

# Dilemma:

## "I'm excluded through language."

Each group has a host.

This dilemma card is for the host and contains:

- A host guide
- A dilemma
- Fact boxes
- A question guide for dialogue one and dialogue two

**Host guide** As a host, your role is to facilitate a good, constructive dialogue where everyone gets to speak. Your role is not to participate by sharing your own perspective, but you are welcome to put your perspective into play by phrasing it as a question ("What if they ...?").

Try to be curious ("Why do you think that?") and investigative ("What if they react differently than you assume?").

Aim to make it safe for participants to say or share something vulnerable by making it clear that different perspectives are welcome and that everyone should be respectful.

### **The dialogue is divided into two parts.**

The first part is about giving advice to the person who posed the dilemma, and the second part is about the theme of the dilemma from the perspective of the panellists and their experiences at DTU.

On pages 3 and 4, you will find questions and data, which you can use to qualify the dialogue.

After reading this guide and skimming the question guide, please read out the dilemma to the panel. Give them a moment to reflect on the dilemma. Then initiate dialogue one.

# Dilemma:

Jens is part of a working community at DTU where everyone except him comes from the same country outside Europe.

There are usually no problems during work. The problem arises in social settings, e.g. lunch time or social events, where his colleagues tend to switch to their native language, which Jens doesn't speak nor understand. This leaves him totally excluded at the table. When they laugh, he doesn't know why they are laughing and he doesn't have a single chance of contributing to the conversation when he doesn't understand the context.

Jens completely understands why his colleagues do this. They probably need to speak effortlessly from time to time and perhaps also speak in a way that uses several references that are unique to their culture. Perhaps this need is even stronger because they come from a country so far away and not closely associated with Denmark.

However, he doesn't think they should speak their native language when he—or anyone else who is not from that country—is present. Jens also doesn't think that he should speak Danish when his colleagues or others who don't speak Danish are present.

He knows that they probably do it without even thinking about it, which is why he has tried talking to them about it. However, this has not helped much. So he would like to ask the panel what he should do now. Should he just let it be and accept not being part of this social community? Should he talk to someone or the whole group about it again and be clearer? And if yes, how? He has also considered talking to the management about it—but should he, and if yes, then how? Or does the panel see a completely different solution?

# 1

## What advice does the panel give?

# Dialogue one:

- [Start by hearing each panellist's thoughts on the dilemma so everyone gets the chance to speak from the start]
- "What could the underlying cause(s) for the dilemma be?"
- "Who is responsible for creating a culture where English is the common language when the people present have different native languages? And how can that be done?"
- [Feel free to use the data from the boxes to boost the discussion]
- [Other investigative questions]
- "We have to come up with an answer, but you don't all have to agree. What does each of you think the person who posed the dilemma should do?"

*"[...] having English as the corporate language inhibits communication. [...] employees form language-specific groups, which means that the organization misses out on a lot of communication, feedback, and knowledge sharing between employees. [...]. That's why it's important that the company keeps an eye on the social environment."  
(Quote from Jakob Lauring, Professor, Department of Management, Aarhus University, in connection with a 2007 study)*

*Many Danish companies have international employees who speak different languages. If the management is not conscious of it and has a strategy for handling it, it can create challenges in the communication between employees. The psychological working environment may be affected by employees getting together in groups with shared languages and social codes such as humour.*

*- (The occupational health and safety group)*

# 2 Dialogue two:

## What do you do, and what could you do?

This part of the dialogue focuses on the panellists' own experiences at DTU.

Start dialogue two by telling the panel that the focal point is still the theme of the dilemma, but now they should look at the conditions in their own unit as well as considering other solutions.

Please note that dialogue two may be a bit more sensitive. Aim to create a safe and respectful space for everyone. The goal is still not to agree on everything, but to learn more about each other's perspectives.

- "Do you recognize the dilemma or parts of it, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "What do you do to make sure no one feels excluded because of language?"
- "Is there a part of the advice you gave that you practise in your unit? If yes, what? If no, would that be possible?"
- "What else could you do? At individual, group, and organizational level?"
- [Other investigative questions]
- "What will each of you take with you to your unit, either as a point of attention or as possible solutions related to the theme of the dilemma?"