activity design	Ch. 5, 13; Annex 2
Module 5 — Student engagement, AI & gamification	Ch. 10, 11; Annex 6
Module 6 — Assessment, evaluation & quality assurance	Ch. 14, 15, 16, 21; Annexes 7 – 10

Applying This Toolkit in the Western Balkans

V-EXCHANGE is funded under the Western Balkans window of the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange call and brings together partners from North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania and Kosovo. Virtual Exchange is not culturally neutral, and good facilitation in this region means planning for its specific opportunities and constraints. The considerations below should be read alongside every chapter and reflected in local session design.

Connectivity and devices

Bandwidth and device access vary widely between and within partner countries, and many students join from mobile phones or shared devices. Design for a mobile-first, low-bandwidth baseline: keep live video optional, provide downloadable materials, allow audio-only and text participation, and always prepare an asynchronous route so an unstable connection never means exclusion (see Chapters 9 and 11).

Language and multilingualism

The region is highly multilingual, and English confidence differs across groups. Provide vocabulary lists in advance, normalize clarification questions, permit contributions in the chat or shared documents, and use AI translation as a support for inclusion rather than a replacement for dialogue (see Chapters 8, 10 and 11).

Recognition, ECTS and institutional embedding

For Virtual Exchange to last beyond the project, it must be recognized. Where possible, link exchanges to course learning outcomes and ECTS credit, use certificates of participation, and secure program-leader approval early. This connects directly to WP5 (curriculum integration and institutional agreements) and is developed in Chapter 17.

Partner-level example: a four-week Virtual Exchange embedded in an existing "Digital Citizenship" course can be mapped to two course learning outcomes (intercultural communication and digital collaboration), recognized as roughly 1 ECTS of student workload (25–30 hours across preparation, live sessions, group work and reflection), and evidenced by a certificate of participation together with the reflection task. Program-leader approval is secured before the exchange and the workload is recorded in the course syllabus.

Project-level versus institution-specific recognition: the recommendations above are project-level. Each partner then applies the recognition mechanism available to it — ECTS and formal course requirements at universities, or certificates and extracurricular or non-formal recognition at youth organizations. Partners should state the mechanism used for each exchange so that recognition is transparent to students. Facilitator recognition: partners are also encouraged to recognize facilitators' work — for example by counting preparation and facilitation hours in workload plans, or by recording certification in staff development records (Chapter 21).

Relevant, locally grounded topics

Exchanges are strongest when they discuss issues that matter across the four countries — youth participation and employment, digital citizenship and misinformation, European integration, environmental challenges, and inclusion. Ground broad themes in students' own contexts (see Chapters 5 and 8) so comparison across the region becomes the source of learning.

> **Western Balkans note**
>
> Throughout the toolkit, look for the shaded "Western Balkans note" boxes. They translate a general principle into a concrete choice for the V-EXCHANGE partner context.

1. Project Context and Purpose

DigCompEdu: Area 1 — Professional Engagement

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- explain why Virtual Exchange matters in the V-EXCHANGE context;
- identify learners in their own setting who are excluded from physical mobility;
- describe Virtual Exchange as both a method and a mindset.

Opening scenario

A student in a small town wants an international experience but cannot afford to travel. Another would like to work with peers abroad, but visa, time, or family responsibilities make physical mobility unrealistic. A lecturer wants to internationalize a course, but the institution has limited mobility places. V-EXCHANGE begins from this very practical problem: international learning matters, but too many learners are left outside it.

The V-EXCHANGE project, Virtual Exchange for Global Citizenship and Digital Skills, is built around a simple but powerful idea: international education should be more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable. Virtual Exchange allows students, educators, and youth workers to connect across borders without requiring physical travel. When designed well, it gives participants the chance to practice digital collaboration, intercultural communication, critical thinking, and civic engagement.The project brings together universities and youth organizations from North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Kosovo. This mix is important. Universities contribute academic structures, curricula, educators, and students. Youth organizations contribute experience in non-formal education, community engagement, youth participation, and outreach to learners beyond formal higher education.

V-EXCHANGE responds to several educational needs at once. First, it addresses unequal access to international mobility. Second, it strengthens digital skills by giving learners real reasons to use online collaboration tools. Third, it develops intercultural learning through structured dialogue rather than superficial cultural exchange. Fourth, it connects learning to civic participation by asking participants to discuss issues that affect their communities and societies. This guide is part of Work Package 2, Training of Educators and Facilitators. Its purpose is to prepare facilitators to design and lead Virtual Exchange activities that are not only technically functional, but also pedagogically meaningful, inclusive, and engaging. Throughout the guide, Virtual Exchange is treated as both a method and a mindset. As a method, it includes session plans, digital tools, activities, assessment, and evaluation. As a mindset, it asks educators to value collaboration across difference, shared problem-solving, curiosity, and reflective learning.

Western Balkans note

In the partner region, competitive mobility places tend to go to students who already have resources and confidence. Virtual Exchange is therefore not a "lesser" option here — for many V-EXCHANGE learners it is the first realistic route to an international experience at all.

Case in practice: A mobility opportunity without travel

At a university in the region, only a small number of students can take part in physical mobility each year. The places are competitive, and students with work or family responsibilities often do not apply. A lecturer adds a four-week Virtual Exchange module to an existing course on digital citizenship. Students work with peers from another country to compare how young people respond to misinformation online. They do not travel, but they still experience international teamwork, intercultural dialogue, and a shared final output.

Reflection point

Which learners in your institution or organization have limited access to physical mobility? What would they gain from a structured online international experience?

Practice task

Write a short paragraph explaining why Virtual Exchange is needed in your context. Include one barrier to physical mobility and one learning opportunity that Virtual Exchange could create.

Chapter takeaways

V-EXCHANGE uses Virtual Exchange to make international learning more inclusive, digital, and connected to civic participation. The toolkit prepares facilitators to turn online contact into structured learning.

2. Understanding Virtual Exchange

DigCompEdu: Area 3 — Teaching & Learning



Figure 1. Virtual Exchange at a glance — five defining features.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- distinguish Virtual Exchange from a webinar, guest lecture or informal online chat;
- name the five defining features of Virtual Exchange;
- rewrite a passive online activity as a structured exchange.

Opening scenario

Two groups of students meet online. The facilitator welcomes everyone and says, "Today we will discuss global citizenship." A few students smile. Some keep their cameras off. After the first introductions, silence fills the room. The facilitator realizes that bringing students into the same video call is only the beginning. The exchange still has to be created.

Virtual Exchange is a structured, facilitated, online learning experience in which participants from different cultural, national, institutional, or social contexts interact, collaborate, reflect, and learn with and from one another. The key words are structured, facilitated, interactive, collaborative, and reflective.

A webinar can inform learners. A guest lecture can inspire them. A self-paced online course can teach content. Virtual Exchange does something different. It asks participants to meet other perspectives, work with them, and reflect on what that encounter changes in their understanding.

For example, an online lecture on media literacy may explain how misinformation spreads. A Virtual Exchange on the same topic would ask students from different countries to bring examples from their own online environments, compare patterns, discuss why misinformation is trusted or rejected, and create shared recommendations for responsible digital behavior. The difference is not the platform. A video conferencing tool can support a lecture, a staff meeting, or a Virtual Exchange. The difference is the learning design. In Virtual Exchange, participants are not only receiving information. They are contributing, questioning, comparing, producing, and reflecting.

Virtual Exchange also differs from informal online conversation. Students may enjoy speaking with peers from another country, but enjoyment alone does not guarantee learning. A strong exchange includes clear learning outcomes, purposeful activities, facilitation, inclusive participation structures, and reflection. It is useful to think of Virtual Exchange as a bridge. On one side, participants bring their own contexts: language, habits, education systems, assumptions, and expectations. On the other side, they encounter the contexts of others. The facilitator does not carry them across the bridge. The facilitator makes sure the bridge is safe, visible, and worth crossing.

Case in practice: The silent breakout room

During a pilot session, students are placed in international breakout rooms and told to "discuss youth participation." After ten minutes, they return with little to report. The facilitator first assumes that the students were shy or unmotivated. Feedback shows a different problem: the task was too broad. In the next session, the facilitator gives a clearer instruction: "Each person shares one example of how young people participate in community life. Then choose one common barrier and write one recommendation in the shared document." The conversation becomes focused because the task becomes clear.

Reflection point

Think of an online session you have attended or organized. Did participants mostly listen, or did they actively exchange ideas? What would have made it closer to a Virtual Exchange?

Practice task

Choose a simple online activity, such as a lecture, guest talk, or discussion. Rewrite it as a Virtual Exchange activity by answering: Who will interact? What question will they explore? What will they create together? How will they reflect?

Chapter takeaways

Virtual Exchange is not defined by technology alone. It is defined by structured interaction, collaboration, facilitation, and reflection.

3. The V-EXCHANGE Educational Model

DigCompEdu: Area 3 — Teaching & Learning

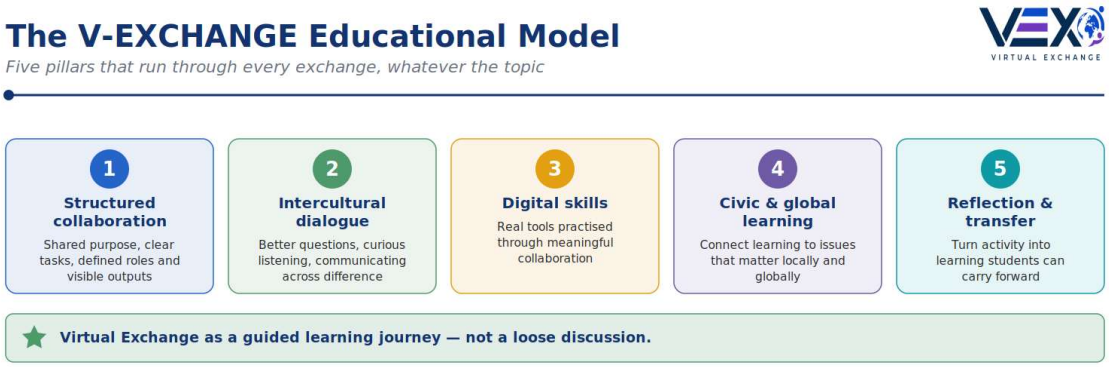


Figure 2. The V-EXCHANGE educational model — five pillars.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- explain the five pillars of the V-EXCHANGE model;
- design an activity that reflects each pillar;
- sequence a multi-week exchange as a guided learning journey.

Opening scenario

A facilitator is asked to design a Virtual Exchange on digital citizenship. The topic is broad, the students come from different countries, and the available time is limited. Without a model, the activity can become a loose discussion. With a model, it can become a guided learning journey.

The V-EXCHANGE educational model combines five pillars: structured online collaboration, intercultural dialogue, digital skills development, civic and global learning, and reflection. These pillars should appear across the design of the exchange, even when the topic changes.

Structured online collaboration

Participants need more than a meeting link. They need a shared purpose, clear tasks, defined roles, and visible outputs. A structured task gives students something to do together. For instance, instead of asking students to "talk about sustainability," a facilitator may ask them to compare one local environmental challenge in each country, identify a shared pattern, and create a one-minute recommendation for youth organizations.

Intercultural dialogue

Intercultural dialogue does not mean asking participants to describe national traditions. It means helping them ask better questions, listen with curiosity, notice assumptions, and understand how context shapes perspectives. The aim is not to agree on everything. The aim is to learn how to communicate across difference.

Digital skills development

Virtual Exchange gives learners a real reason to use digital tools. They may collaborate in shared documents, present ideas online, organize group tasks, use discussion boards, or create multimedia outputs. Digital skills are not taught as abstract software skills; they are practiced through meaningful collaboration.

Civic and global learning

V-EXCHANGE connects international learning to issues that matter: democratic participation, digital citizenship, inclusion, sustainability, employability, media literacy, and community engagement. Participants learn that global issues are experienced locally and that local experiences can inform broader thinking.

Reflection and transfer

Reflection helps participants turn activity into learning. After a session, students should not only say whether they liked it. They should be able to explain what they learned, what surprised them, what assumptions changed, and how they can use the experience in future study, work, or civic life.

Case in practice: Youth and digital citizenship

In a six-week exchange, students from two universities explore digital citizenship. Week 1 introduces the participants and group agreement. Week 2 asks them to compare how misinformation appears in their online spaces. Week 3 focuses on digital rights and responsibilities. Week 4 moves into international group work, where teams design a short awareness campaign. Week 5 is used for peer feedback. Week 6 ends with presentations and reflection. The topic stays consistent, but each week moves students from meeting, to comparing, to creating, to reflecting.

Reflection point

Which of the five pillars is already strong in your teaching or youth work? Which pillar would need more intentional planning?

Practice task

Choose one Virtual Exchange topic and write one learning activity for each pillar: collaboration, intercultural dialogue, digital skills, civic or global learning, and reflection.

Chapter takeaways

The V-EXCHANGE model treats Virtual Exchange as a guided learning journey. Strong exchanges include collaboration, dialogue, digital skills, civic relevance, and reflection.

4. The Role of the Virtual Exchange Facilitator

DigCompEdu: Areas 1 & 5 — Professional Engagement; Empowering Learners

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- describe the core facilitator competencies for Virtual Exchange;
- diagnose and respond appropriately to online silence;
- use structure and roles to balance participation.

Opening scenario

A facilitator enters an online session with a detailed presentation. After twenty minutes of speaking, they ask, "Does anyone have questions?" No one responds. The problem is not that the facilitator is unprepared. The problem is that the facilitator is acting as the center of the session, while Virtual Exchange needs participants to become the center of the learning process.

The Virtual Exchange facilitator is not only a lecturer, host, or technical moderator. The facilitator creates the conditions for meaningful exchange. This includes preparing participants, setting expectations, designing tasks, supporting inclusive dialogue, managing time, responding to difficulties, and guiding reflection.

A good facilitator does not try to control every word. Instead, they create a structure in which participants know what to do, feel safe enough to contribute, and understand why their contribution matters. This requires clarity and flexibility at the same time.

Facilitators need several competencies. Digital confidence helps them use online tools without making technology the focus of the session. Online communication skills help them explain tasks clearly and maintain presence even through a screen. Intercultural sensitivity helps them notice when a comment may be based on an assumption or stereotype. Inclusive facilitation helps them support participants with different language levels, access conditions, and confidence levels.

Facilitators also need to be comfortable with silence. In online spaces, silence can mean many things: confusion, reflection, shyness, technical delay, language processing, or lack of clarity. A skilled facilitator does not immediately fill every silence. They diagnose it. If participants are thinking, give them time. If they are confused, clarify the task. If they are hesitant, offer sentence starters or allow written responses.

The facilitator is also a guardian of the learning climate. When participants discuss sensitive topics, disagreement may appear. This is not a failure. Dialogue across difference often includes discomfort. The facilitator helps participants disagree with respect, speak from experience, ask questions, and avoid generalizations.

Case in practice: The dominant voice and the quiet group

In a breakout room, one confident student answers every question first. Two others say almost nothing. A fourth writes in the chat but does not speak. The facilitator joins the room and says, "I hear some useful ideas already. Let us make sure everyone has space. For the next round, each person can share one sentence, and using the chat is also welcome." The facilitator then assigns roles: one timekeeper, one note-taker, one reporter, and one questioner. Participation becomes more balanced because the structure changes.

Reflection point

Do you naturally facilitate by explaining, questioning, organizing, encouraging, or mediating? Which facilitation habit will you need to strengthen for Virtual Exchange?

Practice task

Write three facilitation phrases you can use when: one person dominates, no one speaks, or a participant makes a generalizing comment.

Chapter takeaways

The facilitator turns online contact into learning. Their role is to create clarity, safety, inclusion, balanced participation, and reflection.

5. Designing a Virtual Exchange Activity

DigCompEdu: Areas 2 & 3 — Digital Resources; Teaching & Learning

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- apply the ten-step Virtual Exchange design process;
- narrow a broad theme into a focused, answerable task;
- define a shared output that makes collaboration visible.

Opening scenario

A lecturer wants students to meet peers from another university. The idea sounds promising, but the first planning question is not "Which platform should we use?" It is "What should students learn by working with people from another context?"

A strong Virtual Exchange activity begins with purpose. Technology, timing, and tools come later. Facilitators should first identify what participants should understand, practice, discuss, or create because they are interacting with peers from another context.

The design process can be organized into ten steps. First, define the learning purpose. Second, choose a topic that benefits from multiple perspectives. Third, identify the participant groups. Fourth, decide the format: one session, short module, project cycle, or ongoing exchange. Fifth, plan the interaction. Sixth, choose digital tools. Seventh, prepare students. Eighth, facilitate the activity. Ninth, include reflection. Tenth, evaluate and improve.

The topic should be meaningful but manageable. "Democracy" is too broad for a single session. "How can universities encourage student participation in decision-making?" is more practical. "Digital skills" is broad. "Which digital collaboration habits make international teamwork easier?" is more focused.

The strongest tasks usually lead to a shared output. This output does not need to be complex. It can be a list of recommendations, a short presentation, a comparison table, a digital poster, a reflection statement, a campaign idea, or a shared map of challenges. The purpose of the output is to make collaboration visible.

Preparation is also part of design. Students may need a short introduction to the topic, a technical check, a vocabulary list, a group agreement, or a short pre-task. When students arrive prepared, live sessions can focus on exchange rather than explanation.

Case in practice: From vague topic to designed exchange

Weak design: "Students from two universities meet online to discuss democracy."
Improved design: "Students meet for a 90-minute session on youth participation in university life. Before the session, they complete a short poll about how students can influence decisions in their institution. During the session, mixed-country groups compare barriers, choose one shared challenge, and draft three recommendations for university leaders. After the session, each student writes a reflection on one idea they heard that changed their thinking."

Reflection point

When you design learning activities, do you usually start with content, tools, or outcomes? What would change if you started with the exchange purpose?

Practice task

Design a one-session Virtual Exchange concept. Include the topic, learning objective, participant groups, main task, shared output, and reflection question. (Use Annex 2; a completed example is in Annex 11.)

Chapter takeaways

Virtual Exchange design begins with learning purpose. Good activities are focused, structured, collaborative, and connected to reflection.

6. Structuring Sessions and Exchange Cycles

DigCompEdu: Area 3 — Teaching & Learning

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- build a timed 90-minute and 60-minute session structure;
- explain the purpose of each part of a session;
- plan the phases of a multi-week exchange cycle.

Opening scenario

A facilitator opens a live online session with a complex discussion question. Participants are still checking microphones, finding the chat, and wondering who else is in the room. The question is good, but the timing is wrong. Before deep dialogue, participants need orientation, trust, and structure.

A Virtual Exchange session should have a clear rhythm. Participants need to know where they are in the session, what they are doing, how much time they have, and what they should produce. A well-structured session reduces anxiety and increases participation.

A useful 90-minute session structure includes eight parts: welcome and purpose, technical check, icebreaker, topic stimulus, breakout task, group sharing, reflection, and next steps. Each part has a reason. The welcome creates presence. The technical check prevents avoidable disruption. The icebreaker lowers social pressure. The stimulus gives common ground. The breakout task creates interaction. The sharing makes learning visible. Reflection turns experience into learning. Next steps connect the session to the wider exchange.

Shorter sessions can follow the same logic. A 60-minute session may include a five-minute welcome, five-minute icebreaker, ten-minute input, twenty-minute breakout task, ten-minute sharing, five-minute reflection, and five-minute closing. The structure should be lighter, but not absent.

For longer exchange cycles, facilitators should think in phases. The first phase is preparation and orientation. The second phase is trust-building and topic exploration. The third phase is collaborative work. The fourth phase is presentation or sharing. The fifth phase is reflection and evaluation.

A four-week exchange may be enough for a focused topic and small output. A six-week exchange allows deeper discussion and peer feedback. An eight-week exchange can support more ambitious project work, such as research, community recommendations, or digital storytelling.

Case in practice: The session that started too fast

A facilitator begins with the question, "What does active citizenship mean in your country?" Students hesitate. Some do not know whether to answer personally, politically, or academically. In the next session, the facilitator starts differently. Students first choose one image that represents participation, then explain it in pairs. Only after this warm-up does the group discuss active citizenship. The same topic becomes easier because the session builds toward it.

Reflection point

At what point in your planned session do participants first speak or write? Is that early enough to build confidence?

Practice task

Create a 90-minute session flow for a Virtual Exchange on a topic of your choice. Include timings and the purpose of each part.

Chapter takeaways

Session structure supports participation. Participants need orientation, trust, clear tasks, shared outputs, reflection, and continuity.

7. Pedagogical Strategies for Virtual Exchange

DigCompEdu: Area 3 — Teaching & Learning

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- identify active-learning strategies suited to Virtual Exchange;
- combine two strategies to redesign a topic;
- connect each strategy to reflection.

Opening scenario

A topic can be interesting and still lead to passive learning. A facilitator can choose an important theme, such as sustainability or democratic participation, but if students only listen to presentations, they may not experience exchange. Pedagogy is the bridge between topic and learning.

Virtual Exchange works best when learners are active. Several pedagogical strategies are especially useful: collaborative learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, dialogue-based learning, peer learning, digital storytelling, scenario-based learning, and reflective learning.

Collaborative learning asks students to work together toward a shared output. This is central to Virtual Exchange because students learn through interaction. A shared document, joint presentation, or group recommendation can make collaboration visible.

Problem-based learning begins with a challenge rather than a lecture. For example, students may explore how universities can support learners who cannot take part in physical mobility. They compare barriers, identify patterns, and propose solutions.

Project-based learning gives participants more time to develop an output. This could be a youth campaign, digital poster, policy recommendation, podcast episode, or community action plan. Project work is especially useful in multi-week exchanges.

Dialogue-based learning focuses on careful listening, questioning, and meaning-making. It is important for intercultural learning because participants do not simply exchange facts; they learn how perspectives are formed.

Digital storytelling allows participants to connect personal, local, and global experiences. A student may create a short story about a place in their community, a challenge they care about, or a moment when they changed their view. Stories can make abstract themes human.

Scenario-based learning gives students a realistic situation and asks them to respond. For example, they may act as a university committee deciding how to include students with limited internet access in an online international project.

Reflective learning should accompany all these strategies. Without reflection, participants may complete tasks but miss the deeper learning.

Case in practice: A problem that belongs to everyone

In an exchange on student wellbeing, facilitators avoid asking each country group to present statistics. Instead, international teams receive a scenario: "Your university wants to create a peer-support initiative for first-year students who feel isolated. What would make the initiative accessible, trustworthy, and sustainable?" Students compare experiences, discuss cultural expectations around asking for help, and design a shared model.

Reflection point

Which pedagogical strategy fits your teaching style best? Which one would challenge you in a useful way?

Practice task

Choose one topic and redesign it using two strategies from this chapter. For example, combine problem-based learning with digital storytelling, or collaborative learning with reflection.

Chapter takeaways

Virtual Exchange should be active. Pedagogical strategies help facilitators turn topics into meaningful collaboration, dialogue, and reflection.

8. Intercultural Dialogue and Global Citizenship

DigCompEdu: Areas 5 & 6 — Empowering Learners; Learners' Digital Competence

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- reframe generalizations into experience-based dialogue;
- write specific, open, grounded discussion questions;
- explain global citizenship as a practiced competence.

Opening scenario

A student asks another student, "What is your culture like?" The question is friendly, but impossible to answer well. No one can represent an entire culture. Intercultural dialogue becomes stronger when questions move from general labels to lived experiences, contexts, and examples.

Intercultural dialogue is the process of communicating across difference with curiosity, respect, and reflection. It includes listening, asking questions, explaining context, noticing assumptions, and being open to the possibility that one perspective is not complete.

In Virtual Exchange, intercultural dialogue should not be reduced to food, holidays, or national traditions. These topics may be pleasant, but they do not automatically lead to deeper learning. Strong intercultural dialogue connects personal experience to broader social questions. It asks how people understand participation, fairness, community, technology, education, or responsibility in different contexts.

Facilitators should help participants avoid treating one person as the representative of a whole country or group. A student can speak about their experience, their institution, their community, or their observations. They should not be expected to speak for everyone who shares their nationality, language, or background.

Global citizenship in this guide means the ability to understand oneself as part of a wider world, to recognize interdependence, to engage respectfully with difference, and to consider how local actions connect to broader challenges. It is not an abstract identity. It is practiced when learners discuss real issues, listen to others, and consider responsible action.

Good discussion questions are specific, open, and grounded. Instead of "What is democracy like in your country?" ask, "How can young people in your community express their views or influence decisions?" Instead of "Are students active?" ask, "What makes it easier or harder for students to participate in university life?"

Sensitive moments may happen. A participant may generalize, compare unfairly, or make a comment that sounds judgmental. The facilitator should intervene without shaming the speaker. The goal is to protect the learning space and model better dialogue.

Western Balkans note

Some topics carry particular weight in the region — national identity, recent history, minorities, and relations between neighboring countries. These can be productive, but only with a firm group agreement, experience-based questions, and a facilitator ready to reframe. When in doubt, anchor the discussion in students' own present-day experience rather than in contested history.

Case in practice: Reframing a generalization

During a discussion, a student says, "People from your country are not very interested in politics." The facilitator pauses and says, "Let us be careful not to speak about a whole country. Could we reframe this as a question about specific experiences? For example: What forms of political or community participation are common among young people in your context?" The facilitator does not ignore the problem, but turns it into a learning moment.

Reflection point

Which topics in your context may require careful facilitation? How can you prepare participants to discuss them respectfully?

Practice task

Rewrite three weak questions into stronger intercultural dialogue questions. Start with: "What is your culture like?" "Are young people active?" "Is technology good or bad for society?"

Chapter takeaways

Intercultural dialogue is not about representing a culture. It is about listening, asking better questions, explaining context, and reflecting on different perspectives.

9. Digital Tools and Online Learning Spaces

DigCompEdu: Area 2 — Digital Resources

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- select digital tools by accessibility, purpose and privacy;
- match tool categories to learning tasks;
- prepare a backup plan for technical failure.

Opening scenario

A facilitator chooses an advanced online whiteboard because it looks impressive. During the session, several students cannot access it from their phones, two cannot create accounts, and one has a slow internet connection. The tool was modern, but it did not serve the learning.

Digital tools should support participation. They should not become obstacles, distractions, or tests of technical confidence. The best tool is the one that helps the actual participants complete the actual learning task.

Facilitators should choose tools based on accessibility, reliability, ease of use, privacy, language support, cost, and institutional availability. A simple shared document may be more effective than a complex platform if it allows everyone to contribute. A familiar video platform may be better than a new tool if the goal is dialogue rather than technical experimentation.

Different tool categories serve different purposes. Video conferencing supports live dialogue, breakout rooms, and presentations. Shared documents support collaborative writing and note-taking. Whiteboards support brainstorming and visual mapping. Polling tools support quick participation and opinion checks. Learning platforms support preparation, announcements, resources, and asynchronous tasks. Discussion boards support reflection and peer response.

Tool choice should follow the task. If students need to compare examples, a shared table may be enough. If they need to brainstorm many ideas, a whiteboard may help. If they need to reflect privately, a form or journal may be better. If they need to build a final output over several weeks, a shared folder or project space is useful.

Facilitators should always have a backup plan. Technology fails. Links do not open. Audio breaks. Internet connections drop. A backup plan can include an alternative link, a downloadable document, chat-based participation, audio-only participation, asynchronous completion, or a simplified task.

Data protection also matters. Facilitators should avoid collecting unnecessary personal information and should use platforms approved by their institution when possible. In line with the GDPR, students should know what tools they are using, why they are using them, and what information they should not share.

Western Balkans note

Assume a mobile-first, low-bandwidth baseline. Prefer tools that run in a browser without account creation, work on phones, and degrade gracefully on weak connections. Where possible, use platforms already licensed by partner universities (the project deliberately builds on existing institutional infrastructure) rather than asking students to adopt new paid tools.

Case in practice: The shared document that worked

A facilitator plans a session on digital skills. Instead of using three different tools, she creates one shared document with clear sections for each breakout group. Students add examples, vote on the strongest idea, and prepare a short report. The tool is simple, but the collaboration is visible. Students who do not want to speak immediately can still contribute in writing.

Reflection point

Which digital tools are already familiar to your participants? Which tools could create barriers?

Practice task

Choose one Virtual Exchange task and list two possible tools. Compare them using these criteria: access, ease of use, privacy, mobile compatibility, language support, and backup options. (Use Annex 5.)

Chapter takeaways

Digital tools should be selected for learning and inclusion. Simple, reliable, accessible tools often support better exchange than complex tools.

10. Guidance on AI and Gamification

DigCompEdu: Areas 6 & 2 — Learners' Digital Competence; Digital Resources

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- apply baseline rules for responsible AI and inclusive gamification in Virtual Exchange;
- distinguish technology that supports dialogue and learning from technology that replaces them;
- use the D3.4 Gamification and AI Integration Guide to develop, document, and review specialist design choices.

Opening scenario

A facilitator is planning a multilingual Virtual Exchange on sustainability. One team uses AI to translate key terms and then discusses the ideas together; another asks AI to produce the whole response. A leaderboard also pushes some students to answer quickly rather than listen. The technologies are similar, but the learning design is not. The facilitator needs clear guardrails and a specialist guide for the detailed choices.

In the context of V-EXCHANGE, *artificial intelligence (AI) refers to digital tools that can support participants and facilitators with tasks such as translation, brainstorming, summarization, language support, and reflection, while keeping human judgment, dialogue, and collaboration at the center of learning.*

Gamification refers to the purposeful use of game-like elements—such as missions, challenges, badges, progress indicators, and peer recognition—to increase motivation and engagement without turning the learning process into competition for its own sake.

AI and gamification can strengthen Virtual Exchange when used carefully. They can make activities more accessible, engaging, and motivating. They can also create risks if they replace human dialogue, reduce critical thinking, or turn learning into superficial competition.

This chapter sets the minimum expectations for AI and gamification in V-EXCHANGE. D2.1 remains the reference for general Virtual Exchange design and facilitation; D3.4 goes deeper into specialist AI-supported and gameful design. Decide here whether a feature serves learning, then use D3.4 to design, document, pilot, and review it.

Links to other deliverables – D2.1 to D3.4 hand-off

This Chapter provides the baseline rules. D3.4, Gamification and AI Integration Guide, is the advanced companion for detailed implementation:

- Gamification design, missions, badges, and cooperative dynamics: Chapters 2–7; Annexes 1–4.
- AI foundations, multilingual support, scaffolding, reflection, and prompting: Chapters 8–11; Annexes 6 and 8.
- Privacy, transparency, bias, integrity, and verification: Chapters 12–13; Annexes 5, 7, and 9.
- Combining AI and gamification, inclusion, facilitation, and safeguarding: Chapters 14–17; Annexes 10 and 13.
- Assessment, governance, implementation, scenarios, and readiness review: Chapters 18–21; Annexes 11, 12, and 14.

Purpose comes before feature. Start with a learning, access, or participation need. If AI or gamification does not strengthen collaboration, inclusion, critical thinking, reflection, or meaningful engagement, it may not be necessary. As throughout D2.1, the tool follows the task.

AI can support Virtual Exchange in several ways. It can help participants translate unfamiliar words, improve clarity in writing, summarize group notes, brainstorm questions, simplify complex texts, and prepare for discussion. For participants with lower language confidence, AI can reduce anxiety and support inclusion.

However, AI should support participation, not substitute for it. It can translate or clarify language, brainstorm questions, summarize notes, simplify a difficult text, or prompt reflection. Participants must still think, discuss, compare perspectives, decide, and explain their own reasoning. AI-generated content should never become a shortcut around the exchange itself.

Responsible AI use requires human judgment. Participants should know when AI is used, disclose relevant use, and check important outputs. Personal, sensitive, or confidential participant information should not be entered into unapproved AI tools. D2.1 Annex 6 is the short baseline; D3.4 Annexes 5, 7, and 9 provide fuller agreement, verification, and tool/privacy checks.

When AI and gamification are combined, the human learning process must stay visible. Teams may use AI inside a mission, but they should verify the result and decide what to keep. Recognition can reward careful checking or peer support rather than speed. Keep an accessible, low-bandwidth route so a particular AI or gamification platform never becomes a condition for participation.

Case in practice: The Digital Citizenship Quest

Mixed-country teams complete three missions: bring one local misinformation example and use AI only to translate or clarify; compare patterns and verify important claims; then create three recommendations for responsible digital citizenship. Recognition is given for collaboration, evidence, verification, and reflection – not speed. The facilitator uses D3.4 Annex 2 for the mission, Annex 5 for AI rules, and Annex 7 for verification.

Reflection point

Where could AI genuinely reduce a barrier or improve learning, and where could it create a shortcut? Which game mechanic would reinforce the behavior you want participants to practice? Which D3.4 chapter or annex would you use next?

Practice task

Take one activity from D2.1 Annex 2. Add no more than one AI-supported function and one gamification element. For each, state the need it solves, the human contribution that must remain, and the D3.4 chapter/annex you will use. If there is no clear benefit, leave the feature out.

Chapter takeaways

AI and gamification can support access and engagement, but they must serve dialogue, collaboration, critical thinking, and reflection.
D2.1 provides the guardrails; D3.4 provides specialist design detail. AI should support learning without replacing peer dialogue or human judgment. Gamification should create purpose, progression, and recognition without rewarding speed or exclusion. Learning, inclusion, privacy, verification, collaboration, and reflection remain the priority.

11. Inclusion, Accessibility, and Participant Support

DigCompEdu: Area 5 — Empowering Learners

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- design flexible participation options for diverse learners;
- anticipate and remove common access barriers;
- build an inclusion checklist for an exchange.

Opening scenario

A student joins from a phone because they do not have a laptop. Another keeps the camera off because the internet connection is unstable. A third understands the topic but needs more time to speak in English. If the session is designed for only one type of participant, these students may be present but not included.

Inclusion is not achieved by inviting diverse participants into the same online room. Inclusion happens when the design allows them to participate meaningfully. Virtual Exchange has strong potential to widen access, but only if facilitators plan for different needs, resources, and confidence levels.

Common barriers include weak internet connection, limited devices, low language confidence, lack of experience with online learning, time zone difficulties, disability-related access needs, low confidence in international settings, and unequal familiarity with the topic.

Facilitators can support inclusion through flexible participation options. Students may contribute through speaking, chat, shared documents, polls, reflection forms, or asynchronous tasks. Camera use should not always be mandatory. Audio-only participation may be necessary. Written participation can give students time to think and reduce language pressure.

Language support is especially important. Participants should be encouraged to use clear language, avoid unexplained local references, and ask when they do not understand. Facilitators can provide key vocabulary before the session, allow translation support, and normalize clarification questions.

Accessibility also includes clear structure. Participants with different learning needs benefit from written instructions, visible timings, predictable session flow, and materials shared in advance. Aligning digital materials with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) — readable structure, sufficient contrast, captions

and alternative text — makes an exchange usable for more learners. A well-structured session is not only more efficient; it is more inclusive.

Participant support should begin before the first meeting. Orientation can explain the purpose of the exchange, tools, expected behavior, privacy rules, communication norms, and support channels. Students should know whom to contact if they have technical, language, or wellbeing concerns.

Case in practice: The student with unstable internet

A student often loses connection during live sessions. Instead of treating this as absence or lack of interest, the facilitator offers alternatives. The student receives materials in advance, contributes to the shared document asynchronously, and sends a short audio reflection after the session. During live meetings, the student uses audio only. The learning goal remains possible because participation is flexible.

Reflection point

Who might be unintentionally excluded by your usual online teaching habits? What can you change before the session begins?

Practice task

Create an inclusion checklist for your next Virtual Exchange. Include access to devices, internet, language support, participation options, accessibility needs, and support contacts.

Chapter takeaways

Inclusion requires design. Facilitators should plan flexible, accessible, and respectful ways for different participants to contribute.

12. Facilitating Live Online Sessions

DigCompEdu: Area 3 — Teaching & Learning

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- open a session in a way that invites early participation;
- give instructions that include time, task, role, tool and output;
- support breakout rooms and close with reflection.

Opening scenario

The live session begins. Students are entering late, one microphone creates noise, and the facilitator has three links to share. The first minutes matter. If the facilitator creates calm, clarity, and warmth, participants are more likely to engage.

Live facilitation is where planning meets reality. A facilitator may have a strong session plan, but they still need to manage timing, energy, technology, group dynamics, and unexpected moments. The aim is not perfection. The aim is purposeful guidance.

The opening should establish presence and expectations. Welcome participants, explain the purpose, check basic technology, and remind the group of participation options. A short, low-pressure activity should invite participants to speak or write early. The longer participants remain silent, the harder it can become to contribute.

Instructions should be specific and visible. Instead of saying, “Discuss the topic,” say, “You have 12 minutes. Each person shares one example. Then choose one common challenge and write one recommendation in the shared document. When we return, one person will report in one minute.” Good instructions include time, task, roles, tool, and output.

Breakout rooms need support. Facilitators should not assume that students know how to begin. They can provide roles such as timekeeper, note-taker, reporter, and questioner. They can also give sentence starters, written prompts, and a shared workspace.

During group sharing, facilitators should avoid letting reporting become too long. Ask for one insight, one question, or one recommendation. Short reporting keeps energy high and allows more groups to contribute.

Closing matters. A session should end with reflection and next steps, not with the facilitator rushing because time has run out. Even a one-minute reflection can help students name what they learned.

Case in practice: The clearer breakout instruction

Weak instruction: “Talk about digital citizenship.” Strong instruction: “In your group, choose two examples of digital citizenship challenges that young people face. Compare whether they appear similarly in your contexts. Add one shared recommendation to the document. You have 15 minutes. Choose a reporter who will share one recommendation when we return.” The second instruction gives students a path.

Reflection point

Do your live session instructions usually include time, task, role, tool, and output? Which element do you most often forget?

Practice task

Write a breakout room instruction for a Virtual Exchange topic. Make sure it includes time, task, roles, output, and reporting format.

Chapter takeaways

Live facilitation depends on clarity, timing, warmth, and responsiveness. Specific instructions make participation easier.

13. Asynchronous Learning and Online Community Building

DigCompEdu: Areas 3 & 6 — Teaching & Learning; Learners' Digital Competence

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- design pre-session and post-session tasks that connect to live work;
- use asynchronous spaces to widen inclusion;
- set community norms that sustain momentum.

Opening scenario

Two exchange groups meet once a week. In the first group, nothing happens between live sessions, and every meeting feels like a restart. In the second group, students complete short preparation tasks, add ideas to a shared space, and respond to peers. By the time they meet live, the conversation has already begun.

Virtual Exchange does not only happen during live sessions. Asynchronous learning can make the exchange deeper, more inclusive, and more continuous. It gives participants time to prepare, reflect, contribute in writing, and collaborate across schedules.

Asynchronous tasks should be short, purposeful, and clearly connected to live sessions. A good pre-task might ask students to watch a short video, answer a poll, bring one example from their context, or write a short reflection. A good post-task might ask them to respond to a peer, improve a group output, or reflect on one changed assumption.

Asynchronous spaces also support students who need more time because of language, confidence, access, or schedule constraints. A student who speaks little in a live session may contribute thoughtfully in a discussion forum or shared document.

Online community building requires norms. Participants should know how quickly to respond, how to give feedback, how to disagree, what language to use, and where to ask for help. Facilitators should model the kind of interaction they want to see.

The facilitator does not need to comment on everything, but they should be visibly present. A short weekly announcement, a summary of common themes, or a question that connects posts can maintain momentum.

Asynchronous work should not become busywork. Each task should answer the question: How will this prepare, deepen, or extend the exchange?

Case in practice: The reflection journal

In a six-week exchange, students complete a short journal after each session. The prompts are simple: What did I hear? What surprised me? What question do I still have? At the end, students use their journal entries to write a final reflection. The journal helps them see how their thinking developed over time.

Reflection point

What learning could happen before or after your live session? Which participants would benefit from more time to prepare or respond?

Practice task

Design one pre-session task and one post-session task for a Virtual Exchange activity. Keep each task short and connected to the live session.

Chapter takeaways

Asynchronous learning gives continuity to Virtual Exchange. It supports preparation, inclusion, reflection, and community building.

14. Assessment, Feedback, and Certification

DigCompEdu: Area 4 — Assessment

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- assess both process and product in an exchange;
- use formative, peer and self-assessment;
- apply the facilitator certification criteria (Chapter 21).

Opening scenario

A group creates an attractive final poster, but one member did most of the work and others barely participated. Another group produces a simple output, but the discussion was thoughtful and collaborative. Assessment in Virtual Exchange must look beyond the final product.

Assessment in Virtual Exchange should recognize participation, collaboration, intercultural learning, digital skills, reflection, and outputs. A final product can be useful, but it should not be the only evidence of learning.

Formative feedback is especially valuable. Facilitators can give feedback during the process, not only at the end. For example, they can comment on how a group is organizing ideas, whether everyone has a role, or whether the reflection needs more depth.

Peer feedback helps participants learn from one another. A simple structure works well: one strength, one question, and one suggestion. This keeps feedback constructive and manageable.

Self-assessment supports reflection. Students can rate their preparation, participation, listening, teamwork, digital tool use, and intercultural awareness. The aim is not to create perfect scores, but to help learners notice their development.

Facilitator certification should focus on readiness to design and lead Virtual Exchange. Facilitators should demonstrate understanding of key concepts, ability to design a session, ability to respond to realistic scenarios, and commitment to inclusive practice. The full certification framework, including scoring rubrics and evidence requirements, is set out in Chapter 21; it feeds Milestone MS8 and Deliverable D2.5 (Facilitator Certification Reports).

Assessment should not feel punitive. In Virtual Exchange, it should support quality, learning, and recognition. It helps facilitators and participants see what happened, what improved, and what still needs attention.

Case in practice: The output and the process

Two teams submit final recommendations on digital safety. Team A has polished slides but little evidence of collaboration. Team B has a simpler document but includes perspectives from all members and a strong reflection on different contexts. The facilitator assesses both the product and the process. Team B receives strong feedback for collaboration and intercultural learning, even if the visual design is less polished.

Reflection point

What do you usually assess: final answers, participation, reflection, teamwork, or process? What should be added for Virtual Exchange?

Practice task

Create three assessment criteria for a Virtual Exchange activity: one for collaboration, one for intercultural learning, and one for reflection.

Chapter takeaways

Assessment should recognize how participants learn together, not only what they produce at the end.

15. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Quality Assurance

DigCompEdu: Areas 1 & 4 — Professional Engagement; Assessment

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- choose indicators that show whether an exchange is working;
- align facilitator-level data with project KPIs;
- turn feedback into concrete design changes.

Opening scenario

After a pilot exchange, facilitators feel that the session went well. Students seemed friendly, and the final discussion was positive. But the feedback forms reveal that several students did not understand the breakout task. Without evaluation, this problem might remain invisible.

Monitoring and evaluation help facilitators and institutions understand whether Virtual Exchange activities are working as intended. They are not only administrative requirements. They are tools for improvement.

Monitoring tracks what happens: attendance, completion, number of sessions, participant groups, outputs produced, and technical issues. Evaluation asks what it means: Did participants learn? Did they feel included? Did they improve confidence? Did the activity support project objectives?

Useful indicators include attendance, active participation, completion of tasks, student satisfaction, digital confidence, intercultural awareness, quality of group outputs, facilitator reflections, and reported challenges.

Pre- and post-surveys can show change in confidence or understanding. Short feedback forms after sessions can identify immediate issues. Facilitator reflection notes can capture what worked, what failed, and what should change. Focus groups or interviews can provide deeper insight after a pilot cycle.

Aligning your data with project indicators

Data collected at the level of a single session should roll up to the project's targets so that facilitation evidence supports project-level reporting (WP3 Learning Impact Assessment, D3.5, and WP4/WP5 dissemination and sustainability). The table below links common facilitator-level measures to the indicators they feed.

Facilitator-level measure	Feeds project indicator
Attendance and completion per session	Number of student Virtual Exchange experiences delivered (WP3 target: at least 1,800; 500+ students engaged)
Pre/post confidence and intercultural-awareness surveys	Change in students' digital and intercultural competencies (D3.5)
Student satisfaction and inclusion feedback	Quality and inclusiveness of exchanges; evidence for best-practice guide (WP4)
Facilitator certification status	Number of certified facilitators (MS8, D2.5)
Institutional integration of an exchange	Curriculum integration and signed agreements (WP5, D5.1/D5.2)

Quality assurance should be practical. A session can be reviewed against a few key questions: Were the learning objectives clear? Did participants interact meaningfully? Was the task inclusive? Were tools accessible? Was reflection included? Was feedback collected? Evaluation becomes valuable when it leads to changes. If students report that instructions were unclear, future sessions should include written instructions and role assignments. If students report language anxiety, future sessions should include vocabulary support and written participation options.

Case in practice: Improving the second cycle

In the first pilot, several students say that they liked meeting international peers but did not understand the final output. Before the second cycle, facilitators add a sample output, clearer written instructions, and a shared template. The second group produces stronger work. The improvement did not require a new platform. It required listening to feedback.

Reflection point

What feedback do you already collect from students or participants? Does it help you improve the next activity?

Practice task

Draft five evaluation questions for participants after a Virtual Exchange session. Include at least one question on inclusion, one on tools, one on learning, and one on facilitation. (Use Annex 8.)

Chapter takeaways

Monitoring and evaluation support both accountability and improvement. Feedback should lead to concrete changes in design and facilitation.

16. Risk Management and Troubleshooting

DigCompEdu: Area 1 — Professional Engagement

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- anticipate the most likely risks in an exchange;
- build a mini risk register with prevention and backup;
- treat unclear tasks as a design problem, not a motivation problem.

Opening scenario

A facilitator prepares carefully, but the platform fails, students arrive unprepared, and one group misunderstands the task. Risk management does not mean expecting failure. It means respecting the reality that online international learning is complex.

Virtual Exchange involves people, technology, institutions, languages, and schedules. Risks are normal. The goal is not to eliminate every risk, but to anticipate likely problems and prepare responses.

Common risks include low student engagement, technical issues, language barriers, unequal digital access, low educator confidence, sustainability challenges, cybersecurity concerns, and mismatched expectations between partners.

Low engagement can often be reduced through clear tasks, real-world topics, interactive activities, visible outputs, gamification, and facilitator support. If students do not participate, facilitators should ask whether the task was clear, relevant, and manageable before assuming that students lacked motivation.

Technical issues require preparation. Test platforms, provide instructions, share links early, and have backup options. If a tool fails, the facilitator should be ready to simplify the task rather than cancel the learning.

Language barriers can be addressed through multilingual support, AI-assisted translation, simple language, written instructions, preparation materials, and permission to use chat or shared documents.

Unequal digital access requires flexibility. Participants may need campus facilities, mobile-friendly tools, asynchronous options, recorded explanations, or audio-only participation. Access should be discussed before the exchange begins.

Risks between partner institutions should be managed through clear roles, shared timelines, communication routines, and agreed expectations. Many problems are not pedagogical; they are coordination problems.

Case in practice: The task was the problem

A facilitator is disappointed because a breakout group returns with no output. Later, the group explains that the task had three parts, two links, and no clear reporting instruction. The students were not disengaged; they were confused. The facilitator reduces the next task to one question, one shared document, one role, and one output. Participation improves.

Reflection point

Which risk is most likely in your context: technical issues, low engagement, language barriers, scheduling, or unclear roles? How can you prepare now?

Practice task

Create a mini risk register with three risks. For each risk, write the possible impact, likelihood, prevention measure, and backup response. (Use Annex 10.)

Chapter takeaways

Risk management is part of good facilitation. Many problems can be reduced through preparation, clear design, flexible participation, and partner coordination.

17. Integrating Virtual Exchange into Curricula and Youth Programs

DigCompEdu: Area 1 — Professional Engagement

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- identify where an exchange can fit an existing course or program;
- plan for recognition, ECTS and institutional support;
- distinguish light, module, project and full integration.

Opening scenario

A Virtual Exchange session can be inspiring, but if it remains a one-time event, its impact may fade. Sustainable change begins when Virtual Exchange becomes part of courses, programs, institutional strategies, and youth work practice.

Virtual Exchange can be integrated at different levels. Light integration may involve one guest exchange session inside an existing course. Module integration may involve a three- to six-week exchange linked to course outcomes. Project integration may ask students to complete an international group project. Full curriculum integration may make Virtual Exchange a recurring part of a program.

For universities, Virtual Exchange can support courses in communication, education, social sciences, digital skills, international relations, employability, language learning, sustainability, and civic engagement. It can be credit-bearing or non-credit, required or optional, short or extended.

For youth organizations, Virtual Exchange can support civic participation, youth leadership, community action, digital citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and non-formal learning. Youth organizations may reach participants who are outside formal higher education or who need more flexible forms of engagement.

Integration requires alignment. The exchange should support existing learning outcomes, not feel like an extra burden. Facilitators should ask where Virtual Exchange adds value that a local activity cannot provide. Usually, the added value comes from comparison, collaboration, international peer learning, and exposure to different contexts.

Institutional support matters. Facilitators need time, recognition, technical support, partner contacts, and sometimes approval from program leaders. If Virtual Exchange depends only on one enthusiastic person, it may disappear when that person changes role.

Curriculum and program integration should also include evaluation. Institutions need evidence that Virtual Exchange supports learning, inclusion, and strategic goals.

Western Balkans note

Recognition is the key to sustainability in the partner region. Wherever feasible, attach ECTS credit or a formal certificate of participation, map the exchange to program learning outcomes, and obtain program-leader sign-off early. This directly supports WP5 (curriculum integration and signed institutional agreements) and prevents Virtual Exchange from remaining a one-person initiative.

Case in practice: From extra activity to course module

A lecturer first organizes one optional online discussion with an international partner. Students respond positively, but attendance is uneven. The next year, the lecturer integrates a four-week Virtual Exchange module into the course assessment. Students prepare before sessions, work in mixed groups, and submit a reflection. Participation becomes stronger because the exchange is connected to the course design.

Reflection point

Where could Virtual Exchange fit naturally into an existing course or youth program? What outcome would it support?

Practice task

Choose one course or program and write a short integration plan. Include timing, learning outcome, partner group, activity format, final output, and assessment method.

Chapter takeaways

Virtual Exchange becomes sustainable when it is integrated into existing educational structures and supported by institutions.

18. Community of Practice and Sustainability

DigCompEdu: Area 1 — Professional Engagement

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- explain how a community of practice improves facilitation quality;
- design a simple, practical community-of-practice routine;
- document good practice so it is not lost.

Opening scenario

A new facilitator tries a Virtual Exchange session and struggles with low participation. Alone, they may feel discouraged. In a community of practice, they can bring the problem to peers, hear what others tried, adapt an activity, and improve the next session.

A community of practice is a group of people who learn together through shared experience. For Virtual Exchange facilitators, it can become a space for exchanging session plans, discussing challenges, sharing tools, reflecting on pilot sessions, and building confidence.

Facilitators often face similar problems: unclear tasks, silent breakout rooms, technology issues, language anxiety, uneven group work, or difficulty assessing reflection. A community of practice helps them see that these problems are normal and solvable.

The community should be practical. Meetings can include short case discussions, peer consultancy, resource sharing, mini-demonstrations of tools, or review of student feedback. A shared repository can collect session plans, templates, reflection prompts, rubrics, and examples of outputs.

Peer mentoring is especially useful. Experienced facilitators can support new facilitators before and after sessions. This does not require a heavy formal structure. Even a short planning conversation and debrief can improve quality.

Sustainability also depends on documentation. If good practices remain only in individual memory, they are easily lost. Facilitators should document what worked, what should be changed, and what resources can be reused.

At project level, the community of practice can support long-term collaboration among universities, youth organizations, and other stakeholders. It provides the foundation for the Educator Community of Practice (Deliverable D2.4) and can feed into best practice guides, policy recommendations, and future project proposals.

Case in practice: Peer consultancy

A facilitator presents a challenge: students join the session but rarely speak. Peers ask questions and discover that students receive the topic only during the live meeting. The group suggests a short pre-task, smaller breakout rooms, written sentence starters, and role assignments. The facilitator tests these changes in the next session and sees more participation.

Reflection point

What support would make you more confident as a Virtual Exchange facilitator? What could you contribute to other facilitators?

Practice task

Design a simple community of practice routine. Include meeting frequency, shared space, types of resources, and one method for discussing facilitation challenges.

Chapter takeaways

Facilitators learn best with ongoing support. A community of practice strengthens quality, confidence, documentation, and sustainability.

19. Implementation Roadmap

DigCompEdu: Area 1 — Professional Engagement

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, a facilitator will be able to:

- sequence the phases from preparation to sustainability;
- treat piloting as learning rather than a final test;
- build a realistic timeline for a first exchange cycle.

Opening scenario

A good idea becomes a successful Virtual Exchange only when people know what happens next. The roadmap turns intention into action.

Implementation should move through clear phases: preparation, facilitator training, session design, pilot delivery, feedback and improvement, full implementation, evaluation, institutional integration, and sustainability planning.



Figure 3. The Virtual Exchange implementation roadmap — eight phases from preparation to sustainability.

In the *preparation phase*, partners clarify roles, target groups, tools, timelines, communication routines, and support structures. This phase should also identify access needs and institutional requirements.

Before an exchange begins, confirm the minimum conditions in Annex 14 (V-EXCHANGE Pilot Readiness Checklist); where the pilot uses AI or gamification, also complete the readiness review in D3.4 (Chapter 21).

In the *facilitator training phase*, educators and youth workers study the core principles of Virtual Exchange, practice facilitation strategies, review examples, and complete design tasks. Training should include both theory and practical application.

In the session *design phase*, facilitators develop exchange topics, learning outcomes, session structures, digital tool plans, reflection tasks, assessment methods, and contingency plans.

In the *pilot phase*, facilitators test the exchange with a smaller group or limited cycle. Piloting should be treated as learning, not as a final test. The aim is to discover what works before scaling.

In the *improvement phase*, facilitators analyze feedback, refine instructions, adjust tools, improve timing, and strengthen inclusion measures.

In the *full implementation phase*, the exchange reaches the planned participant groups. Monitoring should continue, and facilitators should document good practices and challenges.

In the *evaluation and integration phases*, partners use evidence to make decisions about curriculum integration, youth program adoption, future funding, and long-term collaboration.

Case in practice: A realistic sequence

A partner institution first trains a small group of facilitators. Each facilitator designs one session and receives peer feedback. The institution then pilots two sessions with students. After feedback shows that students need more preparation, facilitators add orientation materials. Only after this do they run a larger exchange cycle. The roadmap protects quality by building gradually.

Reflection point

Which phase is most developed in your institution? Which phase needs more planning before implementation begins?

Practice task

Create a timeline for your first Virtual Exchange cycle. Include preparation, training, design, pilot, feedback, implementation, and evaluation.

Chapter takeaways

Implementation should be phased. A roadmap helps partners move from preparation to sustainable practice without rushing quality.

20. Learning from Existing Virtual Exchange Models

DigCompEdu: Area 1 — Professional Engagement

Virtual Exchange is not a single fixed method. Around the world, universities, foundations, youth organizations, and international networks have developed different models of online international collaboration. Some focus on intercultural dialogue. Others focus on classroom-to-classroom collaboration, civic engagement, language learning, peacebuilding, global challenges, or professional skills.

For V-EXCHANGE facilitators, these examples are useful because they show how flexible Virtual Exchange can be. It may take the form of a short activity inside one course, a multi-week online dialogue program, a collaborative international project, or part of a wider institutional strategy for internationalization at home. The examples below are not models to copy exactly. Instead, they offer practical inspiration for designing Virtual Exchange activities that are structured, inclusive, and meaningful.

Soliya: facilitated dialogue across difference

Soliya's Connect Program is one of the best-known examples of facilitated Virtual Exchange. It brings students and young people together online to discuss identity, society, conflict, leadership, and life across divides. The emphasis is on learning how to listen, ask thoughtful questions, and communicate respectfully with people who see the world differently. A typical Soliya-style exchange relies on trained facilitators and small online groups that meet over several sessions; the facilitator guides the conversation and supports balanced participation rather than lecturing.

SUNY COIL: collaborative online international learning

The SUNY COIL Center is closely associated with Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Instructors from two or more institutions in different countries connect their courses and design shared tasks for their students. COIL is often embedded inside existing university courses, which makes it practical for institutions. Students may work together for a few weeks or a full semester on a media literacy campaign, a digital poster, a short research presentation, or a policy recommendation related to a shared social issue.

The Stevens Initiative: scaling Virtual Exchange

The Stevens Initiative promotes Virtual Exchange as a way to connect young people across countries through everyday technology. Its work is a useful example of how Virtual Exchange can be scaled through partnerships, funding, knowledge sharing, and field-building. It also shows that Virtual Exchange can take many forms — dialogue, project work, language learning, leadership, or global problem-solving — around the common feature of structured online interaction.

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges: access without mobility

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges support online people-to-people activities that promote intercultural dialogue, soft skills, and access to international and cross-cultural education without physical mobility. This model is closely connected to the purpose of V-EXCHANGE because it links Virtual Exchange with inclusion, digital transformation, intercultural learning, youth participation, and international cooperation.

Sharing Perspectives Foundation: dialogue on social and political issues

The Sharing Perspectives Foundation designs Virtual Exchange programs that bring participants together to discuss current social, cultural, and political issues, connecting academic learning with real-world public questions. Participants discuss issues that matter in their societies — climate change, migration, digital citizenship, discrimination, democracy, media, and youth participation — learning through the experience of encountering different viewpoints.

EVOLVE: mainstreaming Virtual Exchange in higher education

The EVOLVE project focused on mainstreaming Virtual Exchange as an innovative form of collaborative international learning in higher education. It is especially useful for institutions that want to move from individual experiments to more sustainable adoption, and it highlights the importance of teacher training, evaluation, institutional support, and evidence of learning impact.

UNICollaboration: professional community and practice development

UNICollaboration is an international professional organization focused on telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange in higher education. It supports research, practice, training, conferences, and networking among educators and institutions, showing that Virtual Exchange develops through communities of practice where facilitators exchange session designs, discuss challenges, and learn from peers.

What these examples teach us

- Virtual Exchange needs intentional design — clear goals, meaningful tasks, and a reason to interact.
- Facilitation matters — skilled facilitators help participants listen, contribute, question, and reflect.
- Strong exchanges support concrete learning outcomes: intercultural awareness, digital collaboration, civic understanding, communication confidence, and international teamwork.
- Reflection is essential — students need time to think about what challenged them and how their perspective changed.
- Sustainability depends on institutions and communities continuing to use, improve, and share the model.

For V-EXCHANGE, the most useful approach is not to imitate one famous model fully. Instead, the project can combine the strongest features of several: Soliya's attention to facilitated dialogue, COIL's course-based collaboration, Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges' focus on inclusion, the Sharing Perspectives Foundation's use of social issues, EVOLVE's institutional perspective, and UNICollaboration's community-building approach — producing a model that is practical, inclusive, locally relevant, and sustainable.

21. Final Assessment and Certification Framework

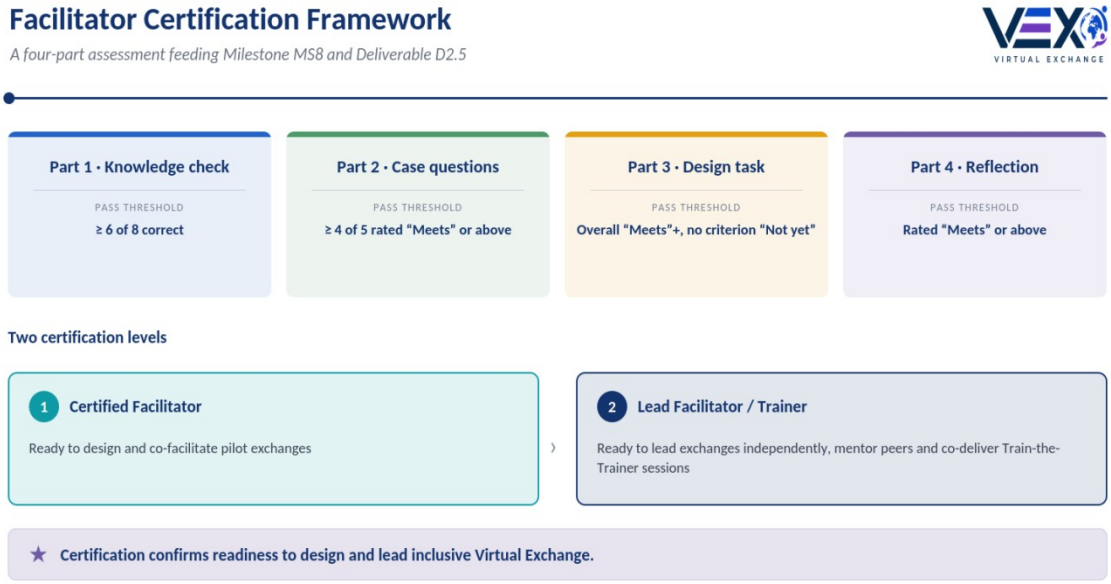


Figure 4. The facilitator certification framework — four-part assessment and two levels.

The final assessment helps facilitators demonstrate that they understand the principles of Virtual Exchange and can apply them in practice. It may be used as a self-assessment, as part of facilitator training (Train-the-Trainer Workshops, D2.2), or as evidence for certification within the V-EXCHANGE project. The assessment has four parts: a knowledge check, case-based questions, a practical design task, and a reflection task.

Certification framework

Certification confirms that a facilitator is ready to design and lead inclusive, structured Virtual Exchange. It is the basis for Milestone MS8 (Facilitator Certification, M18) and Deliverable D2.5 (Facilitator Certification Reports).

Who assesses and how evidence is kept

Assessment is carried out by a trained assessor at the candidate's own partner institution, normally the designated Train-the-Trainer lead. Each candidate's completed knowledge check, case responses, session design, and reflection are retained as the evidence base. A short assessor record notes the score, the pass decision, and any feedback. Assessment evidence is retained by the assessing institution for the record-keeping period required by the Grant Agreement and is accessible only to the assessor and the WP2 moderator. Anonymized, aggregated results feed D2.5.

Across the consortium the same procedure and thresholds apply. The trained assessor conducts the assessment; the WP2 lead (Sofia University) moderates a sample and validates the results for consistency; and the certificate is issued in the candidate's name on a common consortium template. Whether certificates are issued centrally by the WP2 lead or by each partner using that template is to be confirmed by the consortium; certification results feed Deliverable D2.5. A candidate who does not yet meet a threshold may be reassessed once, normally within three months, after further practice or a revised design. The responsible assessor and the validation decision are recorded for each candidate.

Pass thresholds

- Part 1 — Knowledge check: at least 6 of 8 correct.
- Part 2 — Case-based questions: at least 4 of 5 responses rated "Meets" or above on the rubric.
- Part 3 — Practical design task: an overall rating of "Meets" or above, with no rubric criterion rated "Not yet".
- Part 4 — Reflection task: rated "Meets" or above.

Minimum overall threshold: a candidate is certified only when all four parts are passed at the thresholds above. Active participation in training, peer feedback, and community-of-practice activities is recorded as supporting evidence, but is not itself a pass threshold. The two levels are then used as follows within V-EXCHANGE — a Certified Facilitator may design and co-facilitate pilot exchanges; and a Lead Facilitator / Trainer may lead exchanges independently, mentor peers, and co-deliver Train-the-Trainer sessions.

Certification levels

Level	What it recognizes	Evidence
Certified Facilitator	Ready to design and co-facilitate Virtual Exchange	All four parts passed at the thresholds above
Lead Facilitator / Trainer	Ready to lead exchanges independently, mentor peers, and train other facilitators	All four parts passed, with Part 3 rated "Exceeds", evidence of a delivered pilot, and co-delivery of a Train-the-Trainer session

Part 1: Knowledge check

Circle the best answer. The answer key is provided in the answer grid at the end of this chapter (for assessor use); remove that grid to produce the candidate version.

1. **What makes Virtual Exchange different from a standard online lecture?**
   A. It is always shorter.
   B. It focuses on structured interaction and collaboration between participants.
   C. It does not require preparation.
   D. It is only suitable for language courses.
2. **What is the main role of the facilitator?**
   A. To speak for most of the session.
   B. To correct every student immediately.
   C. To create a structured, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.
   D. To avoid all disagreement.
3. **Which breakout room instruction is strongest?**
   A. Discuss digital citizenship.
   B. Talk about the topic in your group.
   C. You have 12 minutes. Each person shares one example of a digital citizenship challenge, then the group writes one shared recommendation in the document.
   D. Use the time however you want.
4. **Which AI use is most appropriate?**
   A. Asking AI to replace student discussion.
   B. Using AI to translate a difficult phrase and then checking the meaning with peers.
   C. Entering personal information about participants into an AI tool.
   D. Submitting an AI-generated output without explanation.
5. **Why is reflection important in Virtual Exchange?**
   A. It fills time at the end.
   B. It replaces assessment.
   C. It helps participants recognize what they learned and how their thinking changed.
   D. It avoids difficult discussion.

6. Which statement best describes inclusion?
   A. Inclusion means inviting everyone to the same video call.
   B. Inclusion means designing participation so different learners can contribute meaningfully.
   C. Inclusion means using the same rule for every student in every situation.
   D. Inclusion means avoiding challenging topics.
7. What should facilitators do when a participant makes a generalizing comment?
   A. Ignore it to avoid conflict.
   B. Publicly shame the participant.
   C. Reframe the comment and invite more specific, experience-based language.
   D. End the session immediately.
8. What is the purpose of a shared output?
   A. To make the session look more formal.
   B. To make collaboration visible and give participants a common goal.
   C. To replace discussion.
   D. To reward only the strongest speaker.

Part 1 answer grid (assessor use)

This grid is provided for assessors only. Remove this section — from the heading above to the end of this note and the table below — to produce the candidate version of the Part 1 knowledge check.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
B	C	C	B	C	B	C	B

Answer key: 1 - B, 2 - C, 3 - C, 4 - B, 5 - C, 6 - B, 7 - C, 8 - B.

Part 2: Case-based questions

Respond to at least four of the five cases. Each response should identify the likely cause and propose specific facilitation changes.

Case 1: Silent breakout room

Students return from breakout rooms with no output. They say the task was unclear. What should the facilitator change before the next session?

Case 2: Language anxiety

Several students understand the topic but are hesitant to speak in English. What participation options and preparation measures could support them?

Case 3: AI shortcut

A group submits a polished text but later explains that AI generated most of it and the group had little discussion. How should the facilitator respond, and what rule should be clarified?

Case 4: Unequal participation

One student dominates the conversation while others remain silent. What facilitation techniques could balance participation?

Case 5: Technical access problem

Some students cannot access the selected tool from their phones. What should the facilitator do immediately, and what should change in future planning?

Rubric for Part 2 (per case)

Criterion	Not yet	Meets	Exceeds
Diagnosis of the cause	Blames students or misreads the cause	Identifies the likely design/facilitation cause	Distinguishes several plausible causes and prioritizes
Facilitation response	Vague or generic	Specific, workable change proposed	Change plus a preventive measure for future sessions
Inclusion awareness	Ignores access/language needs	Considers at least one inclusion factor	Integrates inclusion into the core solution

Part 3: Practical design task

Design a 90-minute Virtual Exchange session or a short exchange cycle, clear enough for another facilitator to deliver. Complete each field. (Annex 2 provides a blank template; Annex 11 a worked example.)

Session title: _____

Target participants: _____

Topic: _____

Learning objectives: _____

Partner group or context: _____

Digital tools: _____

Preparation task: _____

Opening activity: _____

Main collaborative task: _____

Breakout room instructions: _____

Shared output: _____

Reflection activity: _____

Assessment or feedback method: _____

Inclusion and accessibility measures: _____

AI and gamification considerations: _____

Risk and backup plan: _____

Rubric for Part 3

Criterion	Not yet	Meets	Exceeds
Clear learning purpose & outcomes	Missing or vague	Focused, answerable purpose	Outcomes mapped to a competence framework
Structured interaction & shared output	Loose discussion only	Clear task with visible output	Well-sequenced task with roles and reporting
Inclusion & accessibility	Not addressed	At least two concrete measures	Inclusion designed into every stage
Reflection & assessment	Absent	Reflection and a feedback method included	Aligned reflection, feedback and evidence of learning
Risk & backup	None	One realistic backup	Backups for tools, access and engagement

Part 4: Reflection task

Write 250 to 300 words responding to: What kind of Virtual Exchange facilitator do you want to become? Which facilitation skill do you already feel confident using? Which skill do you need to improve? How will you make your Virtual Exchange sessions inclusive, interactive, and meaningful?

Rubric for Part 4

Criterion	Not yet	Meets	Exceeds
Self-awareness	Generic statements	Identifies real strengths and gaps	Evidences reflection with specific examples
Commitment to inclusion & improvement	Not shown	States concrete intentions	Sets measurable, actionable next steps

Annexes

Annexes 1 – 10 are practical, reusable tools. Annexes 11 – 13 are additions that support design, professional development and training delivery. Annexes 14 – 15 support pilot readiness and student orientation. All templates may be copied and adapted by partners.

Annex 1: Facilitator self-assessment checklist

- ☐ I can explain the difference between Virtual Exchange and a standard online session.
- ☐ I can design a clear collaborative task.
- ☐ I can write specific breakout room instructions.
- ☐ I can facilitate respectful intercultural dialogue.
- ☐ I can support participants with different language confidence levels.
- ☐ I can choose digital tools based on accessibility and purpose.
- ☐ I can include reflection and feedback in my session.
- ☐ I can identify likely risks and prepare backup plans.

Annex 2: Virtual Exchange planning template

Topic: _____

Target group: _____

Partner group: _____

Learning objectives: _____

Session or cycle length: _____

Main collaborative task: _____

Digital tools: _____

Shared output: _____

Reflection method: _____

Assessment method: _____

Inclusion measures: _____

Backup plan: _____

Annex 3: Group agreement template

- ☐ We listen before responding.
- ☐ We speak from personal experience.
- ☐ We avoid stereotypes and generalizations.
- ☐ We ask questions when we do not understand.
- ☐ We respect different levels of language confidence.
- ☐ We protect personal information shared in the group.
- ☐ We disagree with ideas, not with people.
- ☐ We support equal participation.

Annex 4: Student preparation checklist

- ☐ I know the purpose of the exchange.
- ☐ I have tested the platform or tool.
- ☐ I know where to find the session link and materials.
- ☐ I have completed the preparation task.
- ☐ I understand the group agreement.
- ☐ I know how to ask for technical or language support.
- ☐ I know what information I should not share online.

Annex 5: Digital tool selection checklist

- ☐ Is the tool accessible to all participants?
- ☐ Does it work on mobile devices?
- ☐ Does it require account creation?
- ☐ Is it approved or acceptable in the institutional context?
- ☐ Does it protect privacy (GDPR)?
- ☐ Is it easy to learn quickly?
- ☐ Does it support the learning task?
- ☐ Is there a backup option?

Approved / Recommended Digital and AI Tools sheet: before implementation, each partner maintains a short sheet of approved or recommended digital and AI tools, using the same template as D3.4 (Annex 9), so facilitators can select platforms with confidence. The sheet is approved by the institutional contact for technical and data-protection matters, kept with the partner's project records, and reviewed before each cohort or whenever a tool or an institutional policy changes.

Record for each tool:

- ☐ Tool / function (for example video, shared document, collaborative board).
- ☐ Institutional approval status.
- ☐ Account or license requirements.
- ☐ Privacy and data-protection notes (what data is processed; consent needed).
- ☐ Accessibility and low-bandwidth suitability.
- ☐ Backup or equivalent option if the tool is unavailable.
- ☐ Date last reviewed.

Annex 6: AI use guidelines for students

- ☐ Use AI to translate, clarify, brainstorm, summarize, or improve your own writing.
- ☐ Do not use AI to replace your participation in dialogue or teamwork.
- ☐ Do not enter personal, sensitive, or confidential information into AI tools.
- ☐ Check AI outputs before using them.
- ☐ Disclose significant AI use whenever it affects an assessed output, a publication, or a group product, using the disclosure statement in D3.4 (Annex 5).
- ☐ Remember that AI can support learning, but it cannot replace your thinking or collaboration. These guidelines follow the Green – Amber – Red use levels and the common disclosure standard set out in D3.4 (Chapter 12 and Annex 5).

Annex 7: Reflection form

One idea I heard today that stayed with me: _____

One assumption I questioned: _____

One similarity I noticed between my experience and that of my exchange partners: _____

One difference I noticed between my context and that of my exchange partners: _____

One skill I practiced: _____

One question I still have: _____

One action I can take after this exchange: _____

Annex 8: Student feedback form

Rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The session goals were clear. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

The digital tools were easy to use. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

I felt able to participate. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

The activity helped me understand another perspective. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

The breakout task was clear. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

The facilitator supported the group well. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

One thing that worked well was: _____

One thing that should be improved is: _____

Annex 9: Facilitator reflection form

What worked well? _____

What was difficult? _____

Were the instructions clear? _____

Did all participants have ways to contribute? _____

Were the tools suitable? _____

What evidence of learning did I observe? _____

What should change next time? _____

Annex 10: Risk register template

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Prevention	Backup response	Owner

Annex 11: Worked example — completed planning template

A completed version of Annex 2, provided as a model for the Part 3 design task.

Field	Example
Topic	Youth participation and misinformation online
Target group	2nd-year students (two partner universities), 24 participants
Partner group	Mixed North Macedonia – Albania breakout groups of 4
Learning objectives	Compare how misinformation spreads locally; practice structured intercultural dialogue; co-produce shared recommendations
Session length	90 minutes, plus a short pre-task and post-task
Main collaborative task	Each member brings one local example; the group finds a shared pattern and drafts three recommendations for youth organizations
Digital tools	Institutional video platform + one shared document (mobile-friendly, no new account)
Shared output	One shared slide per group: pattern + three recommendations
Reflection method	60-second written reflection: “one idea that changed my thinking” (Annex 7)
Assessment method	Process (participation, collaboration) + product (recommendations), plus peer feedback (1 strength, 1 question, 1 suggestion)
Inclusion measures	Vocabulary list in advance; chat and document participation allowed; audio-only permitted; materials shared beforehand
Backup plan	If video fails, continue asynchronously in the shared document with a simplified single-question task

Annex 12: Facilitator competency progression

A simple progression facilitators can use to locate their current practice and plan development. It complements the certification levels in Chapter 21.

Competency	Novice	Confident	Advanced
Design	Runs a single session from a template	Designs a multi-week cycle with clear outputs	Designs and adapts cycles across contexts and mentors others
Facilitation	Manages basics; relies on script	Balances participation; adapts in the moment	Handles sensitive dialogue and complex dynamics with ease
Inclusion	Aware of access needs	Builds in flexible participation	Designs universally accessible exchanges by default
Assessment & evaluation	Collects basic feedback	Uses feedback to improve the next cycle	Aligns evaluation to institutional and project indicators
Digital & AI	Uses familiar tools	Selects tools by purpose; sets AI rules	Integrates AI and gamification thoughtfully and critically

Annex 13: Train-the-Trainer workshop outline (supports D2.2)

An indicative 2 – 3 day agenda for the Train-the-Trainer Workshops (Deliverable D2.2), designed for 20 – 25 participants and delivered directly from this toolkit. Days can be run in person or online; timings are adjustable.

Day 1 — Foundations and design

Session	Content	Toolkit link
Welcome & context	Project overview, WP2 objectives, group agreement	Ch. 1; Annex 3
What Virtual Exchange is	Distinguishing VE; the five-pillar model	Ch. 2, 3
The facilitator role	Competencies; diagnosing silence; balancing voices	Ch. 4
Design workshop	Ten-step design; narrowing topics; shared outputs	Ch. 5; Annex 2
Structuring sessions	Building a 90-minute flow; practice	Ch. 6

Day 2 — Facilitation, inclusion and tools

Session	Content	Toolkit link
Pedagogical strategies	Active learning; combining strategies	Ch. 7
Intercultural dialogue	Grounded questions; reframing generalizations	Ch. 8
Inclusion & accessibility	Flexible participation; WCAG basics; regional realities	Ch. 11; Regional section
Tools, AI & gamification	Tool selection; AI rules; inclusive gamification	Ch. 9, 10; Annexes 5, 6
Live facilitation practice	Micro-facilitation with peer feedback	Ch. 12

Day 3 — Quality, sustainability and certification

Session	Content	Toolkit link
Assessment & evaluation	Process vs product; KPI-aligned data	Ch. 14, 15
Risk & troubleshooting	Risk register; backup planning	Ch. 16; Annex 10
Integration & sustainability	Curriculum/ECTS; community of practice	Ch. 17, 18
Certification	Complete the final assessment; peer review	Ch. 21
Action planning	Each participant plans a pilot exchange	Ch. 19; Annex 2

Annex 14: V-EXCHANGE Pilot Readiness Checklist

Confirm these minimum conditions before a Virtual Exchange pilot begins. This is a common pre-pilot quality check across partner institutions; it complements the roadmap in Chapter 19 and the certification framework in Chapter 21. Complete it at least two weeks before the pilot starts: the assigned facilitator fills it in, the institutional contact confirms it, and the completed checklist is kept with the pilot records. Where the pilot uses AI or gamification, the readiness review in D3.4 (Chapter 21) is completed in addition to this checklist.

- ☐ A trained or certified facilitator is assigned to the exchange.
- ☐ The participant group and the partner group are identified and confirmed.
- ☐ Learning outcomes are defined and mapped to the course or program.
- ☐ A student orientation (purpose, expectations, schedule) is prepared, using the Student Quick Guide (Annex 15).
- ☐ Digital tools are selected from the partner's approved / recommended digital and AI tools sheet (Annex 5), agreed and tested, with a backup option and a low-bandwidth or asynchronous route.
- ☐ Accessibility and language-support arrangements are in place.
- ☐ An assessment or feedback method is selected.
- ☐ A responsible contact is named for pedagogical questions and for technical / data-protection issues.
- ☐ Group agreement, privacy and consent are ready to share with students, and students have completed the common AI-use orientation and the AI use agreement (D3.4, Chapter 12 and Annex 5).

Annex 15: V-EXCHANGE Student Quick Guide

This short guide can be shared with students before their first Virtual Exchange.

What is Virtual Exchange? A structured, facilitated online collaboration with peers from other countries. You take part from your own institution — no travel required.

What to expect. A short series of guided sessions and tasks with a partner group, ending in a shared output and a reflection.

Your participation. Join on time, contribute to the group tasks, and respect the group agreement. If you cannot join live, use the asynchronous option.

Communication. Be respectful and curious, and ask questions. The chat and shared documents are valid ways to take part.

Language support. You may use vocabulary lists, the chat, and AI translation as support; checking meaning with peers is welcome. If you need accessibility support — captions, materials in advance, a different format, or help with a device or connection — tell your facilitator or your institutional contact before the exchange begins.

Technical problems. Test the tool in advance. If a tool fails, switch to the backup option or the asynchronous route and tell your facilitator.

Recording and privacy. You will be told in advance if a session is recorded, what is recorded, and how it is stored. Recordings and your work are not shared outside the exchange without your consent.

Responsible AI use. AI may support translation, brainstorming, and drafting, but the thinking must be yours, and you must never enter personal or sensitive data. Follow the Green - Amber - Red use levels explained in your AI-use orientation, and disclose significant AI use whenever it affects an assessed output, a publication, or a group product.

Recognition. Depending on your institution, your participation may be recognized through ECTS credit within a course or through a certificate of participation. Your facilitator will tell you which applies to your exchange.

Who to contact. Contact your facilitator for learning questions and your institutional contact for technical or data-protection issues.

Glossary

Accessibility: Designing Virtual Exchange activities so that all participants can take part meaningfully, including students with different devices, internet access, language confidence, learning needs, or disabilities.

AI-supported collaboration: The responsible use of artificial intelligence tools to support communication, translation, summarization, brainstorming, or reflection, without replacing students' own thinking or participation.

Asynchronous learning: Learning outside live sessions, allowing participants to contribute at different times through discussion boards, shared documents, reflection journals, or recorded materials.

Civic engagement: Active participation in community, social, or public life. In Virtual Exchange, it often involves discussing shared challenges, comparing local realities, and proposing ideas for positive change.

Community of practice: A group of educators, youth workers, or facilitators who continue learning from one another by sharing experiences, resources, challenges, and good practices after formal training ends.

DigCompEdu: The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators, used in this toolkit to map how each chapter develops recognized educator competences.

Digital pedagogy: The thoughtful use of digital tools, platforms, and online methods to support learning, collaboration, participation, and reflection.

Digital skills: The ability to use digital tools confidently, safely, and effectively for communication, collaboration, content creation, problem-solving, and learning.

Facilitator: The person who guides the Virtual Exchange process by creating structure, supporting participation, encouraging dialogue, managing group dynamics, and helping participants reflect.

Gamification: The use of game-like elements, such as missions, badges, progress markers, team challenges, or peer recognition, to increase motivation and engagement.

Global citizenship: Understanding oneself as part of a wider world, with awareness of global challenges, respect for diversity, and a sense of responsibility toward others and the common good.

Inclusive design: Planning learning activities in a way that anticipates different participant needs and reduces barriers to participation before they appear.

Intercultural dialogue: A respectful exchange between people from different cultural, national, institutional, or social contexts, focused on listening, asking questions, comparing perspectives, and building mutual understanding.

Online collaboration: Working together through digital tools to discuss ideas, solve problems, create shared outputs, or complete tasks with participants who may be in different locations.

Reflection: A structured process that helps participants think about what they experienced, what they learned, how their perspective changed, and how they can apply the learning.

Safe space: A respectful learning environment where participants feel able to express ideas, ask questions, make mistakes, and disagree constructively without fear of humiliation or discrimination.

Structured online exchange: A planned online interaction with clear goals, tasks, timing, roles, outputs, and reflection, rather than an informal or unplanned online meeting.

Synchronous learning: Learning in real time, such as live video sessions, breakout room discussions, online workshops, or real-time group presentations.

Virtual Exchange: A structured, facilitated online learning experience in which participants from different countries, cultures, institutions, or communities interact, collaborate, and reflect together.

Virtual mobility: An online alternative or complement to physical mobility, enabling participants to experience international learning and collaboration without travelling.

Youth engagement: The active involvement of young people in learning, dialogue, decision-making, community action, or civic initiatives.

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