



How to organise a panel discussion?

This guide is written by the Y Vote Project - If you have questions or feedback please contact info@yvote.eu

This should give a short overview on how a panel discussion may be organised. It focuses mainly on how to find and prepare the speakers, and leaves out other important aspects, like finding a room or having proper promotion.

3 months in advance

- select a topic
- decide with format you want (rather informative or passionate exchange of opinions? how do you want to involve participants/ visitors? if it should be very interactive it can also be a fishbowl discussion to include them more)

2.5 to 3 months in advance

- start contacting speakers
- contact more speakers than you want to have - getting more than 50% rejections is normal!
- keep in mind though which constellation of speakers you want to have/ how they will interact or fit together → but can be hard when needing to wait for answers and having to write to many at the same time.
- to keep the overview, make a list with speakers and then order them as your preferences are. Possibly make two lists, depending on their opinions to have some from both sides.
- [Beispiel für ersten Brief](#)
- think about who might moderate the discussion and ask that person. The person should be comfortable with speaking in front of others and interrupting speakers, if they talk to much. Time is always limited in a discussion!

1 month in advance

- ask speakers for a short biography and a picture for promotional purposes (ask them if they are fine with it being published, e.g. on Facebook)
- formulate the topic very concretely, in a way that you can advertise it, and let the speakers know, so they can prepare
- ask speakers for notes about their initial statement, so you know the direction they will take and can prepare follow-up questions accordingly
- possibly send a topic/ first questions and ask them for a short answer/ some notes, so you can anticipate the direction of the discussion (this is important for the moderator, e.g. to prepare questions!)
- from the info you get from the speakers you can prepare an overview of all speakers, that you can send to all speakers (so they know who else will be there) and also distribute at the event to the participants



One week in advance

- send another email to the speakers containing an overview of all the info for the event, e.g.
 - reminding them of date, time and place
 - how long they should be there in advance
 - how long event is expected to last
 - kind of audience you are expecting
 - other speakers that will attend
 - ...
- possibly buy a thank you gift for the speakers

On the day itself

- prepare the room setting
- prepare drinks for the speakers