

teff EDUCATHON TOOLKIT

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Interested in organizing an Educathon? Great!

Maybe you have already participated in a teff Educathon - maybe you haven't. Either way, this Toolkit will equip you with everything you need for your very own Educathon!

Please note that this Educathon toolkit is not meant for your participants to read - only hosts (and facilitators - more on that later!) need to do so before the Educathon.

In fact, the suspense of your participants not knowing *exactly* what awaits them is part of the game!



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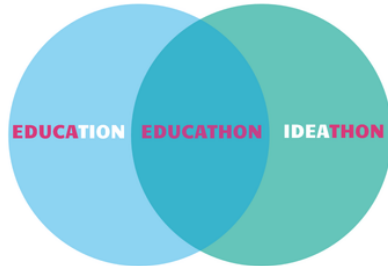
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WHAT AWAITS YOU?

What is an Educathon - and, even more importantly: What is it *not*?

AN EDUCATHON IS ...

- ✓ a combination of the terms “education” and “ideathon”



- ✓ it combines main characteristics of an Ideathon with prominent Design Thinking principles

IDEATHON + DESIGN THINKING



- ✓ a **structured space** and **time-boxed, collaborative** learning format where diverse participants work together on **real-world challenges**
- ✓ a “playground” for participants to **explore** questions, test ideas, and reflect on their process
- ✓ an opportunity to focus on **learning, experimentation, and shared understanding**
- ✓ an **iterative** process, meaning that it is allowed to repeat steps if needed - but do not skip a step ahead! Trust the process!

AN EDUCATHON IS NOT ...

- ✗ **a classic hackathon**
→ there is no pressure to deliver a “perfect” technical solution or a market-ready product
- ✗ **just “yet another workshop”**
→ active participation is key; participants are not passive recipients of expert knowledge.; they actively shape the process, the questions, and the outcomes
- ✗ **a competition**
→ even though you may want to choose a “winning pitch” at the end, the competition should serve as a motivating factor only; the pitches at the end will show that comparing them is almost impossible, and that shared learning is more important than ranking teams
- ✗ **a lecture**
→ there are no long or one-way presentations. Input is short and purposeful, leaving most of the time for hands-on work.
- ✗ **about predefined answers**
→ uncertainty, iteration, and reframing the problem are part of the process
- ✗ **about individual performance**
→ the focus is on team learning and collective intelligence, not on showcasing individual expertise
- ✗ **a one-off event with no follow-up**
→ ideally, it is to spark ongoing learning, collaboration, or action beyond the event itself (see also p. 7 “Results & Impact”)

EDUCATHON AT A GLANCE

On this page, you'll find all the information you need about the *teff* Educathon concept - what you need, how it can be organized, etc. On each aspect, you'll find more information on the following pages of this Educathon toolkit!

IN A NUTSHELL, ALL YOU NEED IS

- a topic
- a printer
- a PowerPoint presentation
- a host
- facilitators
- motivated learners
- a learning space

IDEAL CONTEXT

Any context which calls for a creative approach towards a problem/challenge

IDEAL SETTINGS

- university seminars
- (international) project meetings
- school lessons
- compact seminars
- and many more!

REQUIRED PEOPLE

- participants ideally 20-25
- teams ideally 5-7
- host(s) ideally 1-2
- facilitators ideally 2-4

DURATION

An Educathon's flexibility allows for different time frames:

MINI EDUCATHON

- 1 day (~ 5-6 hours)
- starts with exploration in the morning (no time for additional input, though!) and ends with the pitch presentations in the afternoon
- time limits need to be watched carefully & shortened in advance

REGULAR / MISTI EDUCATHON

- 1.5 days (~ 7 hours + 3 hours)
- presentation of the pitches & end on the 2nd day
- → allows for a more flexible pitch-writing phase (allow for a brief 45min "memory-refresh" / pitch practicing before the presentations, though!)

MAXI EDUCATHON

- stretched e.g. over a whole week, with the three phases happening on different days (e.g. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday)
- gives learners the opportunity to apply knowledge or experience gained in between

GOT IT?

Organize an Educathon towards or even at the very end of a lesson series/an event/a seminar/a project week to give your learners the possibility to apply their knowledge in a creative, innovative way. Even though an Educathon is not meant to "test" knowledge per se, it is a way to find out whether learners have gained a deeper understanding of the topic!

GET IT ALL OUT!

Start a new topic/lesson series/seminar/an event/a project week with an Educathon in order to collect creative ideas based on pre-conceptions of the topic in advance. Use the pitches as a motivation and point of reference during the following time.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Due to the flexibility of the format, it can be realized in different scenarios:

ON-SITE

- all participants in one room on-site (e.g. a classroom)
- teams can work in other places during the teamwork slots and return to the main room for the checkpoints
- breaks can be held flexibly, depending on the group's working pace and needs
- group can be closely observed by host and facilitators

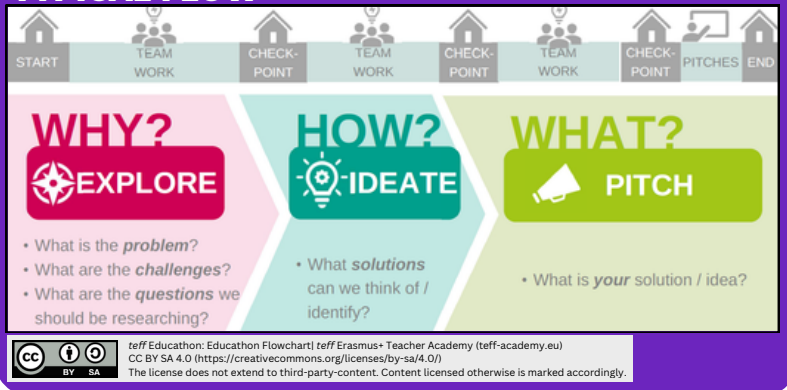
ONLINE

- group meets online
- teams work in breakout rooms
- break times need to be announced in advance
- facilitators may need to motivate groups more and make sure everyone is participating in the teamwork
- digital versions of the material need to be provided

HYBRID

- several groups meet in different places (e.g. different universities)
- all groups meet in one digital zoom for the checkpoints with the host
- teamwork is handled by each location and their respective facilitators
- no time flexibility - breaks and checkpoints need to be scheduled in detail
- facilitators need to contact host for questions

TYPICAL FLOW



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

In an Educathon, everyone's voice should be heard, regardless of their status or occupation. This is why in past *teff* Educathons, we asked pupils as well as student teachers, teacher trainees, in-service teachers and other experts in the field of teacher education to partake.

First things first:

During an Educathon, hierarchies, age difference, levels of expertise, etc. should not stand in the way of finding answers to shared questions and joint challenges.

Of course, this may be easier in some groups than in others: If, for example, teachers are participating alongside pupils/students, some of the teachers' responsibilities perhaps cannot be put aside for the day.

It is each person's responsibility to avoid returning to hierarchies or stereotypes - be open towards others, and to yourself!



THE HOST(S)

Each Educathon is hosted by 1-2 people.
Hosts

- are responsible for the overall facilitation of the Educathon (i.e. the PPT slides): Introduction, Input (if needed; see p. 8), Check-Points, activities/instructions, pitch presentation, wrap-up
- need to make themselves familiar with the whole Educathon before the event
- have the best overview over what's going on at any time
- keep reminding participants of time limits and rules
- are motivating & positive as well as confident that the Educathon will be a success! :)



FACILITATORS

Facilitators are needed to support both the host and the groups. They

- check in with the teams (without interfering in their learning process) to make sure every team is on the right path
- familiarize themselves with the material before the Educathon so they can explain it when needed
- observe and make sure nobody (accidentally) breaks any Educathon rules
- keep reminding participants of time limits
- eliminate any doubts on the learning journey and motivate the teams to "trust the process"
- inform the host if everything is going smoothly or if, for example, instructions need to be repeated or explained again
- join the host(s) in their confidence & motivation! :)



TEAMS (PARTICIPANTS)

In the Educathon, nobody learns all on their own. All work is (eventually) collaborative. At the beginning of the Educathon, the group is split up into teams:

- Teams should not consist of more than 3-5 people to ensure that everyone has their time to shine and bring in their ideas.
- The number of teams - obviously - depends on the size of the learning group you're working with. Keep in mind that each team presents a pitch in the end: Should you have more than 8 teams (= 8 pitches), you'll need short breaks between the pitches for the audience to digest!
- When working with interdisciplinary groups or groups from different backgrounds, it is advised to have mixed groups.
- Also, randomly assigned groups hold great potential for more surprising results!



JURY (OPTIONAL)

If you decide to choose a winning pitch in the end (see p. 6), you may consider inviting a jury to decide. This certainly lets the Educathon end on a celebratory note!

Since the presentation of the 90-second pitches does not take a long time, the jury would only need to join the group to

- listen to the pitches
- decide on a winner (in secret; make sure the jury know they are supposed to choose the most innovative idea, not the most feasible!)
- announce their decision (+ a brief reason for their decision)

Therefore, you could consider asking colleagues, friends, experts, teachers, ... if they would be interested!

THE *teff* EDUCATHON AGENDA

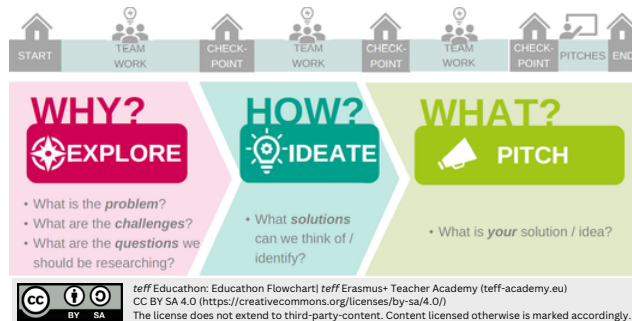
In the past years, Educathons have been held in many different contexts, by many different people, and based on different literature and principles.

The agenda proposed here may therefore differ from other Educathons you have seen or even taken part in elsewhere.

Hosts are advised to use the PowerPoint Template (PPT) provided by *teff* to ensure that the participants can also follow the agenda easily and can understand its structure.

The PPT also provides suggestions for **time limits**.

Download the PPT (see p. 11 “Templates & Material”) and click through the slides before reading the following pages.



The *teff* Educathon Agenda is structured along the three phases

- “WHY? Explore”
- “HOW? Ideate”
- “WHAT? Pitch”

- each phase **starts with a “checkpoint”** at which the whole group gets together and the host explains each phase and the respective activity for the team work
- the group then **splits up into teams** (that have been formed at the very beginning of the Educathon and stay the same throughout the event) to work on designated phase **activities (team work)**
- after the team work, the group **reunites** for the next “checkpoint”
- the **last** phase also includes the **presentation of the pitches**
- the **end** of the Educathon should be used for a group reflection of not only the pitches they have just heard, but also the learning experience they have shared during the event
- it is also advised to collect **feedback** on the event at the very end of the Educathon

1st PHASE: WHY? EXPLORE

↓ PPT slides 13 - 24
Worksheet “Why? Exploration Activity”



This phase provides room for the participants to explore the “area of concern” and find out more about the the challenge/main topic/underlying „problem“ of the topic.

- What is the *problem*?
- What are the *challenges*?
- What are the *questions* we should be researching?

This exploration phase enables the learners to develop the **best possible understanding of the topic**, set aside (or re-work) their own **assumptions**, understand what the topics means for/to **others** and different groups/countries (e.g. students, teachers, pupils).

For the **Think-Pair-Share** activity in this phase, some learners may need **additional input (see p.8 “Input”)**. This should be presented/worked on at the **very beginning** of this phase or combined with the Think/Pair steps. For the Share step, all learners should have obtained **more or less the same level of knowledge about the topic**.

During the **Share** part, facilitators & host need to make sure that all teams

- have identified 3 challenges together on their Placemat sheet
- have decided on one question they are going to concentrate on at the very end of this phase. This question should be highlighted somehow on the Placemat sheet.
- choose their question for the right reasons: Stress that it is something they want to work on and that is close to their reality. The question should not be chosen because of an already existing product/pitch idea - this is not the time to think of the final pitch yet!
- take a 5 minute break after this phase - the high working pace during this phase often sets the tone for the whole Educathon and is one of the more demanding parts of it!

If different teams choose the same question for the rest of the Educathon, that’s okay! In the end, their results will be very different for sure.

2nd PHASE: HOW? IDEATE

↓ PPT slides 25 - 29
Worksheet “How? Ideation Activity”



- What *solutions* can we think of / identify?

This phase provides room for the participants to **generate as many ideas as possible using ideation / brainstorming techniques.**

Starting the phase with the quotes in the PPT stresses that in the Educathon, **it is not the most feasible or realistic ideas that count - it's about innovativity!**

Before the ideation/brainstorming activity, it is very important to present the **rules for brainstorming** (“Please don’t... → Instead, ...”), especially since learners may have very different ideas of and experience with brainstorming. Feel free to change or add rules based on your learners’ needs or customs.

During the **ideation/brainstorming activity**, facilitators & host need to make sure that all teams

- write down the question they chose at the end of the Placemat activity in the Why? phase onto their brainstorming sheet
- are following the brainstorming rules
- are trying (or at least: discussing to try) more than one brainstorming technique
- write down their ideas somewhere
- choose one idea to work on for the rest of the Educathon (not the „easy“ idea – but the most innovative one!).
- describe their idea in as much detail as possible & write down bullet points
- involve every member in the brainstorming. In the extreme case that someone does not agree with the group’s idea at all, you can offer them to choose their own idea and write their own pitch (check with the host first).

3rd PHASE: WHAT? PITCH

↓ PPT slides 30 - 37
Worksheet “What? Pitch-writing”



- What is *your* solution / idea?

In this phase, be aware that some groups may not know **what exactly a pitch is** - for this, some links to YouTube videos are provided so learners can watch some examples. Many groups will also be familiar with the show “Lion’s Den” / “Shark Tank” which has gained international popularity.

Sufficient **time** should be given to write the pitch. Nevertheless, experience has shown that pitches can also be created in a very short time and that, on the other hand, having too much time available can lead teams to doubting their chosen idea and getting too caught up in details.

During the **pitch-writing**, facilitators & host need to make sure that all teams

- are aware that they are not supposed to exceed the 90 second time limit in order to guarantee a fair “competition”
- need to choose someone who is going to present the pitch (this can be the whole group or just 1-2 people)
- are motivated to try and make their pitch entertaining as well - for example by acting out a conversation between two people or re-enacting a common situation that would lead to the “solution” presented in the pitch

For the **presentation** of the pitches,

- a “stage” should be set up; each team should be called to the stage using their team name
- someone (e.g. the host) should watch the time and give some sort of a “warning sign” (e.g. a flashing light) after 80 seconds
- the 90 second time limit should be taken seriously with regard to fairness
- You can allow the audience to ask 2-3 questions after each pitch (optional)

When inviting a jury (see p. 4 “Roles & Responsibilities”), the time during which they decide upon a winner can be used by the learners to give feedback on the Educathon.

When presenting a winner, you can even consider giving out small prizes.

You can also create Educathon participation certificates to hand out at the end of your Educathon.

RESULTS & IMPACT

What to do with the results after an Educathon?

On this page, we propose some ideas on how to ensure a long-lasting Educathon effect long until after the event has finished.

REALITY CHECK



Even though the Educathon should not be about feasibility but creativity / innovation, ideas are often being checked for feasibility after the event has ended. If there is a chance to implement some of the ideas pitched in the Educathon, it can help to build a Feasibility Committee, as proposed here:

https://www.alda-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ADD_Youth-engagement-through-local-involvement_A-step-by-step-guide-to-IDEATHON.pdf

Other helpful material for a “reality check” can be found here: <https://page.ideo.com/design-thinking-edu-toolkit>

ANALYSE TO UNDERSTAND



The ideas pitched and discussions held in an Educathon can reveal skill gaps, new topic areas, or structural challenges for both learners and hosts. This makes Educathon outcomes valuable for shaping future training/, learning programs, or strategy work (e.g. in school development settings). You can analyze which competencies participants needed most and where support was missing. In this way, the Educathon becomes a diagnostic tool for (organizational) learning.

PILOT PROJECTS



After doing a “reality check”, you can select one or a few of the strongest ideas and test them in a real-life environment. This helps you understand whether an idea actually works outside the Educathon setting. Running pilots also shows participants that their work can lead to real change! Even small pilots with limited resources can create valuable learning and momentum.

SHARE, LIKE, REPOST



You can turn the ideas and stories into reports, showcases, or communication campaigns. Sharing results publicly can help attract partners, supporters, and potential funders! It also gives recognition to participants and strengthens collaborative engagement. Visible outcomes further increase the long-term value and credibility of the Educathon. Use Social Media, your website, an internal platform, ... to showcase not only your results, but also the process!

INNOVATION BACKLOG



All presented ideas can be documented and fed into your personal or organization’s strategic or innovation processes. Not every idea needs to be implemented immediately, but many may become relevant later! By clustering and reviewing ideas regularly, you keep them alive and usable. This also helps decision-makers identify patterns, needs, and emerging themes.

INFORM POLICY DEVELOPMENT



Educathon results can highlight real needs, barriers, and opportunities directly from people working or learning in the system: This makes them useful as qualitative evidence for policy discussions, strategy papers, or reform processes. Policymakers can use documented ideas and pitches from the teams to identify priority areas for change. When structured well, Educathon outputs can even complement research data by adding lived experience and practice-based insight!

PREPARATION STEP BY STEP

You can use this checklist to prepare your Educathon.

! When using additional material (i.e. for the input), don't forget to add it (e.g. printed out material) to this checklist!



PARTICIPANTS

You can use the "What awaits you?" page from this Toolkit in order to spark your participants' interest.



HOST

The most convenient solution would be to assign **yourself**, as the organizer, as the host, as you are already familiar with the Educathon. You could also assign 2 hosts to share responsibilities.



FACILITATORS

To prepare your facilitators for their role, send them **page 4** from this Toolkit in advance.



PRINTING

You need to print the following material:

- Worksheet: Explore!
 - 1 page, A3
 - 1 per team
- Worksheet: Ideate!
 - 1 page, A4
 - 1 per team
- Worksheets: Pitch!
 - 2 pages, A4
 - 1 per team
- + optional material you'd like to add (e.g. for an input)



TECHNOLOGY

Make sure your **projector, device** (Laptop, Tablet) and **microfone** (if needed) work and **download your Educathon PPT** onto your device.

If you're doing a **digital or hybrid version** of your Educathon:

- share the link (e.g. Zoom or Teams) with everyone
- make sure everyone's (including yours!) device works - keep in mind that per room, only 1 device and 1 screen is needed



TOPIC

The topic you choose for your Educathon depends on your group's needs and/or interests - however, make sure that it is a topic that provides enough **room for challenges to identify and questions to be asked** (see page 5), e.g.

- Teacher Shortage
- Well-being in schools and/or teacher education
- Diversity in the classroom
- Learning and/or Teaching in the Digital Age
- Distance Learning



INPUT

You do not **need** to prepare input for your participants, but in some cases you **should**.

For example, when tackling a broader topic such as "Teacher Shortage", it may be useful to present some statistics to underline the gravity of the **problem**. For other topics - especially those close to the participants' everyday life, such as e.g. Learning in the Digital Age - such preparation may not be needed as participants will already be well aware of the underlying problem.

If you **do** want to add an "input slot" to your Educathon, make sure

- it is **not too long** - 15 minutes max
- it is done **at the very beginning of the WHY? Phase**, before any team work

When working with established groups, such as school classes or seminars, **homework** could be given to the participants to prepare themselves for the topic. You could then add a short **revision slot** at the beginning of the WHY? Phase to make sure **everyone is on the same page**.

CHECKLIST

weeks before:

- set a topic for your Educathon
- recruit participants
- assign a host & facilitators
- familiarize yourself with this Toolkit
- optional: recruit a jury

the week before:

- optional: prepare input
- meet with / contact host(s) & facilitators to make sure everyone has the same understanding of the Educathon & knows how to work with the material

the day before:

- print material
- check technology
- host: (re-)familiarize with the PPT & the activities in each phase
- facilitators: (re-)familiarize with the printed material
- set up the learning space



LEARNING SPACE SETUP

find/book a room that

- is big enough to work in small groups
 - if doing a digital or hybrid Educathon: has a guaranteed internet connection, a screen and video set-up
- prepare an enjoyable and creative working atmosphere, for example
- have group tables instead of rows
 - have paper (A3), pens, maybe some scissors and tape ready - so people can work as creatively as possible
 - think of (and prepare/book) (designated) learning spaces outside of the room
 - find a place that can serve as a "stage" to present the pitches at the end of the Educathon

FACILITATION & LEARNING CULTURE

Hosts and facilitators should do their best to create a strong learning atmosphere instead of chaos. Here are some common challenges & how to deal with them:



TRYING TO FIND THE “RIGHT” ANSWER

Not all learners can adapt quickly to the relatively open, creative learning space the Educathon creates. It is advised to repeat as often as possible that the Educathon is not about finding the “perfect” but instead the most innovative solution/answer to a problem.



NOT USING THEIR TIME WISELY

In every Educathon, some groups think that some of the time spans suggested for an activity (e.g. the brainstorming) are too long and that they do not “need” it. However, make sure that time is indeed filled with the assigned activity and that teams do not stop working once they have what they think is the perfect solution.



QUIET PARTICIPANTS

The methodology of the educathon and the material is designed in a way that makes it impossible for individuals not to partake at all in the team process. However, some participants may be too shy (or too lazy) to participate. It is key to reassure the whole group that every voice counts and that everyone must be heard. If needed, some ground rules (similar to the brainstorming rules, see p. 6) can be established at the beginning of the Educathon. Facilitators should try and actively involve those participants during the team work phases.



CHALLENGING GROUP DYNAMICS & DOMINANT PERSONALITIES

On the other side, some dominant personalities may push their ideas in uncomfortable ways - because they are of higher status, are more experienced or are simply very, very convinced that their idea is the best. Facilitators will soon notice this and can try to actively make the other team members contribute or even challenge the dominant person’s idea without completely neglecting it.



DEALING WITH THE TIME PRESSURE

“That’s not enough time!” is probably one of the sentences you’ll hear more than once during your Educathon. But: A certain amount of time pressure is needed to make sure the teams work fully concentrated. No extra time should be allowed and all teams should always have the exact same amount of time to do the activities - it’s part of the game!



DEALING WITH FRUSTRATION

Regarding the time pressure and the search for a creative idea in particular, some individuals can get frustrated. If facilitators notice this, they need to reassure the group that whatever they come up with will be more creative than they think it is now, and that there is no “perfect” idea that needs to be found. Groups with a high frustration level should be monitored closely by the facilitators, as they will need some motivational pushes.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

The proposed Educathon schedule presented in this Toolkit does not work for me - can I change it?

Yes, of course! This toolkit only wants to equip you with the basic material & knowledge for organizing an Educathon. You can use it as it is but you may want to add or change things according to your Educathon needs!

What if we have too few participants?

That means there will simply be less pitches - which is not a bad thing, and might leave more room/time for idea development before and after the pitches (see also p. 7 “Results & Impact” for ideas). With learners who do not need a lot of supervision, you could also consider having teams consisting of just 2-3 people.

Do we really need facilitators?

In most contexts and groups: Yes, because the host would be easily overwhelmed with hosting and facilitating and looking after all the different teams. In case of established learning groups, however, such as school classes or university seminars, the teacher could consider being host and facilitator at the same time.

Can I invite experts?

Experts would of course be a great addition to an Educathon: Either at the very beginning of phase 1 (WHY?) to provide an input on the topic, or at the very end of the Educathon, after the pitches and/or as part of the jury.

What if no good ideas emerge?

That is most unlikely - and also depends on what “good” means for you. Following the mindset and workflow of the Educathon, every team will come up with the idea/solution they find most suitable for their chosen challenge/question. Therefore, identifying challenges and defining a question (during phase 1 “WHY?”) is probably the most important component of the Educathon.

What does an Educathon cost?

Apart from a few printouts (and assuming you can provide a room): Nothing. :)

Can participants use Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as e.g. ChatGPT?

Due to the inherently creative nature of the Educathon, which is based on the participants’ own ideas, we strongly recommend refraining from using AI for idea generation (i.e., in the “HOW?” phase). In the WHAT? phase, AI can be used to refine pitches; however, we would also recommend first attempting to draft the texts without the help of ChatGPT or similar tools.



TEMPLATES & MATERIAL



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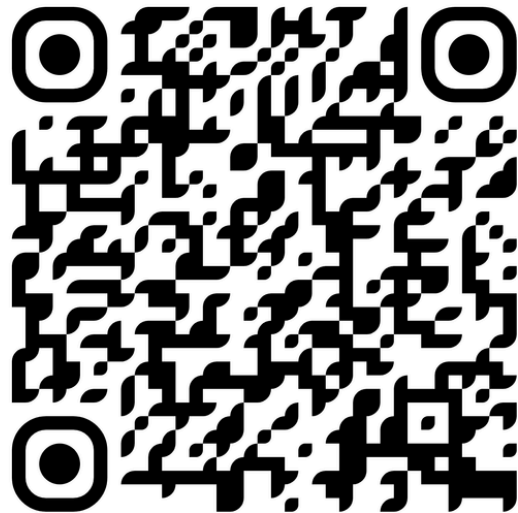
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(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)



DOWNLOAD ALL EDUCATHON MATERIAL ON

[HTTPS://WWW.TEFF-ACADEMY.EU/WHAT-WE-DO/EDUCATHON](https://www.teff-academy.eu/what-we-do/educathon)



EXEMPLARY EDUCATHON TIMELINE

Structure suggestion for a 1-Day Mini Educathon; regular or Midi Educathons can be adjusted using the time limits for 1 day as a point of reference (see also p. 3).

POWERPOINT TEMPLATE (PPT)

IT IS RECOMMENDED TO USE THIS PRESENTATION AS A BASIS FOR GUIDING YOUR GROUP THROUGH THE EDUCATHON. SLIDES CAN BE CHANGE OR ADDED ACCORDING TO YOUR CONTEXT AND NEEDS.

WORKSHEETS

WHY? EXPLORATION ACTIVITY

PLACEMAT
& INSTRUCTIONS
1 PAGE

HOW? IDEATION ACTIVITY

BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES
& TEAM NOTES
1PAGE

WHAT? PITCH-WRITING

WRITING A PITCH - USEFUL TIPS
& STRUCTURE YOUR PITCH
2 PAGES

SOURCES

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LITERATURE

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