

# Application guidelines

---

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Application guidelines for organisers of EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Eligibility</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Application process</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1. Timeline 2023	5
<b>4. Application forms</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1. Meeting type	6
4.1.1 EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses	6
4.2. Proposed title of meeting	6
4.3. Meeting format and location	6
4.3.1. Hybrid format	7
4.3.2. Virtual format	7
4.4. Summary	7
4.5. Speakers	8
4.6. Programme	8
4.6.1. Networking activities	9
4.6.2. Poster sessions (if applicable)	9
4.7. Participants	10
4.8. Organisers	10
4.9. Location	11
4.10. Reducing the CO <sub>2</sub> footprint of the meeting	11
4.11. Budget (to be provided in the online form)	13
<b>5. Selection procedure</b>	<b>14</b>

<b>6. Confidentiality</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>7. Organising hybrid or virtual events</b>	<b>15</b>
7.1. Hybrid conferences	15
7.2. Virtual conferences	19
7.3. Suggestions for organisers	19

**Application deadlines:**

1 March and 1 August annually

**EMBC Member States (A):** Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and United Kingdom

**EMBC Member States eligible for EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses (E):** Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey.

**EMBO subject areas:** Cell Cycle, Cell & Tissue Architecture, Cellular Metabolism, Chromatin & Transcription, Development, Differentiation & Death, Evolution & Ecology, Genome Stability & Dynamics, Genomic & Computational Biology, Immunology, Membranes & Transport, Microbiology, Virology & Pathogens, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience, Plant Biology, Proteins & Biochemistry, RNA, Signal Transduction, Structural Biology & Biophysics, Systems Biology

**Contact:** [courses\\_workshops@embo.org](mailto:courses_workshops@embo.org)

# 1. Application guidelines for organisers of EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses

---

Applications to organise an EMBO Early Career Lecture Course are accepted via the [EMBO online system](#).

Application deadlines are 1 March and 1 August 2023 for lecture courses held in 2023 and 2024.

Please check the eligibility criteria before applying.

Should you have questions regarding your application, please contact [courses\\_workshops@embo.org](mailto:courses_workshops@embo.org).

## 2. Eligibility

---

Applications must meet the following criteria to be accepted:

- The topics covered in the event must be within the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas on page 3).
- Scientists based in Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey can apply.
- The scientific organizing committee must be gender diverse.
- EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses must take place in one of the following countries or territories: **EMBC Member States eligible for EMBO Lecture Courses (E): Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey.**

# 3. Application process

---

## 3.1. Timeline 2023

Applications to organise an EMBO Early Career Lecture Course or EMBO Lecture Course must be submitted online.

Deadlines for application	1 March and 1 August 2023, 09:00 CET
Results announced to applicants	Within 6 weeks after the application deadline

# 4. Application forms

---

The application must be submitted [online](#), and consists of an online and an offline form (Microsoft Word form).

In the [online form](#), you will be asked to provide:

- Proposed title of the meeting
- Proposed date and location of the meeting
- Format of the meeting i.e., in-person only, virtual only, or hybrid
- A list of the organisers, specifying their role, e.g., main organiser, co-organiser, administrative or financial contact
- An estimate of the number of participants that you expect
- Information on speakers
- An abstract describing the principle themes and objectives of the meeting
- A draft budget

In the [offline form](#) (Microsoft Word form) please provide:

- A description of the reasons to hold a meeting, the target audience, the planned activities and what your audience will gain from attending
- The list of speakers
- The draft programme
- A description of the networking activities
- If you are organising a hybrid meeting, a short description of the virtual component
- Selection criteria for participation and number of participants
- A list of the scientific organisers, a link to their respective home pages and their previous

- meeting organising experience
- A short description of the location
- A listing of measures you plan to take to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the meeting

This form must be saved in PDF format and uploaded via the [online application site](#).

## 4.1. Meeting type

When completing your application, please ensure you choose the correct type of event.

### 4.1.1 EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses

EMBO Early Career Lecture Courses can only be organised in eligible EMBC Member States, i.e., Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey.

The Lecture Courses are aimed at providing participants, primarily PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, with an overview of the life sciences.

Speakers should be leading experts in their field. Underlying concepts of a particular field should be made accessible to participants with varying scientific background. Discussion sessions, tutorials on relevant techniques and other topics, journal clubs, as well as poster sessions, and other activities that promote interaction between students and lecturers should be scheduled.

The Lecture Courses can include up to 120 participants and last between two to three days.

## 4.2. Proposed title of meeting

The (main) title of the lecture course may not mention sponsors', organisations' or institutes' names. Organisers should also refrain from using excessively long titles.

## 4.3. Meeting format and location

Please indicate the proposed format and location of your meeting by selecting the format type and entering the venue details on where the meeting will be held or run from (for virtual meetings):

- In-person meeting
- Virtual meeting
- Hybrid meeting

### 4.3.1. Hybrid format

EMBO has conducted a study on virtual and hybrid conferences, interviewing and surveying scientists about their experiences with virtual scientific conferences. The full report can be [downloaded here](#).

As a result, EMBO encourages organisers to experiment with hybrid meeting formats and will offer €10,000 on top of the core funding to assist with the additional costs incurred. The funds can go towards paying for a virtual platform (EMBO will be able to provide you with a simple solution for free), technical/AV support and the rental of technical equipment, as well as additional administrative support that you might need to set up the virtual component.

Please see [Section 10](#) for a summary of options and points to consider.

In the offline form, please describe what you plan to offer to virtual participants (e.g., access to the talks and possibly other activities). It is understood that the final format may differ from the description offered here.

The costs associated with the delivery of the virtual part should be included in the final financial reports to be submitted to EMBO. Please note that EMBO funding cannot be used to purchase technical equipment associated with running the meeting.

### 4.3.2. Virtual format

EMBO will fund virtual meetings. Organisers may use an online platform or event management tool of their choice. EMBO does not take responsibility for or endorse any online platforms or services. EMBO funds can be used to pay for online meeting platform, tools or software necessary to host a virtual meeting.

EMBO is offering a virtual meeting platform that is connected to the meeting websites that EMBO is creating for organisers. The talks are hosted on Zoom (Meeting and Webinar mode) and there is a chat function that also allows video chats among participants. Posters can be hosted on the site as well. The costs for this platform are moderate (between €1,100–1,500) and can be covered from the core EMBO funding. Please note that you will be responsible for setting up the site yourself and we will provide you with a user guide and limited online support.

The costs associated with the delivery of the virtual meeting should be included in the final financial reports to be submitted to EMBO.

Please see [Section 10](#) for a summary of options and points to consider.

## 4.4. Summary

Please provide a short **abstract** (max. 400 words), stating planned activities and what your audience will gain from attending the meeting.

## 4.5. Speakers

Organisers are expected to apply with a confirmed list of speakers. If speakers are not confirmed, the proposal will have a minimal chance to be accepted.

Please consider the following:

- **Number:** There should be around 12 speakers, excluding trainers for other activities.
- **Gender distribution:** At least 40% of the speakers should be of the underrepresented gender. If there is a lower proportion, a justification must be provided. Applications with a lower percentage are generally not successful.

**Please list the speakers in the following format:**

1. First Name Last Name, Institute, City, Country. Please list in alphabetical order, i.e., by Last Name.
2. Add a link to the home page of the speaker's research group
3. Please add:
  - C (for confirmed),
  - F (for female),
  - R (for repeat speaker),
  - O (for overseas speaker),
  - E (for early-stage researchers)

Please see example below:

No.	Name and affiliation. Include link to lab home page	Status (C,F,E, O,R)	Reason for selecting the speaker
1.	John Bloggs (Institute, City, Country) <a href="https://www.XY.JohnBloggsLab/uxy.xy">https://www.XY.JohnBloggsLab/uxy.xy</a>	C, O	John Bloggs is a leader in the field of XY.
2.	Jane Doe (Institute, City, Country) <a href="https://www.XY.JaneDoeLab/uxy.xy/">https://www.XY.JaneDoeLab/uxy.xy/</a>	C, F	
3.			

You will be requested to provide the number of **invited** speakers in each category in the online form, the percentages will be calculated automatically.

## 4.6. Programme

### Training and Networking Sessions

Please describe any training and networking sessions that you are planning.



## Draft Programme

The programme should be sufficiently detailed, listing session themes and speakers, and including time for questions, discussions, and networking.

Please ensure that the programme is legible by adding empty lines between days. Please see example below:

Day	Time	Programme category (e.g., talk, break, keynote lecture etc.)	Speaker name and topic of talk
<b>Day 1</b>			
	12:00	<b>OPENING</b>	
	12:15 – 13:15	<b>KEYNOTE</b>	John Bloggs on cancer stroma
	13:15 – 13:45	<b>BREAK</b>	
	13:45 – 15:30	<b>SESSION</b>	Signalling networks in cancer I
	13:45 – 14:15	<b>TALK</b>	Jane Doe: Ras signalling in melanoma
	....		
	15:30 – 17:00	<b>POSTERS</b>	All posters

### 4.6.1. Networking activities

EMBO believes that networking is a vital component of every scientific meeting. Organisers are expected to facilitate networking through dedicated activities during the lecture course, these should include, but not be limited to poster sessions, joint meals, meet the speaker sessions, flash talks.

Please describe how discussion and interaction between participants and speakers/trainers will be stimulated. The committee welcomes creative ideas regarding the facilitation/promotion of networking (max. 400 words).

EMBO will not fund a separate "speakers' dinner" during the meeting.

**The networking activities should be listed in the programme.**

If organising a hybrid meeting, please describe how you will involve the virtual participants in the meeting (max. 400 words).

### 4.6.2. Poster sessions (if applicable)

Poster sessions should be held at a time that encourages maximal attendance, ideally not during lunch or coffee breaks, with no other activities taking place in parallel, and should be held in a room with sufficient space, for a duration of at least 90 minutes.

The form requires you to tick if the following applies to your poster session:

- The venue for the poster session is close to the lecture hall
- The posters will be available for viewing throughout the entire meeting
- In case multiple poster sessions are planned, participants will be assigned to a specific session
- A social event will be incorporated (e.g., drinks and snacks)

## 4.7. Participants

The approximate number of participants for EMBO-funded lecture courses should be as follows:

- Up to 120 participants

The following further guidelines apply:

- Early career researchers should have the opportunity to attend and present their research.
- Participants should not be restricted to a pre-defined group, such as an EU network or other defined groups.
- EMBO is committed to a reasonable gender distribution in all activities, so please ensure that this is the case in the proposed event.

Provide an estimate of the number of participants you plan to accept.

Please describe what criteria will be used to select the participants.

Please indicate the names and the role of those who will select the participants (e.g., organisers, speakers, instructors etc.).

## 4.8. Organisers

There can be only one main organiser and the number of co-organisers should not exceed five. Please list for each organiser their respective experience in organising lecture courses (please restrict to the last three relevant events).

The **main organiser** is the primary scientific contact for all correspondence after submission of the proposal. **Co-organisers** are scientists who have major scientific/technical involvement in the planning and execution of the meeting.

The **scientific organising committee** must be **gender diverse** and should come from more than one institute.

The **administrative contact** will be copied on all email correspondence related to the application. Additionally, you may add a **financial contact** who can be contacted for budgetary issues.

Multiple roles for one person are acceptable, e.g., one of the organisers may also be the

administrative or financial contact.

## 4.9. Location

Provide the address of the proposed location and a short description of the venue (e.g., capacity and equipment of the laboratory facilities, accommodation and catering (max. 200 words)). The venue should have suitable facilities and preferably accommodation should be onsite or close by. Participants and speakers should be accommodated in the same location or in a limited number of locations. Please note the availability of wireless internet access and how the location can be reached.

## 4.10. Reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the meeting

EMBO encourages organizers of EMBO Courses and Workshops to implement measures that reduce the environmental impact, including the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint, of the meetings.

We hope that this initiative will create awareness and help to change many people's minds and behaviours. Only together can we make a difference for the environment, climate and future generations on the planet.

The EMBO Courses & Workshops Programme awards points to meetings that implement sustainability measures. The meetings receive between one and five points for different measures. The accumulated points will rank the meeting on one of three levels, recognising the organizers' efforts towards increasing the sustainability of their course or workshop.

A meeting acquiring 23 points or more qualifies for the highest level (a meeting with very high sustainability), one with 18-22 points qualifies for level 2 (high sustainability) and a meeting with 15-17 qualifies for level 1 (moderate sustainability).

You may choose from the following measures to acquire a sustainable meeting label:

Measure	Points
<b>CO<sub>2</sub> offsetting</b>	
Offset the CO <sub>2</sub> footprint of your meeting through different actions e.g., by acquiring external funding for compensations via CO <sub>2</sub> offset projects (these could be certified organizations or initiatives that support biodiversity projects or local sustainability projects); by requiring speakers and participants to donate to CO <sub>2</sub> offset projects; or any other innovative ideas	5
<b>Venue</b>	
Choose a certified environmentally friendly venue e.g., EU Ecolabel, Green key	5
Choose a venue that takes energy efficiency measures, but is not (yet) certified,	4

e.g., uses solar energy, including for heating water, gets green electricity, participates in waste sorting and local recycling etc.	
Choose a centrally located venue with good public transport connections, close to major transport hubs to reduce additional travel	4
<b>Hub</b>	
Organise one or more parallel meeting(s) in another location, i.e., a hybrid multi-city event. The meeting could be streamed to another location from the main meeting or variations of this to reduce long distance travel for local participants at each location	5
<b>Catering</b>	
Serve only vegetarian food on at least one day of the meeting	1
Serving locally sourced food	1
No bottled water, opt for water fountains/tap water in jugs	1
No single-use wares such as disposable cutlery, cups, plastic bottles or cans	1
<b>Travel</b>	
Require at least 4 speakers/organisers travelling within Europe to travel by train	3
Require some invited speakers from other continents to give their talks remotely. The funds saved on travel (€1,500 per speaker) can be used to fund train travel incentives for participants (see below)	2 for 1 3 for 2
Offer a discount on registration fees for participants traveling by train, or otherwise incentivize train travel with rewards. You could use the €1,500 that were saved on travel for invited speakers from other continents to fund train travel incentives for participants	2

 moderate sustainability	15-17
 high sustainability	18-22
 very high sustainability	23 and above

### Additional steps that you can take for a more sustainable meeting:

**Electronic programme and abstract book:** Organizers are encouraged to distribute the abstract book in electronic format via the meeting website and print only a minimum number of hard copies, if necessary. Organizers can export the abstract book in electronic format via the meeting website provided by EMBO. The abstract book can then be made available on the meeting website as a password-protected PDF document.

**Plastic-free badges:** Organizers should consider using paper badges.

**Promotional material:** EMBO offers promotional materials for your EMBO funded course or workshop. We have aimed to source sustainably as much as possible and provide material that is useful beyond the meeting. Please order the minimum quantities you would need and encourage participants to re-use the bags and notebooks after the meeting as well.

**Advertising:** Organisers are encouraged to opt for digital advertising using the poster EMBO provides and use the social media handles set up for you.

**Reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of travel further:** Organisers may additionally request speakers and participants to donate to CO<sub>2</sub> offset projects, provide information and directions for local public transport and encourage its use, and encourage participants to walk where possible by providing maps, directions or organise an activity that is reachable by foot.

**Raise awareness:** Inform participants about the sustainability measures you are adopting for your meeting.

Ask participants for feedback and suggestions on your sustainability measures at the end of the meeting.

## 4.11. Budget (to be provided in the online form)

### Expenses

The form requests your estimates for travel, accommodation costs, local transport, or shuttle services that you want to provide, catering, expenses related to the venue, promotion and organisation. The sums are automatically calculated.

EMBO funds can be used to cover:

#### For in-person meetings

- Economy travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs of the speakers.
- Onsite catering for the meeting.
- Administration costs up to €4,000.
- Room hire, audio-visual and IT facilities rental essential for the meeting.
- Social activities (e.g., excursions) costs up to €3,000.

#### For virtual meetings

- Rental of online platform to run a virtual meeting.
- Administrative costs up to €8,000.
- Room hire, audio-visual and IT facilities essential for the meeting.

#### For hybrid meetings

An additional grant of €10,000 will be provided. The funds can be used to cover:

- Rental of a virtual platform to host the virtual part of the meeting.
- Rental of additional AV equipment and personnel costs.
- Additional administration costs up to a total of €8,000.

EMBO funds do not cover overheads or purchase of equipment.

EMBO will create the course website (including an online registration system), design a poster and abstract book cover at no additional charge. EMBO funds cannot be used to pay for alternative website providers.

EMBO funds cannot be used to cover gifts, honoraria and dinners/meals exclusively organised for the speakers.

## **Income**

### *Registration fees*

The maximum registration fee for an EMBO Early Career Lecture Course should not exceed:

- €100 (excluding accommodation).
- Reduced registration fees can be charged to virtual participants. Discounts for group registrations should be considered.

### *Funding and Sponsorship*

Please state the amount of funding requested from EMBO. A maximum of €30,000 of core funding may be provided. If the meeting is organized as a hybrid event, an additional €10,000 will be allocated. **If the meeting is organized as a hybrid event, an additional €10,000 will be allocated to your event if funded. You do not have to request these additional funds in your application.**

Please also state other funding sources or sponsorship that you expect and list any non-monetary support. Ensure that all funders and sponsors understand that they cannot be mentioned in the title of the meeting but can be acknowledged on the website and the poster. Sponsors and funders who provide €20,000 or more towards the meeting can also be recognized as co-sponsors.

State the name of the funder or sponsor, the status of sponsorship (confirmed, pending, not yet approached) and special conditions linked to the sponsorship.

## **Budget balance**

Total expenses should match the total expected income. Please explain if this is not the case.

# 5. Selection procedure

---

- All incoming applications are screened by the EMBO Office to ensure eligibility requirements are met.

- Applications will be reviewed by the EMBO Office and the EMBO Course Committee chair.
- Final funding decisions are made within 6 weeks of the application deadline.

## 6. Confidentiality

---

All applications are treated in confidence and only publicized following acceptance of the funding conditions by the organiser.

The EMBO Courses & Workshops office should be contacted with any questions concerning applications.

## 7. Organising hybrid or virtual events

---

### 7.1. Hybrid conferences

We understand hybrid conferences as an in-person conference with a virtual component. The simplest format is an in-person conference where the talks are streamed to registered virtual participants, or alternatively, the talks are recorded and made available to the virtual participants after the talk. The latter has the advantage of allowing participants in different time-zones to watch the talks at a convenient time.

With little extra effort, virtual participants can be included in the Q&A sessions via the chat options offered by most virtual streaming platforms (e.g., Zoom, Cisco Webex, Vimeo, YouTube Live and others).

Virtual participants could also give short talks based on the abstracts submitted. Sufficient time needs to be allocated in the programme to accommodate the switch between virtual and on-site speakers. Virtual speakers should be encouraged to present live but in case of technical issues, it is recommended that they provide pre-recordings of their presentations.

Social networking platforms, such as Wonder.me, Gather.Town, SpatialChat, Topia and others allow participants to meet in virtual space. According to our survey, respondents felt that, if attending the conference in person, they might not have time to join any virtual social networking event. On the other hand, virtual participants may find the opportunity to virtually meet with other (virtual) participants useful.

Some of our hybrid conference organisers have experimented with virtual poster sessions, i.e., in-person and virtual participants met in virtual space to discuss their posters. This can be done e.g., by using Gather.Town, Wonder.me, Remo or individual Zoom break out rooms for posters. In practice, this requires that the in-person participants find a quiet space (either in the venue or in their hotel rooms) to join the virtual poster sessions.

An alternative may be to hold separate poster sessions for in-person and virtual participants, and/or to hold a virtual poster session before or after the meeting for all participants.

Another option is to ask all poster presenters (virtual and in-person) to upload their posters on the meeting website (e.g., Whova, an all-in-one solution; figshare [for data sharing only]). Selected virtual poster presenters can also be invited to give flash talks as part of the programme.

Prepare all poster presenters on how to present their poster in the chosen platform.

See more suggestions below in the How To section under “Virtual Conferences”.

### **Technical requirements:**

Taking an in-person conference into virtual space requires technology in addition to the usual AV equipment:

1. A virtual platform that allows access to the talks for virtual participants.

This could range from a simple webpage with links to the talks to a sophisticated platform with a chat, forum and other features.

EMBO can offer a simple conference webpage with links to the video stream. This is based on the webpage that EMBO provides to course organisers.

Otherwise, organisers of EMBO Courses and Workshops can choose a platform of their liking (including the virtual EMBO platform). Platforms that have been used by recent EMBO hybrid meeting organisers include Gather.Town and Whova (the latter also doubles as a meeting app for on-site participants).

2. A licence for streaming software (e.g., Zoom, Cisco Webex, YouTube Live, etc.)

Organisers of EMBO Courses and Workshops can use the EMBO Zoom licenses (for meetings and webinars). Otherwise, organisers of EMBO Courses and Workshops can choose the software of their liking.

3. Cameras, microphones, audio mixer(s) and on-site technical equipment to provide sound and video to the virtual participants.

It is recommended to select a venue that provides these services or to arrange this with the venue and hire the necessary professional equipment and technicians. Organisers should have a clear idea of what they want and discuss the possibilities



with the technicians. AV technicians may not be familiar with the specific requirements of scientific meetings, a thorough briefing may be necessary. Points to consider are:

- For optimal engagement, the video streamed to the virtual participants should switch views between presentation, speaker and the audience.
- During Q&A sessions, the audience needs to use microphones, so that questions are audible for the virtual participants. A camera filming the audience during Q&A sessions is helpful.
- When recording talks for later viewing by the virtual participants, make sure that you have software that supports the recording and that sufficient storage capacity is available. It is important to upload the talks as soon as possible after their live recordings, so that participants in other time zones have timely access to them.
- Conventional laser pointers used by speakers will not be visible to the virtual audience. Digital laser pointers are visible for both virtual and on-site audiences.

The EMBO grant can be used to pay for these services.

### **Personnel requirements:**

In addition to the on-site arrangements, organisers need to consider the administration of the virtual side.

Apart from the technical and personnel requirements described above, an additional chairperson will be needed during the sessions to monitor the questions from the virtual audience.

### **Speakers:**

A major reason why scientists attend conferences in-person is the opportunity to personally meet (prominent) speakers in their field. It was expected that speakers listed would also be present on-site to deliver their talks, even if some may not have stayed the full duration of the conference. In the future, this may change. Individual speakers may not be able to attend in person and may be invited to make their contribution virtually.

Another consideration is the carbon footprint resulting from long-distance travel, which may be reduced by asking a speaker from overseas to present remotely.

Organisers should agree on a clear policy on remote speakers and make it absolutely transparent to the participants prior to registration who of the invited speakers will be on-site and who will speak remotely.

Prior agreement from speakers for the streaming of their talks, and possibly recording for later viewing by the participants, has to be obtained. The virtual audience needs to be informed if a particular talk will not be available to them.

### **Virtual participants:**

There are many reasons why participants may not be able to attend a meeting in person, these include:

- Health reasons
- Care requirements

- Lack of funding
- Difficulty to obtain a visa

amongst other possible reasons.

Offering participation via virtual streaming of talks will allow these scientists to learn about the latest developments in their field despite these restrictions.

An upper limit to the number of virtual participants will be set by the streaming licence purchased, but organisers might want to take other aspects into consideration.

Please note that recorded talks may be essential for virtual participants in other time zones, as they may not be able to participate in the live sessions.

#### **Registration fees for virtual participants:**

Registration fees charged to on-site participants cover part of the costs of the conference, such as venue rental, meals and speaker costs. Since the delivery of the virtual component requires significant finances, charging a reasonable fee to virtual participants is fully justified.

Registration fees charged to virtual participants should be lower than on-site fees and may be waived for participants under certain conditions (e.g., for participants from low-income countries). Group fees for multiple participants from individual labs or institutions should be considered.

#### **Transparency:**

Organisers should clearly specify how the conference will be run and what virtual and on-site participants can expect. This should be detailed on the website of the meeting and should include information on the following:

What is available for virtual participants, e.g.

- Access to talks (specify which talks are not streamed) and if as well as which talks will be recorded and available on demand. Specify when the talks will be available and for how long (if applicable)
- Participation in a Q&A session, via virtual platform or other means (e.g., via chat, meeting forum, email, Twitter) (if applicable)
- Participation in discussion sessions or other on-site sessions and activities (if applicable)
- Abstract submission (if applicable)
- Selection for short talk/flash talk (if applicable)
- Participation in (virtual) poster sessions (if applicable)
- Means of communicating with other participants, either virtual or on-site, via chat, a meeting forum or other (if applicable)

Potential in-person participants should be able to see from the website which speakers will not be present in person prior to registration.

#### **Venue:**

Chose a venue that has experience in hosting hybrid meetings.

### Code of conduct:

Organisers should have a code of conduct for virtual and on-site participants, a policy regarding data protection (both participants' personal data as well as the scientific data presented) as well as specifying the use of social media during the meeting. Participants should agree to these upon payment of registration.

## 7.2. Virtual conferences

Purely virtual conferences require careful preparation. The “conventional” in-person meeting programme that we are used to, frequently lasting more than 12h per day, cannot be transferred one-to-one to virtual space. A virtual meeting should not be as long and intense per day as an in-person meeting. This may mean that the meeting may stretch over more days, has shorter presentations or fewer speakers. This may also result in fewer topics to be covered. The length of the scheduled breaks can be seen as a compromise between allowing people to have bathroom, coffee or meal breaks versus losing them to other activities.

See in the above section on technical requirements about suggestions regarding virtual platforms.

## 7.3. Suggestions for organisers

Here are some suggestions on how to deal with more specific issues that you may be faced with when organising a virtual/hybrid meeting.

How to address the **lack of rapport** between speaker and the audience during the talk in a virtual meeting.

- Use a platform that allows the speaker to see, for e.g., the chair, or a panel of session organisers.<sup>1</sup>
- Have all session speakers (and chairs/organisers) meet in a session<sup>2</sup> before going live to make them feel comfortable and get to know at least some of the audience. This is particularly important for short talk speakers and flash talk speakers who may be less used to speaking in an online format.
- Play artificial applause audio clips at the end of the talk.<sup>3</sup>
- Have a poll running visibly during the talk (of course not to be addressed by the speaker during the talk, but visible evidence for reactions to the talk).

---

<sup>1</sup> For e.g., Zoom Webinar mode offers this function.

<sup>2</sup> For e.g. The practice session in Zoom Webinar allows for this, also enable the waiting room so that participants are allowed to enter when all panelists are ready and comfortable to go live.

<sup>3</sup> Some CC0-licensed (free to use for any purpose, no attribution required) sounds can be found here: <https://freesound.org/search/?q=clapping&f=license%3A%22Creative+Commons+0%22&s=score+desc&advanced=0&g=1>

- Encourage participants to show virtual reactions (clapping hands, thumbs up etc.)
- Q&A sessions can also help improve the rapport with the audience (see suggestions below).
- If the speaker wants to see the participants or the chair while presenting, they should be advised to use two screens for a more comfortable experience.

How to run **Q&A** following a talk or a session in a virtual or hybrid meeting.

- Sessions should be moderated by a chair who selects the questions.
- Questions could be upvoted by participants.<sup>4</sup>
- Live questions where the moderator preselects the questions and opens a channel for the question to be asked live can make the talk more interactive.<sup>5</sup>
- Collect all incoming questions in the poll/chat/Q&A of the platform or directly in e.g., a Slack or Jitsi channel, and ask the speaker to answer them in writing during the course of the meeting. The collected questions could be downloaded and posted on for e.g., a dedicated Slack/Jitsi channel so that the answers are visible to all participants.
- Place speakers in breakout rooms and have live discussions with the participants after the talk. You may consider grouping the speakers to prevent that less popular speakers are alone in their breakout room.<sup>6</sup>

How to **facilitate networking** at a virtual or hybrid meeting.

- Organise speed networking events in breakout rooms.<sup>7</sup> These could also be arranged using keyword matches of participants.<sup>8</sup>
- Meet-the-speaker sessions in breakout rooms with all participants visible. These could be organised to meet different requirements, for e.g., restricted to junior participants to allow for juniors to ask questions, or one for speakers and group leaders only, etc.
- Organise thematic breakout rooms (select a discussion leader or host to kick off the discussion). The themes could e.g., be scientific, technical, political, or career advice related.
- Organise mentoring sessions for junior scientists with an appropriate host.
- Facilitate/encourage one-on-one virtual meetings via your platform or ask participants to indicate their means of virtual communication.<sup>9</sup>

How to deal with **time-zone** differences.

- Record talks for re-viewing at convenience
- Restrict virtual meetings to half days
- Indicates local times on the virtual platform

---

<sup>4</sup> Zoom, Slido, Pathable, Glisser are some of the platforms that allow for this.

<sup>5</sup> For e.g. Cisco Webex and Webex Webinars and Zoom Webinar, more info also at [12 Steps to a wildly successful webinar](#)

<sup>6</sup> A comparison between Zoom Meeting and Webinar features can be found here: [Zoom Meeting and Zoom webinar comparison](#)

<sup>7</sup> Some popular platforms for these include: Wonder.Me, Zoom, Remo, Gather.Town, SpatialChat

<sup>8</sup> Some software allows this includes [Grip and Brella](#)

<sup>9</sup> Some platforms allow one-on-one calls e.g., Pathable, Engagez, Slack with license, etc.

How to run **virtual poster sessions**.

- Posters, possibly including a short presentation, can be uploaded on free<sup>10</sup> or commercial<sup>11</sup> platforms.
- Reserve specific timeslots for poster sessions, like in live poster sessions. Poster sessions can be organised in breakout rooms, where each poster presenter has their own breakout room during the poster session. Encourage (require) presenters to be “at” their poster at the specified times.
- Hold at different times of the day to accommodate different time zones.
- Organise flash talk sessions to allow poster presenters to introduce their poster during regular meeting times. These could be pre-recorded to minimise technical problems.
- If the platform does not provide one-on-one live meeting function, encourage poster presenters to publicise their own channel (e.g., Zoom [free for 40 minutes], Skype, etc.), so that those interested in talking to them can do so.

To address **screen fatigue** during virtual meetings:

- Restrict meeting duration per day to 0.5 days
- Maximum meeting length of 3–4 days
- Add adequate breaks, for e.g., 10-15 min between sessions or talks; 45 min to an hour for lunch

*Disclaimer: This document is intended to assist organisers set-up virtual meetings and offers merely suggestions and advice. EMBO does not endorse any software or services and does not take any responsibility for third-party services that the organiser may choose to use.*

---

<sup>10</sup> For e.g., figshare, SlideShare, scribd.com, prezi.com, speakerdeck.com

<sup>11</sup> For e.g., ipostersessions.com, confex.com, posterpresentations.com, <https://lp.fourwaves.com/virtual-poster-sessions>, <https://gather.town/>