INCON Expert Article: The role of the Conference Organiser in Hybrid and Virtual Congresses

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Hybrid or Virtual Congresses?

Congresses in the future will have to be planned differently due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is foreseeable that regular physical congresses will not generate the same number of participants as before.

Congresses will continue to be predominantly physical events, but more participants than before will participate virtually, be it from their offices, their institutes or clinics, or their homes. Many congresses will be hybrid events, with entirely virtual congresses being a possible alternative.

Congress sessions will be recorded more frequently than today, and it will be possible to access them on-demand on the scientific associations' websites. Participants will be able to view lectures at their pleasure even after the congress is over.

1. The Congress as a Hybrid Event

The scheduled congress takes place in the form of a physical event. The congress programme as well as the exhibition takes place in predetermined venues.

Pre-Recording of Lectures
Individual speakers may not be able to attend the congress in person. CPO and the other INCON conference organisers provide speakers with the possibility of recording lectures in advance.

At the time of the congress session, the speaker will be joining via live video conference in the session room. The pre-recorded lecture will be played back, and the speaker can answer questions from the public on site and from digital participants in real time. Alternatively, the speaker can hold the lecture in real time within the scheduled time of the session.

Recording the Sessions
The whole program or particular session can be recorded. After post-production, the recordings can be added to the congress media library and can be accessed at any time to registered congress participants.

Congress Management
It is the conference organiser's role to manage all pre-recordings and live broadcasts, paying particular attention to checking and, if necessary, improving the broadcasts and recordings. The conference organiser is responsible for managing all the technical aspects of the hybrid event and guarantees reliable live streaming as well as the setup and maintenance of the congress media library.

2. The Congress as a Virtual Event

A virtual meeting is fundamentally different than a physical event. Congress participants usually dedicate less time to attending a virtual event compared to a physical congress. So the virtual congress should be a few days longer, have longer breaks and fewer parallel sessions.

Congress Management: Preparing the Virtual Congress
• Coordinating and instructing speakers and chairs
• Pre-recording lectures
• Adapting the online programme on the congress website
• Setup of a congress lobby

Online Programme
Similar to the physical event that we are used to, the entire congress programme is featured online and sorted according to: days, topics, speakers etc. Additionally, there are links to the virtual sessions.

Congress Lobby
The digital congress lobby is the gateway for all users. They can start navigating the current programme and are directed into virtual session rooms.

Virtual Industry Exhibition
In the virtual exhibition, booths can be shown, for example, on a map with the respective corporate logo. A virtual exhibition can be designed to be interesting enough for the participants to be intrigued and visit it. Exhibiting companies can have their virtual stands customised to their every need.

By implementing live chat modules (text or video chat) as well as through dedicated online seminars and interactive video presentations, exhibitors have the possibility to get in touch with participants.

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