

How to organise an Open Science Cafe

One of the main barriers to the actual shift to open science is that most people, even within the open science community, operate in separate silos. In order to overcome this, we need other formats than presentations and panels. Open Science Cafes do have the potential to connect different stakeholders, as they facilitate listening and sharing thoughts. In short, it consists of roundtable conversations that are ignited by statements on a set of cards. You can use the cards in different ways. This manual describes the format that was used at the Open Science Fair in Athens in September 2017.



Impression of the Open Science Cafe at the Open Science Fair in Athens, September 2017

What you need

- This manual
- [A deck of cards, downloadable on the FOSTER portal](#)
- [A pile of mindmap cards for every table, downloadable on the FOSTER portal](#)
- [1 brilliant quotes and ideas card per table, downloadable on the FOSTER portal](#)

Set-up

The set-up: 6-8 people gather around a table with 1 moderator and 1 note taker. To initiate conversations, they are provided with a deck of cards with statements and questions related to open science and the involved projects. These statements do not reflect the viewpoints of projects, but rather serve as conversation starters. Someone can pick a card, the group talks about it for some time, and then they can move on to the next card. In this way, people learn from each other and start to think about the bigger picture. Meanwhile, you can collect valuable input for the projects and the open science movement. If you like, you can put a time limit on conversations and make sure that different groups mix. At the Open Science Fair we had 4 groups, and every half hour people were asked to 'reshuffle' and pick a new table. In total the cafe lasted 1.5 hour.

Instructions for the moderator

The main task of the moderator is to make sure that everyone is at ease, everyone is involved and that also less confident/present people can express their thoughts. In short: you are the one to facilitate a conversation in which people listen to each other. Here are some tips:

1. If everyone sits, start with wishing everyone a warm welcome and explain the set-up and purpose of the conversation.
2. Start a short introduction round. Try to make sure people don't talk about their job and affiliation, but rather about why they are here as a person. It is important that this is a real conversation between people (and not a set of 'sales pitches').
3. Take the initiative by letting someone pick a card and ask him/her to read it out loud and what his/her initial thoughts are.
4. Keep track of who speaks how much.
5. Is one or are a few people dominating the conversation? Do not be scared to break them off in a friendly way and ask someone else for his/her thoughts.
6. Does a conversation not come off ground or get stuck? Ask some questions to specific people. If it still doesn't work: ask someone else to pick a new card.
7. Keep track of time: you can discuss different cards/topics, but after half an hour the groups switch in order to get new combinations of people.
8. Pay attention to the note taker and his/her role, see below.

Instructions for the note taker

Your role is to collect interesting points of the conversation. You have two different ways to do this:

1. **The mindmap cards:** You can use these cards for topics that get a lot of attention in the conversation. If things go too fast, don't be afraid to stop the conversation and ask people to provide input for this mindmap. Write down the main topic in the centre, and work from there. Is it hard to find connections? You can also collect random thoughts and statements here.
2. **Brilliant quotes and ideas:** Sometimes someone says something that's just WOW, just spot on or somehow very useful. For this you have the 'brilliant quote and ideas' card. You only have one, so here you have to be very selective. Make a point of it if you think something is so good that it deserves to go on this card.

Involved projects

The Open Science Cafe is an initiative by LIBER, co-organised by the following projects, all funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme:



More information and inspiration

The blogpost [The Open Science Cafe at the Open Science Fair](#) shows the result of that particular Open Science Cafe. Would you like to know more or share your experience or outcomes? Email to martine.oudenhoven@kb.nl or send a tweet to @LIBEReurope.