Digital team building activities

I. Current situation

Due to current events, the University Board has encouraged all organisational units and employees to reduce attendance times to a minimum. At the same time, there are growing numbers of requests coming from the departments regarding an increasing demand for team building and similar trainings. According to that demand, the department/unit of human resources and organisational development developed the following recommendations on how best to carry out team building trainings digitally and what to keep in mind. For any questions/queries, please contact the human resources and organisational development unit that will be happy to assist you, if you need information that is more detailed.

II. Alternative digital programmes

Subject to certain requirements, it is possible to carry out team building and similar programs virtually, such as welcoming new team members to a team. Team building programs can also be useful if a restructuring happens or when setting up new units or departments – that is also possible digitally. Existing conflicts may also be dealt with using digital formats provided the meeting is well prepared and all parties involved indicate their willingness to cooperate. Essentially, all these scenarios are able to build trust, develop team spirit and, depending on context, getting to know each other.

Below you find a recommendation list of aspects that can be considered to carry out digital team building trainings:

- More intense preparation and closer communication with responsible persons by the trainer is needed,
- Careful specification of task or job to select methods matching the cause or occasion and to get to know the objective behind the event,
- Process consulting and step-by-step progression as tried and tested options in situations entailing conflicts,
- Well-balanced level of interaction during a virtual workshop,
- Agreed rules (such as video switched on, functioning hardware etc.) for date of event or course to be observed by all team members.

In principle, the instruments and methods used in attendance events or courses can also be applied to a virtual format. In addition, the following instruments have been found to work well in digital formats:
- Digital calling or business card (for introduction purposes)

- Developing objectives for the following year (if topics, matters or concerns depend on a specific occasion or cause)
- Tasks for individuals and groups to get to know each other and to build trust
- Retrospective methods (how did individual team members experience cooperation, what worked out fine and what should be maintained?)

III. Comment on digital alternative programmes

Carrying out trainings that aim to change behaviour, particularly those based on observation, instructions and interactive exercises are more demanding in digital form. Mainly because gestures, facial expressions and posture are not always digitally displayed or perceived. This is particularly true during atmospherics that require non-verbal communication through posture and body language etc. In addition, mirroring and reflecting one's personality and behaviour between trainer and participants are restricted in a digital setting. As the current situation requires reducing in-person meetings to a minimum level, it may be necessary to hold such meetings digitally. If urgent trainings are not able to be postponed to a later date, you should consider carefully case-by-case whether or not the planned measure can be carried out digitally or should by exception take place in person.