



Timeout Foundation and Timeout method

Why do we need constructive societal discussion?



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- Founded in May 2019
- A public-benefit, non-profit organization
- Founders: Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation, The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, Finnish Cultural Foundation, and the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland
- Starting in 2025, the Brita Maria Renlund Memorial Foundation also a funder
- The team consists of CEO Laura Arikka; Programme Manager Jonna Similä; Experts Efe Ewwaraye, Valtteri Tervala Petra Larvus; Coordinators Vilja von Weissenberg and Eveliina Alho
- The workplace is located at Puistokatu 4 (Helsinki) – House of Science and Hope



Foundation's objectives:

- **Strengthen trust between people and towards society**
- **Strengthen civic participation and democracy**
- **Strengthen societal resilience**

Our work is supported by the Timeout dialogue method, developed originally together with experts from various fields at Sitra and in the Timeout Foundation.

We organize dialogue events, provide training, build networks, and collaborate both in Finland and internationally. The foundation works, for example, with public administration, NGOs, associations, schools, educational institutions, and the media.





Why do we need Timeout (in Finland)?



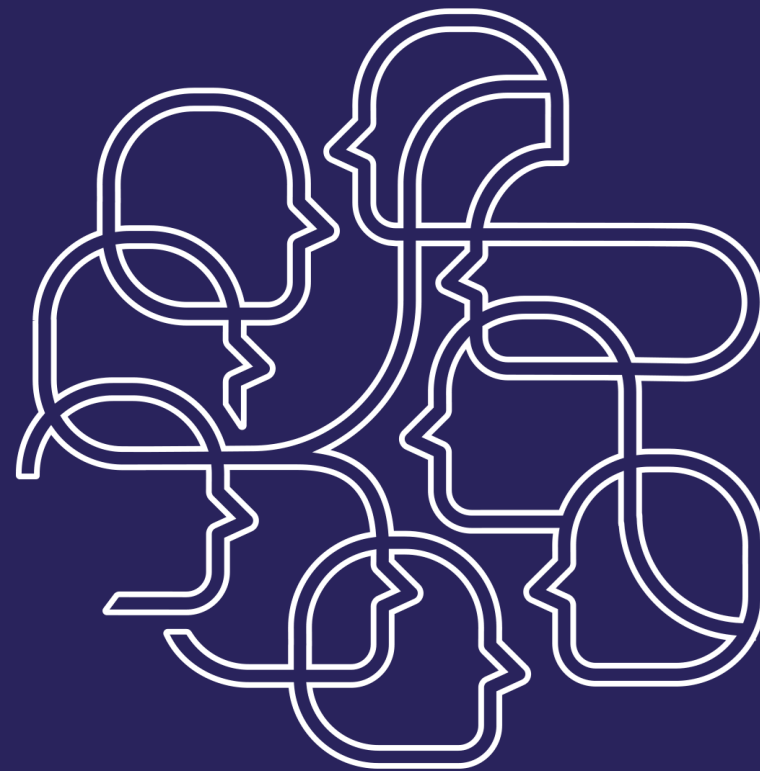
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“We are concerned about the polarisation of society and the tensions increasing within it. The ability and will to engage in constructive discussion are increasingly important so that we can understand each other in spite of our different backgrounds,”

Antti Arjava, Member of the Board of Directors of the Timeout Foundation.



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What do the Finns think about domestic conversation culture?

- 72%** feel that Finnish conversation culture has taken a turn for the worse.
- 25%** feel that they cannot share their thoughts without fear (of others)
- 86%** want more respect for other people, both in traditional media and on social media.
- 77%** enjoy in-depth discussions and situations where they can learn from the ideas of those involved in the discussion
- 61%** would like to have more opportunities to enjoy constructive dialogue

Well said project / Yle (the Finnish Broadcasting Company) and Timeout Foundation 2025

<https://yle.fi/aihe/s/10005655>

“Trust in government and public institutions is weaker for rural residents and among people with lower levels of education and income. If the disparities in trust deepen, this may weaken social cohesion and Finland’s ability to cope with the challenges of an ageing population, climate change, digitalisation and the transformation of work.

Although people’s trust in public institutions and their satisfaction with democracy is high, the proportion who believe they can influence political processes is small.

The OECD emphasises that potential marginalisation in certain population groups should be tackled by promoting broader social dialogue in Finland.”

The fear of conflicts, arguments, or harassment is recognized as a barrier to societal participation across all age groups.

In the report, 16% of respondents stated that the fear of conflicts and arguments has prevented them from participating in this area in recent years.

The results show that people aged 20–30 are more likely to doubt their own skills and knowledge, and more often believe that they lack the qualities needed for societal participation.

Participation also feels more burdensome and complex to young adults, and the concern of being forced to take on too much responsibility becomes a more common barrier for them.

- These findings encourage reflection on how different societal institutions could strengthen the confidence of those aged 20–30—and those even younger—that societal participation is not too difficult or overwhelming, and that they are enough just as they are.

Survey 2024, Sitra



Why important?

- Democracy and societal peace
- Maintain and increase trust within society.
→ Between people and towards society
- **Heavy emphasis on social infrastructure. Key part in this is the necessary effort to improve dialogue and dialogical connection between groups of people who live in and experience different realities.**
- Making dialogue skill a civic competence

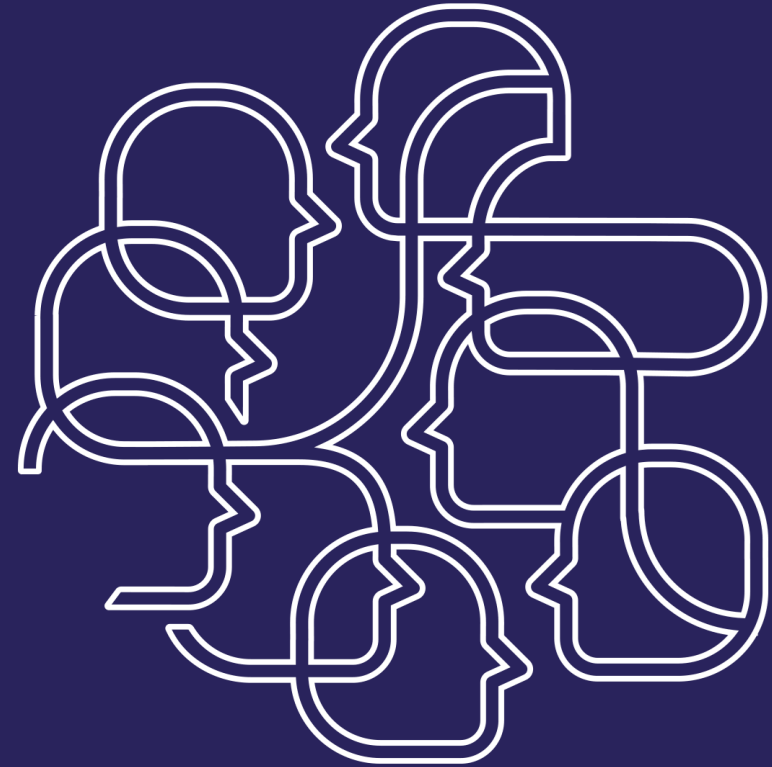
What is a dialogue?

“A dialogue is a constructive and equal way of having a discussion. It is aimed at understanding others, but not at reaching unanimity. At best, a dialogue generates unpredictable insights and new thinking.”

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Timeout method

The purpose of Timeout discussions is to bring people with different backgrounds together to discuss important matters in an unhurried atmosphere equally and constructively



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What's Timeout about?

- **An open, free method for everyone to use. All the tools for the facilitator can be found in our website**
- You can choose any topic that you find important
- Each discussion has a facilitator
- The participants do not have to share the same views at the end of the discussion. Furthermore, there is no need to make any decisions during or after the discussion. The participants speak from their own experience.
- Each discussion is participated in by **6–25 people** or in a virtual discussion **3-10 people** with different backgrounds.
- The discussions are confidential, unless agreed otherwise.
- What the Timeout is NOT about? Reconciliation, debate, conflict resolution, therapy, workshop, advocacy, to be done in a hurry

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”

“Everybody should have an opportunity to participate in the conversation on big changes, such as the health and social services reform or the transformation of working life.

At Timeout discussions, an atmosphere of equality is created by talking about experiences.”



Ground rules for a constructive conversation by Timeout

Ground Rules for a Constructive Dialogue

1. **Listen** to others without interrupting or having side conversations.
2. **Share** your own experiences and perspectives.
3. **Allow room** for unfinished thoughts and different viewpoints.
4. **Respect** others and keep the dialogue confidential.

”

The facilitator ensures that everyone has enough space to talk about their experiences and that the ground rules are being respected.

Ground rules should be discussed with the participants already in the beginning of the dialogue.

The rules can be printed out and placed visibly in the meeting room.

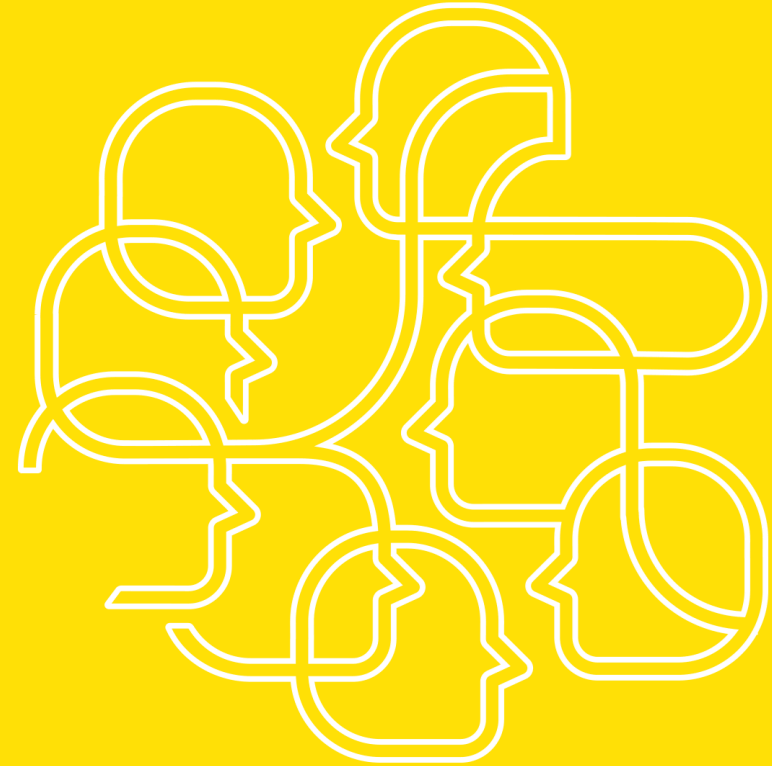




WHAT MAKES TIMEOUT METHOD?

The structure of a Timeout Dialogue

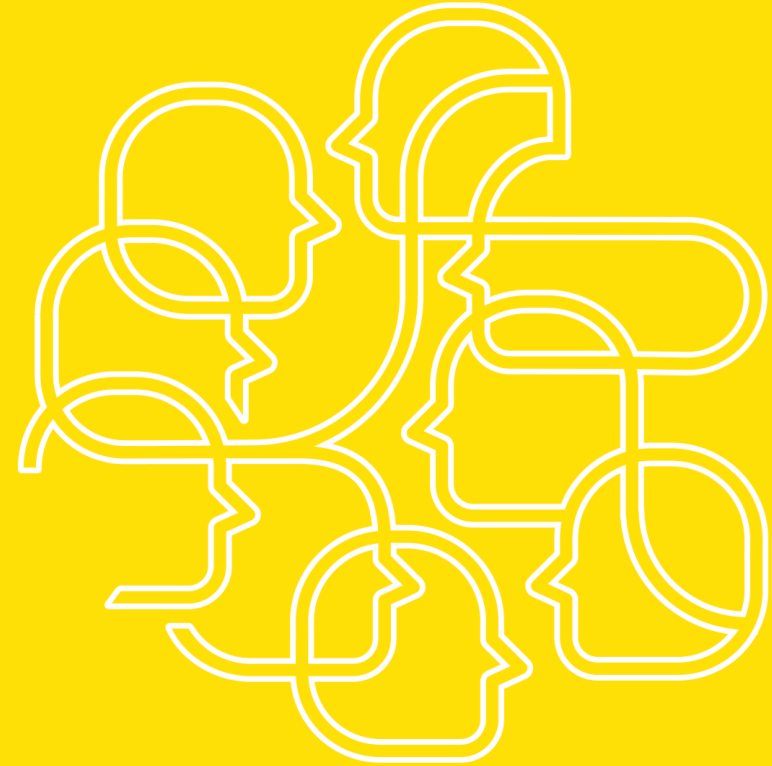
1. **Welcome and introductions**
2. **Ground rules for a constructive dialogue**
3. **Introduction to the topic**
4. **Individual reflection / dialogue in pairs**
5. **Group dialogue**
6. **Deepening the dialogue**
7. **Individual reflection / dialogue in pairs**
8. **Group dialogue**
9. **Writing down personal insights**
10. **Sharing insights with others**
11. **What happens next?**
12. **Thank you and closing**



WHAT MAKES TIMEOUT METHOD?

The things that take place:

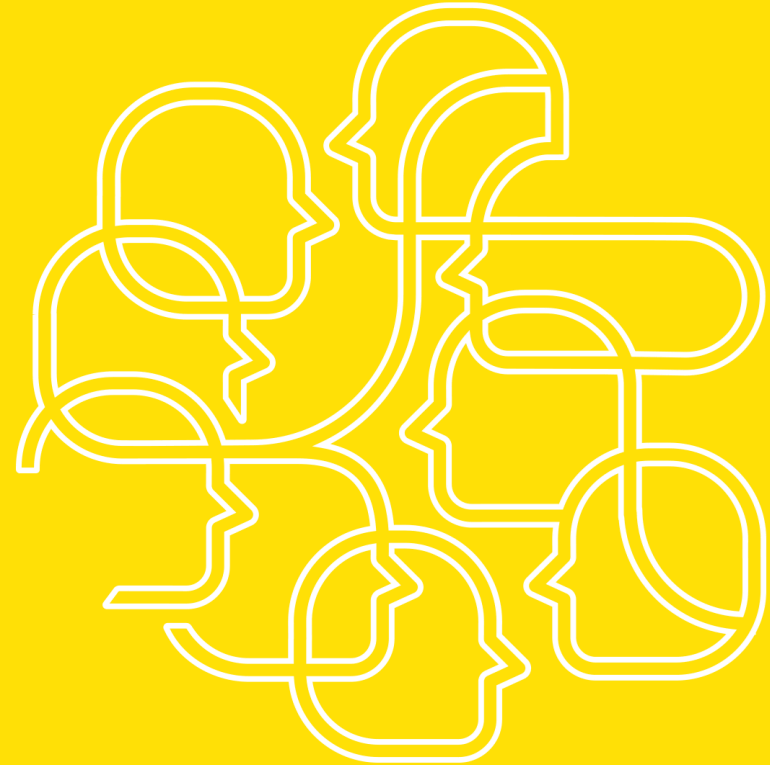
- **Before**
 - All participants know what they are taking part in
- **During**
 - We stay honest and true to the goal of the dialogue (=deeper understanding and various perspectives)
- **After**
 - Self reflection: What have I learned? How has me participating impacted myself and/or decision making?
 - What and when to discuss next time?



TIMEOUT METHOD

CORE:

- Joint encounters amongst people from different backgrounds
 - Not only the “polar opposites” but more so the ones who do not participate → silent voices
- **“Experience talk”**
 - enables a more equal encounter
 - differs from pure knowledge based conversation
 - enables new insights and deeper understanding



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- Tools
- Ground rules for a constructive discussion
- Dialogue guide

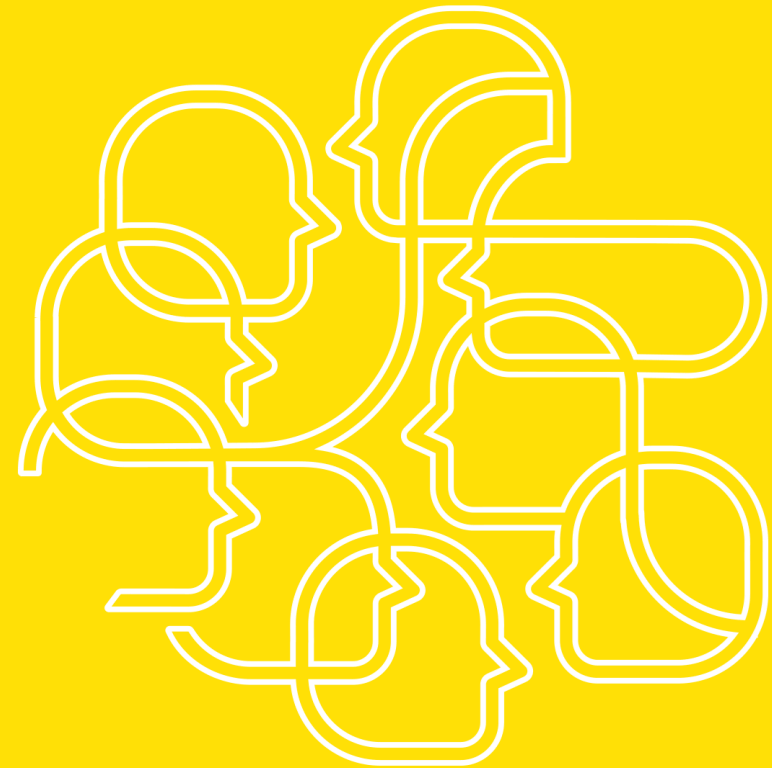
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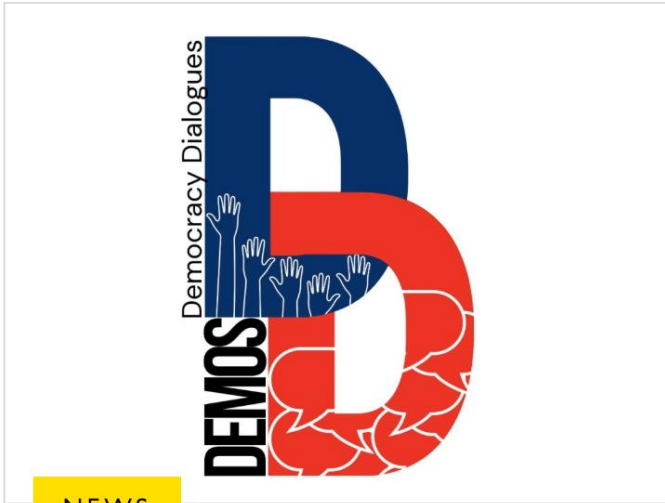
During 2018-2025

- **13 830** organized dialogues
- Over **154 824** people have participated
- Over **862** organizations have been using or are using the Timeout method

During 2025

- **1038** Timeout dialogues (22% organised by Timeout Foundation)
- **13 820** participants
- **128** Timeout trainings (83% organised by Timeout Foundation)
- **2358** Participants in the trainings
- **4,61 / 5** feedback from participants of Timeout Foundation trainings





NEWS

28.5.2024

DEMOS - Democracy Dialogues - How to use dialogue to strengthen democracy?



NEWS

21.5.2024

The Hybrid European Democracy Festival brought people from all over Europe into shared discussions



Foreign ministry funded project with the Guides and Scouts of Finland and Nepal Scouts to implement UN resolution 2250:

**64 Timeout Dialogues
over 3600 participants**

Collaboration to support societal dialogue



8.5.2025

Citizens want clear and just social security system – report on social security dialogues published



23.5.2025

Elderly Helsinki residents invited to discuss Swedish-language health and social services



5.9.2024

The National Museum of Finland brings a dialogue on the ownership and management of cultural heritage to museum and cultural professionals

Dialogue series to support civic participation

Government report on the future of Finland

As part of the Government Report on the Future, the Prime Minister's Office and Timeout Foundation teamed up to organise 50 + 40 dialogues on the future of Finland in 2021-2022 and 2024

These discussions were held in different parts of Finland in cooperation with regional and local operators using the Timeout method

Representatives of different generations (**especially young people**) and genders and people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life were invited to participate.

The goal was that people who, for one reason or another, do not usually take part in discussions on the future would get involved in reflecting on the future of Finland.

Dialogue series to support civic participation

WELCOME TO DIACOMET

The EU funded Horizon Europe project 'Fostering capacity building for civic resilience and participation: Dialogic communication ethics and accountability'

Digital communication has advanced, expanded and changed how people interact. However, it also spreads conflict, hate speech and disinformation. The many initiators of destructive communication acts do not rely on professional or ethical rules to distribute truthful information.

Diacomet:

83 dialogues
496 participants



NEWS

27.6.2024

The Timeout Method Was Utilized in Modeling the Pre-Trial Investigation of Human Trafficking Offenses

Building clarity and preventing bias in digital forensic examination, interorganisational communication and interaction (CLARUS)

A review of Organized crime in Finland was conducted using the Timeout method

According to a recent report by the Police University College, organized crime typically involves transnational, network-based activities facilitated by information technology and infiltrates the legitimate economy. Therefore, it is crucial for Finland to develop its own national strategy to combat professional and organized crime. This is important both for defining unified objectives and for coordinating and enhancing national and international cooperation.

Research projects / qualitative research: knowledge with the help of dialogue



Trainings to have more Timeout dialogue facilitators



NEWS

13.12.2024

Understanding Through Dialogue: Timeout Foundation at the EUSTORY Next Generation Summit



Dialogue events



World's biggest Timeout Dialogue about peace

Leader event, The Guides and Scouts of Finland, Summer 2023

Thank you



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What are your thoughts?



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