EMBO Courses & Workshops Programme

India | EMBO Lecture Courses Application guidelines

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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 Associate Member States (B): India, Singapore

Countries / territories covered by a co-operation agreement (C): Chile, Taiwan

Countries / territories eligible for co-funding by EMBO and The Company of Biologists (D): 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

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1. About

The aim of an India | EMBO Lecture Course is to teach participants, primarily PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. The course should provide participants with background and underlying concepts, thereby making the topic accessible to scientists with diverse scientific background.

An India | EMBO Lecture Course should consist of:

- Scientific lectures by experts: preferably the speakers would give a more general overview lecture as well as a more specific research lecture
- Poster sessions and student presentations
- Additional sessions covering e.g.:
  - Technologies relevant to the research
  - Journal clubs
  - Reviewing of manuscripts
  - Career options
  - Responsible conduct of research
  - Where, when and how to apply for postdoctoral positions and fellowships
- Practical training if deemed necessary

Organisers are encouraged to consider covering scientific writing, job applications, presentation skills or grant application writing. If additional trainers need to be hired, EMBO and India Alliance funds can be used. Please specify your request in the application.

India | EMBO Lecture Courses must take place in India and last between three and ten days to provide sufficient time for all the activities. Attendance of these events should not exceed 120 participants and the ratio of speakers to participants should be around 1:5.

Scientists can apply for funding to organise an India | EMBO Lecture Course. EMBO contributes a maximum of €33,500 of core funding and the DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance (India Alliance) a maximum of INR 5.5 Lakhs (~ €7000) for travel grants, childcare support and training workshops.

Applications to organise an India | EMBO Lecture Course are accepted via the EMBO online system. Application deadlines are **1 March and 1 August.** Selections for funding are made by the EMBO Course Committee in April/May and in September/October. Please check the eligibility criteria before applying.

Organisers are advised to contact the EMBO office to discuss their proposal before the application deadline, especially if they are applying for an India | EMBO Lecture Course for the first time: courses_workshops@embo.org.
2. Eligibility

Applications for India | EMBO Lecture Courses must meet the following criteria to be considered for funding:

- The topic covered in the course must be within the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas on page 3).
- Scientists based anywhere in the world are eligible to apply, independent of their nationality.
- The scientific organising committee must be gender-diverse and include members from more than one institute. At least one of the organisers must be based outside India.
- The course must take place in India.

3. Application process

3.1. Timeline 2022

Applications to organise an India | EMBO Lecture Course must be submitted online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First deadline for application</td>
<td>1 March 2022, 09:00 CET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee meeting</td>
<td>May 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results announced to applicants</td>
<td>June 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second deadline for application</td>
<td>1 August 2022, 09:00 CET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee meeting</td>
<td>October 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results announced to applicants</td>
<td>October 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organisers are advised to apply as early as possible in the calendar year before the proposed date of the practical course to ensure sufficient time for the proper advertising and promotion of the meeting if the application is accepted for funding. Applications to fund events in the same calendar year will not be considered.
4. Application forms

Applications have to be submitted online and consist of an online and an offline form (in MS Word format).

In the online form, you will be asked to provide:

- Proposed title of the lecture course
- Proposed date and location of the course
- Format of the meeting (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)
- The expected number of participants
- Information on speakers
- An abstract describing the principle themes and objectives of the meeting
- Subject areas and keywords
- A draft budget

In the offline form (in MS Word format) please provide:

- A justification for holding a lecture course on the proposed topic
- Improvements that you have made based on feedback from previous meetings (if applicable)
- The list of speakers
- The draft programme
- A description of the proposed networking activities
- If you are organising a hybrid meeting, a short description of the virtual component
- The criteria for selecting the course participants
- The expected number of participants
- A list of the scientific organisers, including a link to their respective institutional home pages and their previous experience in organising meetings
- A short description of the course location
- A list of planned measures to reduce the CO₂ footprint of the course

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 India | EMBO Lecture Course.

4.2. Proposed title of meeting

The (main) title of the lecture course should not mention sponsor's, organisation's or institute's names. Organisers should also refrain from using excessively long titles and numbers referring to previous meetings.

4.3. Meeting format

Provide the address of the proposed location on where the meeting will be held or run from. The venue should have suitable facilities and preferably accommodation should be onsite or close by.

Please indicate the proposed format by selecting the event format:

- In-person meeting only
- Hybrid meeting
- Virtual meeting only

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 an additional €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 9 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 9 for a summary of options and points to consider.

4.4. Abstract, keywords, topic

Please provide a short abstract (max. 200 words), stating the principal themes and objectives of the lecture course.

Describe the practical course with five scientific keywords and choose a primary and secondary subject area from the EMBO subject areas (listed on the page 3).

Outline the reasons for holding a practical course on the proposed topic in the near future (max. 200 words), describing recent developments in the field and how the practical course would contribute to the advancement of the research field.

Similar events

Not applicable for India | EMBO Lecture Courses.

If applicable – Feedback from previous EMBO-funded meeting(s) or resubmission

For meetings previously funded by EMBO, describe any improvements or changes you propose to implement based on the experience of, and feedback from, the previous meeting(s) (max. 200 words).

Note that the committee receives the feedback from the previous courses and takes this into account when judging a resubmission.

For resubmission of a previously unsuccessful proposal, please provide the ID number of the previous proposal and list the main adjustments that you have introduced.
4.5. Speakers

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

Please consider the following:

- **Number:** The number of speakers and instructors should be adequate to cover the topic in sufficient depth without making the programme overly dense. The ratio of speakers to participants should be around 1:5. Additional trainers/instructors for practical training can be accommodated.
- **Expertise:** Speakers and instructors should be experienced researchers with significant expertise in the course subject.
- **Geographical diversity:** At least 40% of the speakers should be based in Europe.
- **Gender distribution:** At least 30% of the speakers must 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.
- **EMBO supports the career progression of young scientists.** The invitation of early-stage researchers, here defined as maximally 5 years’ experience as PI, will be viewed positively by the committee.

Please list the speakers in the following format:

1. First Name Last Name, Institute, City, Country
2. Please add:
   - C (for confirmed),
   - F (for female),
   - R (for repeat speaker - not applicable for India | EMBO Lecture Courses),
   - O (for speakers based in Europe),
   - E (for early-stage researchers)
3. Add a link to a relevant publication that led to their invitation
4. Add a link to the home page of the speaker's research group

Please see example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name and affiliation. Include link to lab home page</th>
<th>Status (C,F,E,O,R)</th>
<th>Describe the expertise that is relevant to their contribution to the course. Please provide a reference and a link to a relevant publication.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jane Doe (Institute, City, Country) <a href="https://www.XY.JaneDoeLab/uxy.xy/">https://www.XY.JaneDoeLab/uxy.xy/</a></td>
<td>C, F</td>
<td>Jane Doe has developed xy application in STORM Jane Doe et al, EMBO J, 2020; Ras signaling in melanoma; PubMed link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the online form, you will be requested to provide the number of invited speakers in each category, the percentages will be calculated automatically.

4.6. Programme

Introductory paragraph

Please give a one-paragraph introduction, explaining the logic behind the order of the sessions.

Draft Programme

The programme should be sufficiently detailed, listing session themes and speakers, and including time for questions, discussions, and networking. It should have the appropriate duration for the size and focus of the meeting, and the time allocated to talks and Q&A sessions should be appropriate.

Please ensure that the programme is legible by adding empty lines between days. Note in a few words what the invited speakers will contribute to that session. Final talk titles are not expected at such an early stage.

Please see example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Programme category</th>
<th>Speaker name and topic of talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>OPENING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:15 – 13:15</td>
<td>KEYNOTE</td>
<td>John Bloggs on cancer stroma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13:15 – 13:45</td>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13:45 – 15:30</td>
<td>SESSION</td>
<td>Signalling networks in cancer I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13:45 – 14:15</td>
<td>TALK</td>
<td>Jane Doe: Ras signalling in melanoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>....</td>
<td>POSTER SESSION</td>
<td>All posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15:30 – 17:00</td>
<td>POSTER SESSION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>....</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.7. Networking activities

EMBO and India Alliance believe that networking is a vital component of every scientific meeting. Organisers are expected to facilitate networking through dedicated activities during the course. The networking activities should be listed in the programme.
Networking opportunities

These should include, but not be limited to, coffee breaks, group activities, meet the speakers’ sessions, flash talks, discussion rounds. The committee welcomes creative ideas regarding the facilitation and promotion of networking.

Common meals

Meals should be organized for all participants to encourage interaction. EMBO will not fund a separate "speakers' dinner" during the meeting.

Poster sessions schedule and location

Poster sessions should be held at a time that encourages maximal attendance, ideally not during lunch, dinner or breaks, and should not overlap with other activities. Poster sessions should be held in a room with sufficient space and last for at least 90 minutes.

A minimum of two poster sessions should be organised during a Lecture Course.

The form requires you to check the corresponding box 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)

Please describe how discussion and interaction between participants will be stimulated during the poster session (max. 400 words).

4.8. Participants

Attendance of these events should not exceed 120 participants.

The following 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 from a single institution only or other defined groups.
• You are requested to consider EMBO’s commitment to a reasonable gender balance in all activities.

Please describe what criteria will be used to select the participants and indicate the names and the role of those who will make the selection (e.g. organisers, speakers, session chairs etc.).

Provide an estimate of the number of participants you plan to accept and the percentage of participants from India. For India | EMBO Lecture Courses, it is understood that most participants will be based in India.

Please also state the number of participants who will be selected for oral presentation and specify the duration of their presentations.
4.9. 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 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 researchers who have major scientific/technical involvement in the planning and execution of the meeting.

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.

The scientific organising committee must be gender-diverse and from more than one institute. At least one of the organisers must be based outside India.

4.10. 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. Please note the availability of wireless internet access and how the location can be reached.

4.11. Reducing the CO₂ footprint of the meeting

EMBO and India Alliance would like to promote the reduction in CO₂ emissions in order to lessen environmental impact by encouraging the organisers of India | EMBO Lecture Courses to implement, to the best of their abilities, some measures that should keep the CO₂ footprint of the course at a minimum.

We are aware that these measures may neither seem nor be significant on their own, but we do hope that they will create awareness and will help to change many people’s minds and behaviours. Only together can we make a difference to the climate and the future of the planet and our children. We would therefore welcome that organisers encourage debate about this topic at the meeting.

Reducing long-distance air-travel: If possible, organisers are encouraged to include at least one remote presentation at the meeting by an overseas speaker. This should not be given by an additional speaker but should replace a regular speaker in your programme. The money saved for travel and accommodation (max. €1,500) as a result can be used to cover additional travel grants for participants travelling to the venue by train from the available core budget. Please indicate this in your budget estimate.

Provide catering with lower CO₂ impact: Catering should be served in non-disposable wares and, if possible, try to avoid (plastic) bottled water and plastic cups.
Electronic programme and abstract book: Organisers should distribute the abstract book in electronic format via the course website and to print only a minimum number of hardcopies, if necessary. Via the EMBO provided registration system organisers can export the abstract book in electronic format. This can then be made available, password protected, on the course website.

Central locations: Consider venues that are centrally located and easily accessible by public transport.

Plastic-free badges: Organisers should consider using paper badges.

EMBO promotional items: EMBO provides notebooks (FSC certified paper), bags (from recycled materials), and pencils for meetings on request. Notebooks are perforated to encourage their continued use after the meeting. You will be contacted prior to the meeting to inform us of your needs.

4.12. Budget

The budget must 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 (max. €33,500) can be used to cover:

For in-person meetings

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

For virtual meetings

- 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:

- Economy travel, accommodation and subsistence costs of the speakers
- Accommodation for in-person participants
- Onsite catering for the meeting
- A virtual platform to host the virtual meeting
- Additional AV equipment and personnel
- Additional administration costs up to €8,000
- Room hire, audio-visual and IT facilities essential for the meeting
- Social activities (e.g., excursions) costs up to €3,000

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.

**India Alliance funds (INR 5.5 Lakhs (~ €7,000)) can be used to cover:**
- Travel grants for participants (up to INR 20,000 per person)
- Childcare support (e.g. fees for a caregiver or child-care facility, travel and accommodation costs for a caregiver or for taking the child to the meeting, etc; up to INR 20,000 per person)
- Training workshops (see page 4 for examples)

**Income**

**Registration fees**

The registration fee for an India | EMBO Lecture Course:
- should not exceed INR 5000/€60 (< 5 days in length) and INR 7000/€90 (≥ 5 days in length)
- should not be less than INR 12000/€150 for participants from industry

Reduced registration fees can be charged to virtual participants.

**Funding and Sponsorship**

Please state the amount of funding requested (up to €33,500) from EMBO. If the meeting is organized as a hybrid event, an additional €10,000 will be automatically allocated to your course if selected.

The India Alliance will provide up to INR 5.5 Lakhs (~ €7,000) to all funded courses and therefore you do not have to request funds for travel grants, childcare support and training workshops in your budget. Details on how travel grants should be distributed to participants can be found in the guidelines for organisers.

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 recognised 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.
- Each application is assigned to at least two members of the Course Committee for evaluation.
- Final funding decisions are made by the entire EMBO Course Committee in April/May and September/October each year.
- All applicants are informed of the outcome of their application by email shortly after the committee meeting.

Please do not contact the committee members directly. This may lead to your application being excluded from the review process.

6. Selection criteria

The EMBO Course Committee is looking to fund lecture courses that cover the latest developments and gather the best international experts.

Applications should be timely, non-overlapping with other meetings in the same year, and as complete as possible.

The committee will pay special attention to the following aspects:

A. **Topic**

- **Originality:** The topic should not cover an area where there is already an overabundance of meetings.
- **Relevance:** Significant new developments in the field should be addressed.
- **Broadness:** Topic(s) should be covered in sufficient depth and breadth.
• **Unique focus:** If the topic is similar to an on-going series of events funded by EMBO, the unique focus of the proposed meeting should be clearly indicated.

### B. SPEAKERS

• **Number:** There should be enough speakers to cover the topic in sufficient depth but without making the programme overly dense.

• **Expertise:** The speakers should be qualified experts in their area.

• **Speakers selected from abstracts:** Some speakers should be selected from abstract submissions.

• **Status:** Most speakers should be confirmed.

• **Career level:** The list of speakers should balance early-stage and established investigators/group leaders.

• **Gender distribution:** At least 30% of the speakers should be of the underrepresented gender. A lower proportion must be justified. This is checked by the office prior to assignment.

• **Geographical diversity:** At least 40% of the speakers should be based in Europe.

### C. PROGRAMME

• **Clear structure:** The programme should be sufficiently detailed, listing session themes and speakers, and allowing time for questions, discussions, and networking.

• **Appropriate duration:** The programme should have the appropriate duration for the size and focus of the meeting.

• **Talks duration:** The time allocated to talks and Q+A should be appropriate. Overly long talks should be avoided.

• **Previous feedback** (only if organisers have been involved in organising other EMBO events in the past): If there was any negative feedback the attempts to rectify the issues in the current application should be specified.

### D. NETWORKING

• **Networking opportunities:** Sufficient time should be dedicated to activities that promote exchanges between the participants, e.g., coffee breaks, group activities, meet the speakers sessions, flash talks, discussion rounds. Other attempts to promote interaction amongst attendees are a plus.

• **Common meals:** Meals should be organised for all participants in order to encourage interaction.

• **Poster sessions schedule and location:** Poster sessions should be held at a time that encourages maximal attendance, ideally not during lunch/dinner or breaks, and should not overlap with other activities. The sessions should last for at least 90 minutes.

### E. ORGANISING COMMITTEE AND LOCATION

• **Diversity:** Co-organisers should be an international and gender-diverse group of scientists.

• **Location:** The venue should be easy to reach, and it should be suitable for the type of meeting proposed. Participants and speakers should be accommodated in the same location or in a limited number of locations.
7. San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

EMBO is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and as such does not use publication metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor during the assessment process (see https://sfdora.org for further details). Applicants are asked NOT to include publication-based metrics when listing invited speakers' and co-organisers publications.

8. Confidentiality

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

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

Contacting individual members of the EMBO Course Committee to influence the decision process will result in disqualification of the application.

9. Organising hybrid or virtual events

9.1. 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 chose 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 chose 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 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.

9.2. 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.

9.3. 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.¹
- Have all session speakers (and chairs/organisers) meet in a session² 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.³
- 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).

¹ For e.g., Zoom Webinar mode offers this function.
² 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.
³ Some CC0-licenced (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.¹
• 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.²
• 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.³

How to facilitate networking at a virtual or hybrid meeting:
• Organise speed networking events in breakout rooms.⁴ These could also be arranged using keyword matches of participants.⁵
• 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.⁶

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

¹ Zoom, Slido, Pathable, Glisser are some of the platforms that allow for this.
² For e.g. Cisco Webex and Webex Webinars and Zoom Webinar, more info also at 12 Steps to a wildly successful webinar
³ A comparison between Zoom Meeting and Webinar features can be found here: Zoom Meeting and Zoom webinar comparison
⁴ Some popular platforms for these include: Wonder.Me, Zoom, Remo, Gather.Town, SpatialChat
⁵ Some software allows this includes Grip and Brella
⁶ 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 or commercial 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.

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10 For e.g., figshare, SlideShare, scribd.com, prezi.com, speakerdeck.com