MEMBER CONFERENCE

The online mini-version
26 March 2020

Lessons Learned

From doing an online conference

When we arranged our very first online member conference, we learned a lot, and have gathered our Lessons Learned in this document. In these times of rapid change from face-to-face meetings to online versions, this document aims to encourage and support members to do online conferences of their own.

Before
Moderator

- Prepare an operating scheme.
- Time your speech.
- Train on using all the functionality of the webinar platform (e.g. flip from speaker mode to PowerPoint to web browser).
- Try to be prepared for the unexpected! Think through - what could go wrong and how should we deal with that.

Speakers

- Send out the questions to the speakers in advance.
- Be clear about expectations.
- Offer the speakers the opportunity to try out the webinar platform in advance.
- Ask the speakers to keep their camera and microphone muted until it is their time to speak.
- Ask the speakers if their presentation slides will be available for distribution after the conference.

Communication

- Send out "nice and need to know" e-mail on the same day as the conference.
- Be clear about where to find the link to join the conference.
- Prepare chat content in the operating scheme so that it is possible to cut/paste it into the chat during the conference.
- Be aware of GDPR. If you want to take pictures of or record the broadcasting - make sure to ask anyone involved for consent before!

During

- Ask the speakers to call into the conference about 30 minutes before it starts - to check if anyone has any last-minute questions or technical problems.
- Make sure that the moderator and the invited speakers have good sound and image quality.
  - Headphones and external webcam are preferred.
  - Good light on the face and no light from behind.
  - The room where the person is sitting should be calm.
- Always ask the participants to keep themselves muted and their cameras off, unless asked to turn them on. This reduces the bandwidth and risks of technical problems.
- Engage the audience. Experiment with interactive tools but be sure to make time for inter-activeness in the program.

5 tips for running the chat during webinars

If all else fails – the chat function is your best friend. Treat it accordingly! Here are 5 tips to make full use of the chat during webinars.

1) **Assign a chat editor.** This person is co-hosting the meeting and is very important for the audience's total experience of the event.

2) **Prepare the chat.** The chat editor prepares the webinar with:

   a) prewritten chat posts

   b) web links

   c) as many answers to likely questions as possible

3) **Engage with the audience.** The chat editor shall establish a relationship with the audience immediately, preferably a couple of minutes before the start of the webinar. If the chat can direct messages to "everyone" or individuals - use it! For instance, you can make speakers aware of questions that have been asked them or ask any of the participants to do something (e.g. turn off their cameras) - without everyone else knowing.

4) **Add value.** Give the audience more value for their time – add useful links in the chat.

   a) Personal webpages of the speakers

   b) Detailed information about the topic

   c) References

5) **Prepare for crisis!** If you run into technical problems, the chat function gets really important. Keep the audience updated with as much information as possible. Prepare for different scenarios and act swiftly!