Guidance for Session Organisers.
Designing a Virtual Event via Interactio and Zoom.

Introduction.

The purpose of this document is to help you plan and design your virtual Workshop, Question & Answer or Participatory Lab using Zoom or Interactio. Tutorials on the digital tools will be available in September, but this document offers guidance on how to build the right team and content for your session.

As a reminder, Exhibitors’ pitches and EU Regions Talks can be either live on site or recorded, without the use of any specific digital tool. A tutorial explaining the technical specifications on how to record your video will be available as well in September.

Step 1. General tips.

a) Build your intervention around one of the thematic priorities of the EURegionsWeek:
   i) Empowering citizens.
   ii) Cohesion and cooperation.
   iii) Green Europe.

b) Identify the target audience for your session and work on your presentation.

c) English is the language of the event. Please specify to speakers and moderators the interpretation scheme if applicable.

Step 2. Practical tips on the dynamics of a Virtual Session.

As you approach the design and planning of your session at EURegionsWeek, there are several issues you should consider, that shape the dynamics of a virtual session.

a) **Participant Dynamics:** most participants will mute their microphones and turn off their video cameras, which means you cannot see or hear them.

b) **Planning Dynamics:** activities in a virtual setting need to be planned. For example, using a flip chart to record comments from participants in a virtual setting means (i) creating an online document to write the comments, (ii) sharing the document so everyone can see it, (iii) deciding whether participants communicate verbally or in writing.
c) **Tool Dynamics**: virtual settings offer a large range of tools that you can use to set tasks or exercises for participants to complete online, to submit questions and comments when listening to speakers, to vote on issues, to contribute ideas and suggestions etc.

d) **Moderating Dynamics**: it is difficult to moderate and follow discussions whilst simultaneously managing the platform tools. It is better to split these tasks and have one person to moderate / chair the session and another to manage all the technical aspects.

A virtual setting can be a bit confusing and challenging to design because of these dynamics.

As a first step, please consider the questions below:

**Exercise.**
Q. How comfortable and experienced are you with using Zoom and Interactio?

- If you are **experienced**, then make a list of the different tools you have used in the past and feel comfortable managing during your session.
- If you have **limited experience**, then can someone who knows how to use virtual platforms and tools help you both design and run your session?
- If you have **limited experience** and are managing the session **alone**, then it may be wise to keep things simple and avoid technical problems.

**Step 3. Designing a Virtual Session.**

As mentioned above, virtual settings require more design and planning work than a physical event. Below are some key elements to consider:

a) **Objectives.**
First step, clarify your objectives and outcomes i.e. if you want to share best practices then (i) which best practices and (ii) what should participants do with the information they get (replicate the best practice or rather discuss and give you feedback etc.)?

b) **Organising the Session.**
What activities do you need to reach these objectives i.e. should participants be split into breakout groups, do they need information in advance, should you invite speakers etc.?

c) **Engaging Participants.**
In a virtual setting, it is easy for participants to disengage and check emails or focus on other activities. Think about how to keep their attention by asking questions, voting on issues, engaging in debates, co-creating solutions, agreeing on next steps etc.
d) Planning Document.
Create a planning document that places the activities in a logical sequence. Check the timing to see how long each activity will take and whether this fits in the time available? Things take longer in virtual setting and something will always go wrong.

e) Choosing your Team.
Who will implement the activities in your planning document? Virtual events require a different set of skills and profiles, so select your team carefully and define roles:

i) **Virtual conference moderator**: the host of the event, introduces and guides speakers, moderates panel sessions, facilitates discussions and questions to speakers, time-keeping and wraps up the meeting etc. Should also coordinate the breakout room hosts.

ii) **Breakout room host**: the host has similar responsibilities to the conference moderator but limited to the breakout room session only. Check if the breakout room host needs assistance with virtual tools or can manage alone?

iii) **Speaker(s)**: invited to give presentations on specific issues that meet the outcomes. Check if the speakers need assistance with virtual tools or can manage alone?

iv) **Backend moderator**: manages all technical aspects of the virtual session such as enabling video streaming, moving participants to breakout rooms, monitoring which participants want to speak (raising virtual hands), unmuting microphones etc. It is strongly advised to separate the role of the backend moderator from that of the conference moderator.

f) Virtual Setting Check-List.
Double-check the activities in the planning document against the tools available in the virtual setting? If you use a breakout room, how will you assign participants to groups and move them to the virtual breakout rooms? If a speaker wants to use power point slides, how are these displayed? If participants give comments or suggestions, how do they do this and where will the answers be displayed?

**Exercise.**
Q. Work through these questions to help design and plan a successful virtual event.

- **Objectives**: what are your objectives, what outcomes do you want to achieve?
- **Organising the Session**: to achieve the objectives, what activities need to happen?
- **Engaging the Participants**: how can you engage participants and get them involved?
- **Planning Document**: what is the logical sequence for these activities, how long do they take and can you fit everything into the timeslot available?
- **Choosing the Team**: who do you need on the team to implement the activities in your planning document?
- **Virtual Setting Check-List**: how will you implement the activities in a virtual platform, and who will handle the technical aspects?

The design and planning process outlined above will eliminate many problems, but we recommend you undertake a ‘test run’ either online or offline.

a) Session Script.
During the test run you will experience constant pressure to lead and manage the session, if you do not speak there is silence and none of the participants know what is happening. Create a ‘session script’ that sets out (i) the time for each activity, (ii) what you are meant to say, (iii) who is involved in the activity and (iv) the technical requirements. An example of a ‘session script’ is in Annex 2.

b) Speakers and Panel Debates.
Try to include your speakers during the test run. Long speeches do not work well in a virtual setting, so be precise about what you want them to talk about and how this meets the objectives (see the session script in annex for an example). Speakers must send you their power point slides in advance, they should not show slides themselves by sharing their screen as too many things that can go wrong. Also agree with the speakers in advance how to keep track of time during their interventions.

c) Moderating and Technical Management.
If you have a colleague helping you with the technical support, you must do the test-run with them. The two of you need to be in ‘sync’ and coordinated to ensure the session runs well. If you are running the session on your own, it is highly recommended that you practice using Zoom / Interactio to become familiar with the tools and how they work.

Exercise.
Q. Work through these exercises to ‘test-run’ your successful virtual event.

- Session Script: create a script that shows who is doing what during your session and the technical requirements for each activity?
- Speakers & Presenters: brief the speakers and presenters on the objectives of the session and the topics you want them to address?
- Test-Run: set up a test-run using Zoom or another online platform together with some colleagues and your technical support (if you have someone) to see what works, what needs to be changed and if you can handle the technical aspects?
Annex 1

Details on session formats

Reminder: Gender balance - male only panels will not be accepted

Workshops.

A workshop brings together a maximum of four speakers and minimum one moderator to present information or offer training to the audience. Ideally, one of the speakers should be tasked with keeping the discussion moving. The focus is on sharing political strategies, experience and good practice and facilitating cooperation and networking, including contributions from the audience

The workshop can either consist of presentations by the speakers, followed by comments and questions from the audience, or take the form of a debate between the panel members. A moderator facilitates both options.

Virtual platform:
- Workshops with Interpretation will be delivered using Interactio.
- Workshops without interpretation will be delivered using Zoom.

Roles to be identified:
- Speaker(s)
- Virtual conference moderator
- Backend moderator

A few tips
- The workshops should be alive, provocative and interactive.
- Respect the allocated speaking time.
- If interpreting is provided, please let the audience know how to make use of it. Speak clearly and not too fast, to make the interpreters' job easier.
- Empower your participants by involving them in the conversation via the chat or live questions.

Question and Answer session (Q&A)

The Q&A session convenes experts (max.2) to answer questions from the audience on a specific topic. It stimulates debate and knowledge sharing. The Q&A session should give the participants a voice and create space for interactions that enhance the learning experience.
The Q&A session needs to be well planned in order to bring benefit to the participants. A standard session starts with short introductive speeches on the topic addressed (max. 20 minutes for a 60 minutes session) and continues with the questions and answers.

Roles to be identified:
- Speaker(s)
- Virtual conference moderator
- Backend moderator

A few tips
- Brief your moderator, who drives the interaction at your Q&A session. She or he will steer the discussion between presenters and attendees. It is useful to involve your moderator in the session planning, in order to help define the format and the flow. He or she must be able to use the chat tool.
- Explain how much time there will be for the audience's questions. This time must represent at least 2/3 of the session length. Structure the session and develop a detailed agenda.
- Explain how you will collect the audience's questions: via the chat or you will take live questions from participants and when.
- Ensure that the speakers know the length of their time slot and how the Q&A session will be run. The speakers will carry the discussion forward.
- Prepare some questions in advance. Such preparation is one of the keys to success. It will encourage the participants to follow the lead and submit their own. If they do not have any questions, invite them to vote for the ones they want to be addressed.
- Collect some questions, give the people in the room the opportunity to comment or ask a follow-up question.

Participatory labs

Participatory labs are a forum to exchange opinions, build on the knowledge of participants and their problem-solving abilities through using participatory techniques. The lab is a collaborative and creative environment for active participants wishing to share experiences guided by moderators. If you are using breakout rooms in your lab, make sure you recruit a host for each breakout room.

Roles to be identified:
- Speaker(s).
- Virtual conference moderator.
- Break out room host.
- Backend moderator.
A few tips

- Start with a positive, receptive attitude and willingness to use the participatory techniques and tools.
- Keep your participatory session “small and simple”, especially if you have limited experience of this type of activity.
- Adapt the tools and techniques to suit the situation.
- Design the session according to the expected outcomes.
- Explain the topics clearly, so participants can provide accurate information.
### Annex 2

#### Example of Session Script.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Script</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11:00  | Introduce Best Practice 1.        | • Katharina explains that this session will focus on the first example of best practice coming out of the project.  
  • Katharina introduces Pablo as the Mayor of Logroño where the activities took place.  
  • Katharina reminds the participants that they can submit questions to Pablo using the chat box and should also answer the question:  
    ❖ "What elements of this good practice can I use in my project"?                                                                                                                                                                                          | • Display power point with the name + title of Pablo.  
  • Display power point with the question participants should answer.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 11:05  | Best Practice 1.                  | • Pablo introduces the best practice example implemented in Logroño (approx. 15 min) and covers:  
  ➢ *What are the key results / outcomes of the project.*  
  ➢ *Why were these successful.*  
  ➢ *What key elements can participants replicate or reproduce in their projects.*  
  • Katharina thanks Pablo and selects some of the questions submitted in the chat box.  
  • Katharina reads out the first question and invites the participant who wrote it to expand.  
  • The participant explains their question and Katharina invites Pablo to reply.  
  • This is repeated for the other questions.  
  • Katharina then asks participants what activities or elements they                                                                                                                                  | • Unmute Pablo’s microphone and enable video.  
  • Manage power point slides for Pablo.  
  • Unmute microphones of participants when instructed by Katharina.  
  • Make sure Katharina can see the ‘chat box’ questions and ‘virtual hands’.                                                                                                                                 |
Participants have listed for replication in their projects.
- Participants raise their ‘virtual’ hand and Katharina invites the first one to speak.
- The participant shares which elements they think can be replicated and why.
- This process is repeated.
- Katharina thanks Pablo and the participants and ends the session.

Katharina Schmidt, moderator.  
Dace Reinika, Mayor of Tērvete, Latvia. | Katharina explains that this session will focus on the second example of best practice coming out of the project.  
Katharina introduces Dace as the Mayor of Tērvete where the activities took place.  
Katharina reminds the participants that they can submit questions to Dace using the chat box and should also answer the question:  
“What elements of this good practice can I use in my project”? | Display power point with the name + title of Dace.  
Display power point with the question participants should answer. |