**EMBO Courses &
Workshops Programme**

Virtual Meeting Organiser Guidelines

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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**, C**hromatin & 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

1. About

EMBO Courses and 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 and Workshops is €37,000 (€33,500 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. Organisers are therefore required to justify all major costs in the budget section of the application form. It is expected that participants (other than the speakers) will pay a modest 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 €8,000;
- 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 organiser, 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 organisers 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 has to 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 organiser 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 organisers. The talks are hosted on Zoom (Meeting and Webinar mode) and there is a chat function that also allows video chats among participants. For a link to the demo site, please see Appendix I. 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 by your meeting grant. These costs should be included in the final financial reports. 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. Please contact us at courses_workshops@embo.org if you would like to review the platform.

Organisers 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

- could be charged to ensure participation by those who register. Organisers may consider a minimum of €75 per academic participant; these fees may be reimbursed using the sums provided by EMBO registration fee waivers (see section below).
- should be charged at a minimum of €200 for participants from industry.
- should be paid directly to the organiser (or the organiser'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 appendix); The income from the registration fees is considered as EMBO funding.
- must be waived for one EMBO editor registered for the course or workshop.
- may be waived for editorial staff from other scientific journals who attend a course or workshop.

6. Participants

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

You may want to consider organising satellite workshops/lectures that are open to the local scientific community. If additional funds are necessary, please contact us via email at courses_workshops@embo.org.

It is at the discretion of the organisers 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 would like to 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 organisers 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 Member States (A - see list on first page), EMBC

Associate Member States (B - see list on first page) and EMBC Cooperation Partners (C - 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 €2,500 in fee waivers (organisers may allocate additional funds received from sponsors). The EMBO registration fee waivers shall be allocated by the organisers on the basis of the quality of the abstract submitted, with priority given to scientists from the countries listed below. The fee waivers may be awarded to participants from anywhere only after qualified applicants from priority countries have been considered. All applicants must justify the reasons for applying for a fee waiver. A maximum of €100 per fee waiver is recommended. At the organiser'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 Turkey, as well as from EMBC Associate Member States Chile, India, Singapore and Taiwan.

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

10. Childcare grants

Organisers 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. 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.

EMBO core funding cannot be used to cover poster prizes.

12. Publicising & co-funding

The course or workshop will be entitled "EMBO Practical Course", "EMBO Workshop", "EMBO Global Lecture Course", "EMBO Lecture Course" or "India I EMBO Lecture Course". The (main) title of the meeting may not mention a sponsor's, organisation's or institute's name, other than EMBO. Organisers should also 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 stamp](). 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-sponsors 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 and Workshops are announced on the EMBO poster, EMBO website and social media channels and through selected other print and online media.

Further advertising is left at the organiser's 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 I EMBO Lecture Course, without subtitles relating to previous similar meetings or other organisations.

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 organisation and execution of the event, lies exclusively

with the event organisers.

Furthermore, EMBO hosts the website, where organisers opt for this, but does not take responsibility for the content provided by the organisers of the meeting. Organisers 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 organiser's responsibility, and will be deducted from the final payment of the awarded EMBO funding.

Organisers 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. Organisers shall also ensure that all processes and procedures used relating to the organisation of the meeting comply with all local laws, regulations, standards and guidelines that apply in the jurisdictions in which the meeting takes place.

13. Poster and website

EMBO will create the workshop or course website (including an online registration system), design a poster and abstract book cover at no additional charge where organisers opt for this. EMBO hosts the website, but does not take responsibility for the content provided by the organisers of the meeting. Organisers 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 organisers' responsibility, and will be deducted from the final payment of the awarded EMBO funding.

For information on various methods of collecting registration fees, please see the appendix. Please note that EMBO does not handle registration fee payments, but only provides information that may be useful to organisers.

Please note that EMBO does not print or mail the posters or abstract books designed for your workshop.

Organisers who make their own websites and posters have to adhere to the EMBO brand guidelines (please refer to "Guidelines for organisers creating their own web pages and posters for EMBO Courses or Workshops").

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

14. Reducing CO$_2$ impact of the meeting

EMBO supports virtual meetings to promote the reduction in CO$_2$ emissions and lessen the environmental impact.

15. Participant feedback

If EMBO creates and hosts the website for the course or workshop, feedback from all participants is automatically collected after the meeting. Participants who fill out the questionnaire automatically receive their certificate of attendance via email. Organisers will have access to the anonymised 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. Organisers will have access to the anonymised feedback forms.

16. Data protection

As the majority of EMBO Courses and 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 organisation 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 organising 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.

An appropriate 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 organisers 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 organisers refer participants to the privacy policies of the platform or software they choose for their meeting.

EMBO advises that organisers only work with third-party platforms that confirm compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

17. Final documentation

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

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

18. Appendix I: Virtual Platform

EMBO is now able to offer you a virtual meeting platform that is connected to the meeting websites and registration systems that EMBO provides for you.

If you would like 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. Please let us know if you have any comments and/or would like to use the platform.

If you would like to avail this virtual platform, please contact us at courses_workshops@embo.org.

In addition, EMBO has held a series of interviews with scientists to gauge their view on the role of scientific meetings for researchers individually and the community as a whole (a report will be forthcoming in the next months). As a result, we have identified a number of real or perceived shortcomings of virtual meetings, some of which might be mitigable. In the attached document we have summarised suggestions on how to address some of these. The document is also available as a Google doc and we invite you to comment and add suggestions from your own experience.

19. Appendix II: Registration Fee Collection

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

Please note:
- EMBO does not 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 a standard checking account.	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.	Payments and participant registration have to be manually matched.	Payments and participant registration have to be manually matched.
Credit card payments are possible.	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.
For set up and support, please contact: m.mandl@conference-service.com	For support, please contact your service provider. For a brief tutorial on how to use PayPal for online payments, please see here.	For support, please contact your bank.

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 registrant's data.

20. Organising virtual events

20.1. 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.

20.2. 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 session[2] 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.

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[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.

- 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).
- 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.[4]
- 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.[5]
- 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.[6]

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

- Organise speed networking events in breakout rooms.[7] These could also be arranged using keyword matches of participants.[8]
- 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.[9]

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[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

[4] Zoom, Slido, Pathable, Glisser are some of the platforms that allow for this.

[5] For e.g. Cisco Webex and Webex Webinars and Zoom Webinar, more info also at 12 Steps to a wildly successful webinar

[6] A comparison between Zoom Meeting and Webinar features can be found here: Zoom Meeting and Zoom webinar comparison

[7] Some popular platforms for these include: Wonder.Me, Zoom, Remo, Gather.Town, SpatialChat

[8] Some software allows this includes Grip and Brella

[9] Some platforms allow one-on-one calls e.g., Pathable, Engagez, Slack with license, etc.

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

How to run **virtual poster sessions**.
- Posters, possibly including a short presentation, can be uploaded on free [10] or commercial [11] 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

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