



**INTERNATIONALES  
HAUS SONNENBERG**

**SONNENBERG-KREIS**  
Gesellschaft zur Förderung  
internationaler Zusammenarbeit e. V.

## Skype interviews with experts as Method for Opinion Formation, getting new perspectives and Content Learning

Group size	8-39
Time required	190 minutes
Material Re-quirements	Computer, headset, webcam, projector, speakers, flip chart, markers, Wall, moderation cards, visualization of the questions to the frame of the interviews. Each computer needs an Internet connection and a Skype account.
Prerequisites	The participants should be already be familiar with the topic (at least basics) in order to develop autonomously further questions. If the group is as big, that more interviews are performed in parallel, one facilitator and a separate room for each group are needed

### Short description

Participants develop their own questions and perform a Skype interview with an expert or an engaged person. Here people can be interviewed who live even on the other side of the planet, without having to take flights to complete. Thus, interesting insights and perspectives can be matched .

The participants get the experience to talk to an expert, win new knowledge through the exchange contact with a specific person and strengthen their communication skills in conversation. As well the “clash” with strong opinions and statements of so called “experts” might be very inspiring or provoking for the own opinion formation process.

### Preparation

Depending on the size of group 1 to 3 experts can be interviewed. An interview is conducted in a group of about 8 to 13 TN. For larger groups, the participants are divided into small groups and there are parallel 2 to 3 interviews conducted with different Expert\_innen.

Ahead the team researches for experts in a field of interest of the participants. If possible, the participants are already involved in the selection process. The experts get requested early on whether they would be willing to do an interview and to fix an agreed date and timeslot.

The experts should be communicated in advance, in which context the interview takes place, how old the participants are and what are the topics of the seminar or class. The experts should be asked to connect a webcam to their computer so that the TN can see them during the conversation.



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In each room a circle of chairs and equipment (computer with internet access, headset, web-cam, speakers and projectors) are prepared.

#### **Implementation:**

##### 1. Dividing groups related to interest (5 Min.)

Groups with more than 14 participants are divided into small groups related to the experts they are most interested in. For that the experts are presented quickly by the team (evtl. Flipchart). Then the small groups are located in different areas/ rooms and now work separately on the interviews.

##### 2. What is an Interview? (10 min.)

The preparations in the small groups start from the already made experiences of the TN with interviews: „Have you ever conducted interviews - if so, with whom? "

In the following discussion we brainstorm different types of interviews (biographical interviews, contemporary witnesses talking, random street interviews, expert interviews, job interviews, etc.) and collect the mentioned types on flipchart (brainstorming with supplement). If the TN have ever conducted an interview before, that's a good base for following-up. So we ask the experienced persons about interesting and important elements and the use of an interview.

Based on the responses, we reflect the following 3 aspects of an interview. These are visualized on a flip chart:

- Person: Questions about the person to know each other, to create a pleasant atmosphere, find out about the persons background, motivation and vision of the person for job or commitment
- Knowledge, expertise; What knowledge could the Interview partner have, that could be of interest to us?
- Opinions: What topics interest us, we would love to hear the opinion of the conversation partner about questions that moves us regarding the topic.

##### 3. Internet research (20 min.)

The TN research independently in the Internet about the organization and engagement of the "expert":

- What is the organization?
- What is the position of the organization in relation to the seminar topic?
- etc...

The results are collected in the small groups.



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#### 4. Questions collect (20 min.)

The facilitator divides the interview group into three subgroups and develop, collect and share questions for the fields: people, knowledge and opinions, which they want to ask the expert. It is important that there are questions that must be answered not only with „ Yes "or „ No". The participants write their questions on moderation cards (1 question per card). The 3 subgroups get back together and present their questions on the whiteboard.

In that process, further questions can be added, overlapping questions sorted out or possibly merged. It shall be checked if the questions are “open questions” (Not to be answered with yes or no)

Now the interview shall get structured by bringing the questions in a good order (Person-> Knowledge-> Opinion). It should be ensured that the interview starts with simple questions, then proceeding to the more difficult, complex and is terminated with simple questions. Finally areas of responsibility during the conversation needs to be clarified: Who like to ask which questions ? Who is presenting the group ihn the beginning, opens the conversation and who is responsible for concluding and thanks. The TN that are not exactly on the headset, moderating or questioning), make notes to the statements of the experts.

#### Pause (min. 15 min.)

If necessary, the questions can get digitalized during the break, printed on A4 paper and be sorted on the whiteboard. Better visualization

#### 5. Last Arrangements (10 min.)

The facilitator clarifies last sticking points of the interview and visualizes the questions in the form of key words:

- Who is speaking at the beginning the interview often the responsibility is unclear).
- Do we give the person the opportunity to introduce him or herself or will the introduction only will take place related to our questions?
- What happens if the conversation partner asks questions himself?
- How can a sterile discussion atmosphere in which one question is followed by the next, without any fluent talk be prevented? (Z. B. persons who ask questions shall or can integrate some further and more detailed questions or reactions, shall introduce him or herself shortly)
- Who pays attention to the time during the interview (time-keeper)?

#### 6. Interview (20-45 mins.)



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The facilitator establishes the Skype connection and transfers the call to the TN which start and conduct the interview by themselves. All the other participants, who are not actively involved in the conversation, follow the discussion with the beamer projection. The prepared wall with the questions is clearly visible to all.

Break (10 min.)

#### 7. Evaluation (20 min.)

First, the sensitivities are evaluated:

- How do you feel about the interview? How satisfied are you?
- What is your impression of the conversation partner?

Then the contents are discussed. For this purpose, the participants are asked to take a look at the questions asked, to look through their notes and to decide on 3 main points (or 2), which they found particularly interesting. They should write down each on a moderation card.

The TN will present their cards and issues and hang them on the relevant issues on the wall. After each card, the facilitator asks to see if anyone else found this statement particularly interesting. So it quickly becomes apparent where the interests of the participants are and which statements of the expert perhaps had been understood differently. There usually rises up a lot potential for further discussions in questioning the expert statements. Finally

- the role of such "experts and engaged persons " in designing or changing our system, philosophy and living approaches and
- how important it is to be informed ourselves about the issues in question in order to participate in society can be addressed.

#### Presentation (40 min.)

If several interviews were conducted in parallel, the small groups independently can work on and hold a short presentation about the most exciting results. The groups will receive 20 minutes to prepare and then meet for joint presentation in plenary.

Variations	During the conversation, further or spontaneous questions from the participants are rare, as they are busy with the recording of information. If more time is available for deepening after the evaluation of the first conversation, newly emerging issues can be collected and the experts are questioned a second time
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	via Skype
Tips for Team	This method is well suited to the TN to hand over the organization of their own learning process and to pursue their own questions. Organizations that could be asked for interviews on the subject of economic growth, include the OECD (eg departments „ Social and Welfare issues "or „ Green Growth and Sustainable Development"), the Post Growth Institute, the New Economics Foundation (NEF), universities, the Institute for Ecological Economy Research (ICW).
Ideas for following up	In the follow up, the statements or aspects, which the participants found most interesting in evaluation and presentation can be deepened

**Background of the method (description):**

The method was developed at Internationales Haus Sonnenberg and tested in many international youth seminars from 2009 to 2013. Still today it is often used in seminars, when an excursion is due to logistical or financial aspects not possible. However it has to be pointed out, that it's not comparable with an "normal" excursion and talk with experts on site. Both have its unique potential and aims.

The method description is based on the draft of "Fairbindung e.V." which was published in the german version of the method collection " Beyond Growth" (<http://www.fairbindung.org/bildungaktuelleprojekte/endlichwachstum/>). It was created for a workshop in the first Learn 2 Change Meeting in Loccum (2015).

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