

## **Planning virtual and hybrid events: steps to improve inclusion and accessibility**

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Over the last decade, the way we communicate and engage has changed on a global scale. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a rapid and unplanned move to virtual platforms, resulting in several accessibility challenges and the inadvertent exclusion of several people during online events. While virtual/hybrid events have strong potential to facilitate new opportunities and networks for everyone, they can also favor the inclusion of groups traditionally excluded from in-person conferences. To do so, early and careful planning considering inclusion and accessibility are needed. Without effective planning, virtual and hybrid events will replicate many biases and exclusions inherent to in-person events.

This presentation will share lessons learned from previous virtual/hybrid events' successes and failures, based on the combined experiences of several groups and individuals. This presentation is based on a recently submitted EGU Sphere article<sup>1</sup> that aims to provide guidance on planning virtual/hybrid events from an accessibility viewpoint. While we acknowledge that every event is unique and will require its own accessibility design, early consideration helps to ensure everyone feels welcome and included. We will present here our suggested accessibility considerations, broken down into three stages of event planning: 1) Pre-event, 2) on the day/during the event, and 3) after the event, with a specific focus on the importance of communication from the early stages to the post-event phases.

This presentation is intended to act as a starting place for inclusion and accessibility during virtual/hybrid event planning but it is not a fully comprehensive guide. The goal of this presentation is to initiate discussion on event accessibility and inclusion and to help generate new ideas and knowledge from people outside of the authors' network. As more events are run, it is expected that new insights and experiences will be gained,

helping to continually update standards.

<sup>1</sup>Doran, A. L., Dutch, V., Warren, B., Watson, R. A., Murphy, K., Aldis, A., Cooper, I., Cockram, C., Harp, D., Desmau, M., and Keppler, L.: Planning virtual and hybrid events: steps to improve inclusion and accessibility, EGU Sphere [preprint], <https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-2023-2939>, 2023.