

## To arrange hybrid conferences with local hubs

In many occupational groups, it is common to go to international conferences. Cheap flights have made international travel accessible to more and more people. The pandemic and thoughts about sustainable travel complicate the picture. It is still important that we meet in our occupational groups but we need to find new ways to meet to discuss and develop our professions and our professional roles.



On 26-27 March 2022, an international educational conference was held in Gothenburg. The idea from the beginning was to meet physically, but since the pandemic still limited travel, the organizers decided to hold the conference online instead. As the dates approached, society was opening up for travelling, so in the end the conference became a hybrid variant with 60 participants on site and 286 on-line.

The conference program consisted of six key-note speakers and optional seminars on four different occasions with up to five parallel seminars to choose from.

Of the six key-note speakers, two took place on site in Gothenburg, three via zoom from Scotland and other locations in Sweden and one with a presenter on site together with an online presenter from the USA.

When it was time for the parallel seminars, they were all broadcast via Zoom. There was a zoom room manager in five different rooms on site at

the conference venue in Gothenburg. Some seminars were held from these rooms and some took place from the presenters' home countries.

The conference was part of an Erasmus+ project *Education for sustainability and resilience* with partners in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Slovenia. Due to the project's focus on sustainability and resilience, it was discussed how we can work in project form with participants from several different countries without needing to fly.

From Finland, the project participants traveled by boat and train, and some project participants from Norway took an electric car to Gothenburg. But both in Norway and Slovenia, people met physically in groups and participated in the conference via the Internet together. Participants simply met in a room with a good connection and participated together from this room. When it was time for the optional seminars, participants used their own computers to participate in different seminars.

The reason for going to a conference is often that you want to take part in new findings and lectures, but also that you want to meet others in your profession to exchange experiences. Arranging an international conference with local hubs then becomes a sustainable way of being able to do both parts without having to travel. The costs for a conference of this kind will be lower as it does not require a large conference facility but will suffice with smaller rooms. The costs for travel will also be much lower, which means that more people can participate and help develop the profession.

Many who, during the pandemic, have experienced one digital conference after another testify that it becomes difficult to stay focused during an entire conference if you sit alone and follow it digitally. Meeting in groups and listening to lectures and having time to discuss what you have heard, having coffee together and asking questions becomes a more lively way to participate without having to travel far. The aim of our Erasmus+ project has not been to develop a more sustainable way of having international conferences but since we did have some good experiences in our hybrid way of meeting we wanted to share those here.



Erasmus+