

# Virtual and Hybrid Meeting Organizer Guidelines

---

Instructions for organizing a virtual meeting or the virtual aspect of a hybrid meeting

## Table of Contents

<b>1. About</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Funding</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Payment of the grant</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Virtual Courses and Workshops</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Registration fees</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Participants</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7. Samples for Practical Courses</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8. Speakers</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>9. Registration Fee Waivers</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>10. Childcare grants</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>11. Poster Prize</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>12. Publicising &amp; co-funding</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>13. Poster and website</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>14. Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> impact of the meeting</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>15. Participant feedback</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>16. Data protection</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>17. Final documentation</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>18. Virtual platform and mobile app</b>	<b>13</b>
18.1. Virtual platform	13
18.2. Mobile app	13
18.3. Pricing	13
<b>19. Registration fee collection</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>20. Organizing virtual events</b>	<b>17</b>
20.1. Virtual conferences	17
20.2. Suggestions for organizers	17

**EMBC/EMBO partners:**

**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, Türkiye, and United Kingdom

**Partners (B):** Chile, India, Singapore, Taiwan

**EMBO | The Company of Biologists (C):** Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea

**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. About

---

EMBO Courses & Workshops are meetings that cover different and evolving aspects of life-science related subject areas and bring scientists together to present and discuss their latest findings. Courses or Workshops may alternate with corresponding meetings held outside of Europe, facilitating interactions between scientists based in Europe and beyond.

## 2. Funding

---

The maximum funding available for virtual EMBO Courses & Workshops is €13,500 (€10,000 of core funding plus €2,500 exclusively for fee waivers and €1,000 for childcare grants). Decisions on the amount of funding are made on a case-by-case basis. Organizers are therefore required to justify all major costs in the budget section of the application form. It is expected that participants (other than the invited speakers) will pay a registration fee. EMBO funds must not be used to cover *per diem* expenses, gifts or poster prizes.

EMBO funds can be used to cover:

- online platform to run a virtual meeting;
- administrative costs up to €7,000;
- room hire, audio-visual and IT facilities essential for the meeting;
- creation of offline content for Practical Courses;

EMBO funds do not cover overheads or equipment.

It is understood that, as an organizer, you do not render any services on behalf of EMBO. The organising institution is responsible for the EMBO Course or Workshop. It is supported by EMBO with a grant, provided that the event is organised as described in the initial application (except for any further modifications that are subsequently approved in writing by EMBO), and that promotion of the event and submission of the final documentation complies with the funding conditions.

# 3. Payment of the grant

---

The funds will be transferred to the account specified by you and to which you have access. EMBO will not be able to transfer the funds to third parties. We recommend that you open a separate account, preferably at your institute, with the name of the Course or Workshop (but please DO NOT use the term EMBO in the naming of the account, since this implies to our auditors that this account is managed by EMBO).

50% of the allocated funding will be transferred to organizers approximately four months prior to the start of the meeting. EMBO must be notified of any significant changes to the meeting budget and/or scientific programme after it has been initially approved.

Once the final financial statement and reports have been approved by EMBO, the remaining funds (up to 50% of the allocated funding plus the amount spent on fee waivers and childcare grants) will be transferred. Please list the fee waiver and childcare grant recipients separately in the final report.

The final documentation must be submitted to EMBO within three months following the end date of the meeting. Failure to do so will result in the final payment being forfeited.

EMBO reserves the right to claim unspent funds based on the financial statement.

## 4. Virtual Courses and Workshops

---

The main organizer of a virtual EMBO Course or Workshop must be based in one of the countries listed under A, B or C on the first page.

EMBO is offering a virtual meeting platform that is connected to the meeting websites that EMBO is creating for organizers. You will receive full support to set up your virtual platform. 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. Please see Section 18 “Virtual platform and mobile app” for pricing information and a link to the demo site. These costs can be covered by your meeting grant and should be included in the final financial reports.

Organizers may also use an online platform or event management tool of their choice. EMBO does not take responsibility for or endorses other online platforms or services. EMBO funds can be used to pay for online meeting tools or software necessary to host a virtual meeting. These costs should be included in the final financial reports.

## 5. Registration fees

---

Organizers should keep in mind the VAT (Value Added Tax) in the country in which the meeting is taking place when setting the registration fees.

Registration fees:

- should be charged to ensure participation by those who register; these fees may be reimbursed using the sums provided by EMBO registration fee waivers (see section below).
- should be a minimum of €75 up to a maximum of €150 per Postdoc and student
- should be a minimum of €150 up to a maximum of €300 per academic participant
- should be a minimum of € 200 up to a maximum of €500 per industry participant
- must be waived for one EMBO editor registered for the course or workshop.
- should be paid directly to the organizer (or the organizer's nominee) and included as income in the final financial statement (please note that EMBO does not collect registration fee payments, however, fees can be collected via the website set up by EMBO, see “19. Registration Fee Collection”). The income from the registration fees is considered as EMBO funding.
- Please include simple terms and conditions for refunds in case of cancellations. This is to ensure transparency and manage the expectations of those registering for the meeting.

## 6. Participants

---

When selecting speakers and participants, organizers are requested to ensure a wide geographical representation and gender balance. Participants should not be restricted to a pre-defined group (e.g. an EU-network or other defined groups).

We would encourage you to consider organizing satellite workshops/lectures that are open to the local scientific community. If additional funds are necessary, please contact us at [courses\\_workshops@embo.org](mailto:courses_workshops@embo.org), to apply for funding (up to €2,000) for organizing a satellite meeting.

It is at the discretion of the organizers to define their own policies on participants using social media (e.g., Twitter) or taking photographs or recordings of presentations or posters during the meeting. Please inform participants of the policies that you will adopt via your meeting website (there is a section on the website made by EMBO) and other communication channels.

## 7. Samples for Practical Courses

---

Participants of EMBO Practical Courses can apply for a grant to cover the shipment costs for their research samples. The grant should be offered by the organizers as a reimbursement after the course has taken place to ensure that the participants attend.

## 8. Speakers

---

At least 33% of the speakers should be based in EMBC Member States (A - see list on first page). The sum of speakers from EMBC/EMBO partners (A and B - see list on first page) must correspond to at least 50% of the total number of speakers.

## 9. Registration Fee Waivers

---

Fee waivers can be granted to participants who apply for it. These should be offered as a reimbursement after the meeting has taken place to ensure that the participants attend.

EMBO provides an additional €2,500 in fee waivers to cover registration fee waivers and travel grants, the latter in the case of a hybrid or in-person meeting. Organizers may allocate additional funds received from sponsors. The EMBO registration fee waivers shall be allocated by the organizers on the basis of the quality of the abstract submitted, with priority given to scientists from the countries listed below. Fee waivers may be awarded to participants from anywhere only after qualified applicants from priority countries have been considered. Organizers should announce the travel grants and registration fee waivers to participants in advance of the meeting, as soon as registration opens. Virtual participants must justify the reasons for applying for a fee waiver when registering.

A maximum of €100 per fee waiver is recommended. At the organizer's discretion, the amount of the fee waiver can be lowered to benefit more participants.

Priority should be given to participants of any nationality working in laboratories in:

Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye, as well as from Chile, India, Singapore and Taiwan.

Organizers may consider to award fee waivers to applicants from lower income economies.

## 10. Childcare grants

---

Organizers of EMBO events can allocate funds to offset additional childcare costs incurred by participants or speakers when participating at any EMBO-funded meeting. Up to €1,000 is provided for each event in addition to the core funding awarded. Eligible costs include fees for a childcare facility, or costs for a caregiver etc. to enable parents to attend the virtual meeting uninterrupted.

# 11. Accessibility grants

---

Organizers of EMBO events can allocate funds to offset additional costs incurred by participants or speakers for any accessibility needs when participating at any EMBO-funded meeting. Up to €1,000 is provided for each event in addition to the core funding awarded.

A maximum of 500 euros per person may be awarded for any additional costs e.g. to adapt the conference environment, or to be accompanied by someone to assist them where necessary.

# 12. Poster Prize

---

EMBO Press offers a limited number of poster prizes each year. If you would like to request a poster prize for the meeting, please contact [publishing@embo.org](mailto:publishing@embo.org).

EMBO core funding cannot be used to cover poster prizes.

# 13. Publicising & co-funding

---

The course or workshop will be titled "EMBO Practical Course", "EMBO Workshop", "EMBO Global Lecture Course", "EMBO Lecture Course" or "India | EMBO Lecture Course". The (main) title of the meeting may not mention a sponsor's, organization's, or institute's name, other than EMBO. Organizers should refrain from using excessively long titles and numbers referring to previous meetings.

The website, poster and all materials should include [the EMBO logo and the EMBO Workshop/Practical Course/Lecture Course stamps](#). The EMBO Press logo should be featured with other supporter logos on the website and poster.

Sponsors cannot be mentioned in the title of the meeting but can be acknowledged on the website and the poster. Sponsors who provide €20,000 or more towards the meeting can also be recognized as co-sponsors. The co-sponsor logos can be displayed prominently on the website.

EMBO does not consider funding courses and workshops when the other co-funders/sponsors insist on the proceedings being published (although publications can arise from EMBO Workshops, provided that all contributions are given voluntarily).

All EMBO Courses & Workshops are announced on the EMBO poster, EMBO website, social media channels and through selected other print and online media.

Further advertising is left at the organizers' discretion. It is a strict condition of EMBO funding that any additional publicity, as well as the programme and abstract book, should clearly indicate that the meeting is an EMBO Workshop, EMBO Practical Course, EMBO Global Lecture Course, EMBO Lecture Course or India | EMBO Lecture Course, without subtitles relating to previous similar meetings or other organizations.

The scientific programme of your meeting, as submitted at the time of application, was reviewed and approved by the EMBO Course Committee. Responsibility for subsequent changes to the programme, and the organization and execution of the event, lies exclusively with the event organizers.

EMBO hosts the website, when organizers opt for this, but does not take responsibility for the content provided by the organizers. Organizers are responsible for ensuring that all content and images provided by them for the websites comply with German copyright laws. Fines resulting from copyright infringement will be the organizers' responsibility and will be deducted from the final payment of the awarded EMBO funding.

Organizers shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations, standards and guidelines, including GDPR ([see also Data Protection below](#)), in the advertising of an EMBO-funded meeting. Organizers shall also ensure that all processes and procedures used relating to the organization of the meeting comply with all local laws, regulations, standards and guidelines that apply in the jurisdictions in which the meeting takes place.

## 14. Poster and website

---

EMBO will create the workshop or course website (including an online registration system) and design material for advertising. This will include a poster, an abstract book cover, a Powerpoint slide, a banner for social media and a participant badge, at no additional charge. EMBO hosts the website but does not take responsibility for the content provided by the organizers. Organizers are responsible for ensuring that all content and images provided by them for the websites and posters comply with German copyright laws. Fines resulting from copyright infringement will be the organizers' responsibility and will be deducted from the final payment of the awarded EMBO funding.

For information on various methods of collecting registration fees, please refer to section "19. Registration Fee Collection". Please note that EMBO does not handle registration fee payments, but only provides information that may be useful to organizers.

Please note that EMBO does not print or mail any of the advertisement material designed for your workshop.

Organizers who make their own websites and posters have to adhere to the [EMBO brand guidelines](#).

Full details will be supplied to organizers shortly after acceptance of the funding conditions has been confirmed.

## 15. Encouraging Sustainable Meetings

---

EMBO supports virtual and hybrid meetings to promote the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and lessen the environmental impact.

## 16. Participant feedback

---

If EMBO creates and hosts the website for the course or workshop, feedback from all participants is automatically collected after the meeting. Upon filling out the questionnaire, participants can download their certificate of attendance on the registration system landing page. Organizers will have access to the anonymized feedback forms.

Should you be using your own registration system, EMBO will request a complete list of participants, including speakers. They will be contacted by EMBO with the request to fill out the feedback questionnaire. Organizers will have access to the anonymized feedback forms.

# 17. Data protection

---

As the majority of EMBO Courses & Workshops include speakers and attendees from Europe, you have agreed to comply with the European General Data Protection Regulation ([GDPR](#)). Under the GDPR, you hold the position of “data co-controller”, meaning that you are the decision-makers regarding the personal data that is collected and processed for the organization and direct execution of a “virtual meeting”. As a data controller, you must familiarize yourselves with the GDPR and your obligations to your data subjects. Specifically, you agree only to collect personal information that is necessary for organizing your meeting and ensure that the people whose information is collected are aware of the ways in which it will be used. Any person whose personal information (including names, email addresses, institutional addresses etc.) is to be used in the promotion of the meeting must explicitly agree to their information being used in this way. You also agree to ensure that subjects are aware of their [rights under the GDPR](#), including the right to be made aware of the data you hold about them and to correct, erase or receive a copy of this data.

A disclaimer informing users of their rights under the GDPR will be included in all online registration systems supplied by EMBO.

If you are planning to contact event participants after your meeting, you must obtain their active consent during the event (e.g. through a sign-up list). Please be aware that under the GDPR, you have an obligation to document that they have given this consent, so please keep the corresponding documentation.

Where organizers use the services of a third-party platform or software, e.g. such as the online platform to host the virtual event, there may be different sets of data being collected and processed. This will also depend on what data participants are required to provide before and while attending the meeting. It is your duty to inform participants of what personal data will be processed through the platform and how. It is also recommended that organizers refer participants to the privacy policies of the platform or software they choose for their meeting.

EMBO advises that organizers only work with third-party platforms that confirm compliance with the GDPR.

# 18. Final documentation

---

**The following documentation must be submitted to EMBO within three months from the end date of the course or workshop. Failure to do so will result in the final payment being forfeited.**

- Short report (1 – 2 pages) about the course or workshop, including a short scientific overview, participants' reaction to the location and organization, and any other relevant comments.
- Final financial statement, which should include all income and expenditure for the meeting. Please note that the organizer must retain receipts for ten years after the meeting for auditing purposes.
- Total number of applicants, and the number, gender, nationality and country of residence of all (academia and industry) participants, instructors and speakers.
- Programme and/or abstract book (electronic).
- If applicable: List of childcare grant and registration fee waiver awardees (including name, institute, nationality (if known), country of residence and amount awarded for childcare grants or fee waivers). Please note that the organizer must retain receipts for ten years after the course or workshop for auditing purposes.

# 19. Virtual platform and mobile app

---

## 19.1. Virtual platform

EMBO offers a virtual meeting platform connected to the meeting website and registration system that EMBO provides for you.

To see what the platform looks like, click [here](#) and login with the details below:

User-ID: **12**

Password: **EMBOvirtual**

After logging into the platform, click on “**Access the virtual conference**” found on the left menu. We have set up a mock meeting to demonstrate the functionalities.

The platform will be created for you and you will receive comprehensive support:

- The accounts of the users on the platform and app will be created.
- A filter will allow organizers to select the attendees that will be given access to the platform and app.
- An email will be sent to the selected participants to invite them to download the app and access the platform.
- A cover page will be created and maintained.
- The initial list of sessions will be created, as displayed on your EMBO event webpage, but without the presentations.
- Organizers will need to insert the presentations in the program. Instructions on how to do so will be shared with you.

## 19.2. Mobile app

EMBO has recently launched a mobile app for virtual and hybrid events.

If you would like to see what the mobile app looks like, click [here](#).

## 19.3. Pricing

<b>Mobile app only</b> - All participants are listed on the app ahead of the event and can interact through a chat.	€1,100
--	--------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COMS or the organizers can send them an invitation with their credentials before the event starts.</li> <li>- The EMBO agenda created on the EMBO Google Sheet can be imported and updated with the click of a button.</li> <li>- Organizers can add custom content, e.g. practical information and material to download.</li> <li>- All changes (users, agenda, content) are automatically imported to the app.</li> <li>- Organizers can send push notifications.</li> </ul> <p>Access a demo at <a href="https://conference-service.com/conference-management-software/mobile-app.html">https://conference-service.com/conference-management-software/mobile-app.html</a></p>	
<p><b>Virtual platform only</b> The description given for the mobile app applies to the virtual platform.</p> <p>Organizers can use their own license at no extra charge or use the COMS license (see below).</p>	€1,100
<p><b>Zoom license*</b> If not using their own license, organizers can use this license and the virtual platform's built-in functionality to handle the scheduling and starting of Zoom meetings, as well as their recordings. The recordings can stay online and available for download for a month after the event.</p>	€300*
<p><b>Virtual platform + Mobile app</b> The virtual platform and the mobile app work together, allowing remote users and users of the app to interact via the shared chat.</p>	€1,500

\* For events with up to 300 participants.  
For events with more than 300 virtual participants, organizers will need to contact Zoom for a quote.

If you would like to use the virtual platform and/or mobile app, please contact us at [courses\\_workshops@embo.org](mailto:courses_workshops@embo.org) to arrange an online demo and discussion of your specific requirements.

# 20. Registration fee collection

This brief overview is intended to provide information on the possible ways of setting up a payment system for your EMBO funded event.

You may want to get advice regarding tax implications of your meeting. These may arise for example from collecting registration fees, sponsorships etc. These implications may differ between the place from which you organize the event and where the event is taking place.

Please note:

- EMBO does not guarantee nor take responsibility for the services of any of these providers.
- EMBO does not offer to set up or provide support in the use of these services— questions about the platform and how to work with it should be directed to the support services of the respective providers.
- Some services charge a commission for the transaction of each payment. You should check the amount of the fee and consider whether to adjust your pricing accordingly.

Payment module via EMBO supplier	Online transactions (PayPal, Stripe, WorldPay etc.)	Bank transfer
- Can be used with any bank account, including your university bank account. - Requires the use of a payment gateway.	Requires that you have a business bank account	Requires that you have a business bank account
The registration system matches the payments to the participants for credit card payments.	Payments and participant registration details have to be manually matched.	Payments and participant registration have to be manually matched.
Both credit card payments and bank transfers are possible. Bank transfers need to be manually matched (with some exceptions).	Credit card payments are possible.	Credit card payments are NOT possible.
Included with the EMBO website, but not set up by EMBO.	PayPal and other online payment services generally charge a commission for each transaction.	There may be additional charges for international transfers.
The cost for this payment module is €550 and can be covered by your grant.  See below for a detailed description of the COMS module.	For support, please contact your service provider.  For a brief tutorial on how to use PayPal for online payments, please see <a href="#">here</a> .	For support, please contact your bank.

For set up and support, please contact <a href="mailto:m.mandl@coms.app">m.mandl@coms.app</a>		
---	--	--

### **IMPORTANT:**

Please note that your chosen payment provider may not be available in all countries and may not accept all credit cards, debit cards, or payment methods. EMBO cannot help with any problems relating to the platform you use.

Please also note that only the payment module via the EMBO supplier will allow for matching the payments with the registrants' data. For all other methods of accepting registration fees, you will need to manually match the payments with the registrants' data.

## **Overview of the COMS payment module**

### **In a nutshell**

1. If you opt to use the COMS payment module, you will be responsible for setting it up and managing the payments.
2. If you intend to collect credit card payments, you will need to activate a payment gateway (a platform that processes credit card payments and deposits them in your account), and then link this gateway to your bank account and also to the COMS system.

### **In detail**

1. The COMS payment module allows you to create forms for the collection of conference fees and other bookings from the users. Admins set up the forms and make them available to the users, in the same way as other forms (e.g. abstract submission form). When users fill in the form and then confirm their booking, an invoice is created and emailed to them. Admins have records of these bookings in the admin area and functions to manage them.

2. When setting up the payment module, admins can decide which payment methods they will allow. There are two methods, which can be activated independently of each other (i.e. one or the other, both, sometimes none, if the event is free):

2.1. Bank transfers: If you activate this method, users will see your bank details on the payment form and invoice. They will be able to use this information to transfer the billed amount. The payments will later show up on your bank statements and you will be able to manually input the transactions into the COMS system, in the admin area. The record for the user will then be updated to payment completed and a receipt will be sent out to the user. This is available without the need for any Stripe or PayPal account but requires manual work on your part.

Note: Automatic matching of bank transfers is possible in some cases if your bank account is located in specific European countries, and you are using Stripe to collect the payments.

2.2. Credit card payments: These need a payment gateway to process the cards (e.g. Stripe, PayPal, Girocheckout). The payment gateways process the funds and deposit them in your bank account. Our integration with these gateways prompts them to report the transactions to COMS in real time (server to server), which allows for an automatic update of the payment records in our database. As soon as the user has

completed the credit card payment, the record is set to completed and a receipt is sent out. Admins see this in the admin area and save themselves the manual work necessary for bank transfers. A transaction fee is paid to Stripe or PayPal, but not to COMS.

In order to process credit card payments, you need a Stripe, PayPal (business account) or Girocheckout account. None of these work with individuals, only businesses since the processing of credit card payments is only legally authorized for registered businesses. Therefore, such accounts cannot be created in your private name but would have to be created in the name of your organization/university/institute/non-profit (any legal entity) and will be checked by Stripe/PayPal against public records of their business registration.

Please note that, unless you already have a Stripe, PayPal (business) or Girocheckout account, their creation requires some work, and most importantly, assistance from your administration in providing the data relating to their business record. **The creation of such an account is not possible for all organizers, who often need permission from their institutional administration. For this reason, please first check with your administration office if this is a viable option for you.**

## 21. Organizing virtual events

---

### 21.1. Virtual conferences

Purely virtual conferences or the virtual aspect of a hybrid meeting require careful preparation. Firstly, guarantee that the venue/the location from which you are streaming from is able to provide a stable internet connection, to ensure seamless streaming throughout the meeting. The “conventional” in-person meeting programme, frequently lasting more than 12 h 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 being 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.

### 21.2. Suggestions for organizers

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 organizers.<sup>1</sup>
- Have all session speakers (and chairs/organizers) 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>
- Use polls to learn about audience demographics (e.g., their research field, career stage, etc.)
- Encourage participants to show virtual reactions (clapping hands, thumbs up, etc.)
- Q&A sessions 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.
- In-person and virtual questions can be shown on a large screen on-site for all participants to see.<sup>4</sup>
- Questions could be upvoted by participants.<sup>5</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>6</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 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>7</sup>

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

---

<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-licenced (free to use for any purpose, no attribution required) sounds can be found [here](#)

<sup>4</sup> Slido can be used for this.

<sup>5</sup> Zoom and Slido are two examples of platforms that allow for this.

<sup>6</sup> For e.g. Webex by Cisco and Webex Webinars and Zoom Webinar, more info also at [12 Steps to a wildly successful webinar](#)

<sup>7</sup> A comparison between Zoom Meeting and Webinar features can be found [here](#)

- Organise speed networking events in breakout rooms where virtual participants are able to meet and talk with one another.<sup>8</sup> These could also be arranged using keyword matches of participants.<sup>9</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.
- Allow virtual participants to submit abstracts for talks and to have speaker slots.
- 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>10</sup>
- You can consider having a dedicated host just for virtual participants. This person should be in charge of welcoming virtual participants, giving instructions, meeting virtual participants in breakout rooms, monitoring the breakout rooms and any questions, etc.

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

- Record talks for re-viewing at convenience. The recordings should be available shortly after the talk. Provide a dedicated website for all recordings, for e.g., Vimeo (which can be embedded into the virtual platform provided by EMBO). Note that the speakers need to consent to having their talk recorded.
- Restrict virtual meetings to half days.
- Indicate local times on the virtual platform.

How to run **virtual poster sessions**:

- Posters, possibly including a short presentation, can be uploaded on free<sup>11</sup> or commercial<sup>12</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.

How to address **screen fatigue** during virtual meetings:

- Restrict meeting duration per day to 0.5 days

---

<sup>8</sup> Some popular platforms for these include: Zoom, Remo, Gather, SpatialChat

<sup>9</sup> Some software allows this includes [Grip](#) and [Brella](#)

<sup>10</sup> Some platforms allow one-on-one calls e.g., Engagez, Slack with license, etc.

<sup>11</sup> For e.g., figshare, SlideShare, Scribd, Prezi, Speaker Deck

<sup>12</sup> For e.g., iPosterSessions, The Conference Exchange (Confex), PosterPresentations.com, Fourwaves virtual poster session solution, Gather

- 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 organizers in the set-up of 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 organizer may choose to use.*