

Guideline for Civil Society
Organizations in Kosovo

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF CSOs

Kosovo Resource Centre
for Civil Society

Digital

Transformation of CSOs



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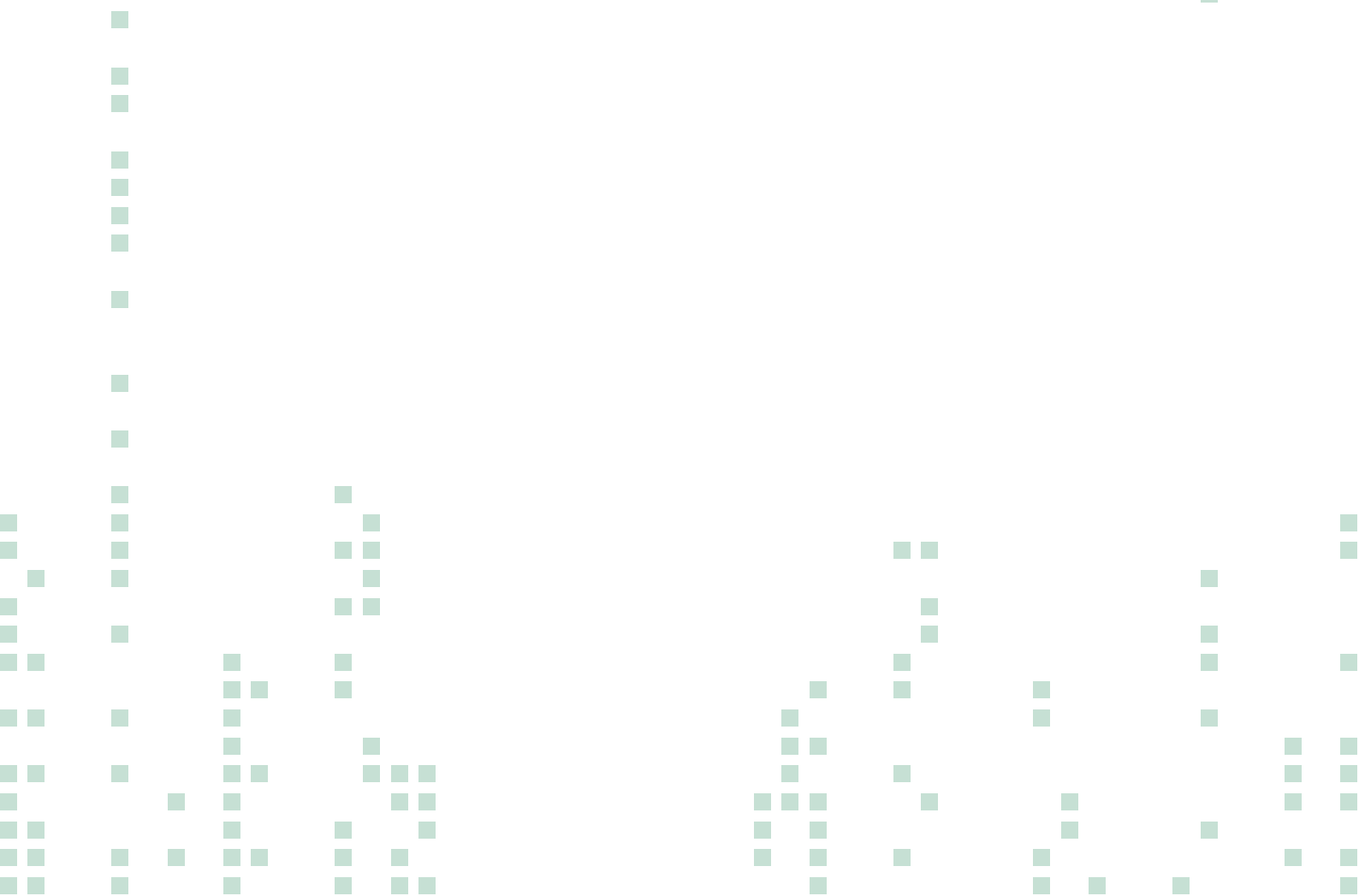
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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION



For many years now, Civil Society Organizations have been gradually integrating various ICT tools to facilitate their work processes. From the use of devices such as projectors, printers and laptops to digital tools that enable communication, data and information creation, storage and management, ICT tools have been used as resources to facilitate numerous activities both internally within the organization and externally with other entities.

However, digital services and tools have advanced majorly in the past years, particularly with the arrival of cloud services. Such developments have offered immeasurable possibilities to optimize work processes, simultaneously imposing the need to embed digital tools and services into the organizational culture proactively.

On the other hand, the enormous evolution of the ICT and digital services' ecosystem has also shaped the way citizens engage with information and services. As a result, we are now required to develop a new set of competences that enables us to navigate and maximize the use of these advancements both as consumers and users of digital tools.

Even though there are numerous innovative examples of utilizing ICT tools within the CSOs sector, such instances are sporadic and vary on the organization's characteristics (i.e., size, budget, years of presence in the field, location, work and capacity building culture).

The recent restrictions imposed by a global pandemic have surfaced the potential of utilizing digital tools to facilitate our work process and attain our aims. At the same time, it has become evident that capacity building in ICT terminology and application is a precondition for the proper use of ICT tools and their potential to optimize work processes.

Aiming to bridge the gaps faced by the Civil Society Organizations in using ICT tools as a medium for organizing digital experiences, this guideline:

- offers tips on how to organize effective and engaging digital events (i.e., meetings and trainings; webinars; info sessions; or similar);
- identifies some key platforms available describing their key features;
- gives step-by-step visual guidelines to master the key functions in selected platforms;
- introduces additional digital tools for activity-based application (e.g., facilitating a brainstorming or a group work activity, collecting feedback, etc.).

1.1 Importance of actively digitalizing our work

We have now entered the digital transformation stage, which implies that digital technologies are gradually replacing the traditional work methods and are opening pathways for innovation and creation.

The utilization of digital tools has offered numerous opportunities across sectors. Communication and collaboration have become easier regardless of the physical distance. Access to content and information is only one click away, while there are numerous opportunities for creatively producing materials, solving problems and optimizing the offered services.

In other words, the proper use of technology translates into quick, efficient and more convenient personal and professional interactions between individuals and entities.

Within the ecosystem of civil society and civic space, the advancement of the digital environment offers suitable choices for conducting day-to-day activities and tasks. Additionally, it has brought together the civic spaces on a larger scale, simultaneously making them more dynamic and inclusive. Many initiatives have managed to bring forth and into focus common topics on a regional and global level. These developments have enabled the participation of civil society in decision-making and democratic processes, have empowered advocacy, communication and collaboration.

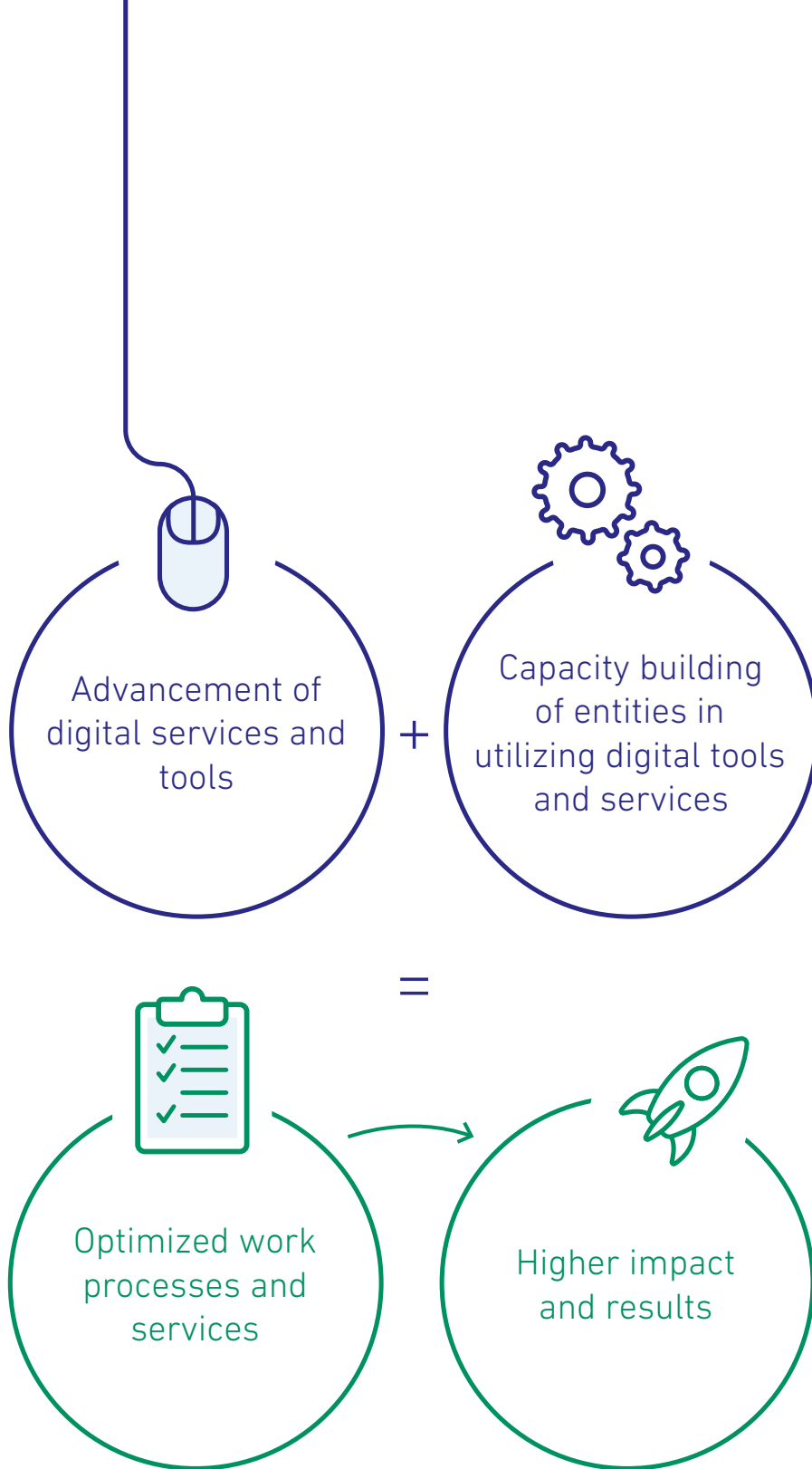
Within the field of NGOs, the following are some of the areas where digital transformation has been observed:

- Digital management of the organization through the use of cloud-based tools for communication and task management;
- Engagement of beneficiaries and partners through digital tools;
- Digital crowdfunding;
- Digital promotion through digital storytelling.

To put it differently, ICT tools offer numerous advantages and facilitate many processes within the organization. Below are highlighted some of the potentials of using digital tools for organizations.

- Enable internal communication, collaboration, coordination and knowledge management;
- Enable external communication and collaboration;
- Reach out to beneficiaries, partners, stakeholders through activities conducted in a digital environment (e.g., round tables, public discussions, youth work, workshops, training, conferences, group discussions, volunteering programs, etc.);
- Get closer to target audiences and reach new audiences by better promoting the work profile and portfolio;
- Strengthen transparency;
- Boost innovation;
- Provide opportunities for continuous development of employees and the organizational culture.

It is evident that the advancement of digital services and tools offers numerous advantages to optimize our work processes and services that translate into higher impact and results. However, to achieve this, entities need to continuously build their capacities in finding, adapting and utilizing ICT resources.



1.2 General principles to consider when organizing digital events

This section highlights some general principles that should be considered when planning, designing and organizing digital experiences.

The digital infrastructure makes it possible to create online events. However, the learning culture should also be a continuous process promoted by organizations. In addition, attention should be paid to the competences that team members have or need to develop by creating a work culture that recognizes and supports learning and development. The following pages introduce some practical ideas on these concepts and other topics useful for the event day.

Learning culture

Many aspects affect the successful digitalization of work processes, the two main ones being infrastructure and the methodology in using the existing infrastructure.

Yet, another crucial underlying factor that affects the integration and use of digital tools is the perception and level of acceptance we create on a personal level and within the organizational culture towards the use of technologies as tools that facilitate our professional development and work processes.

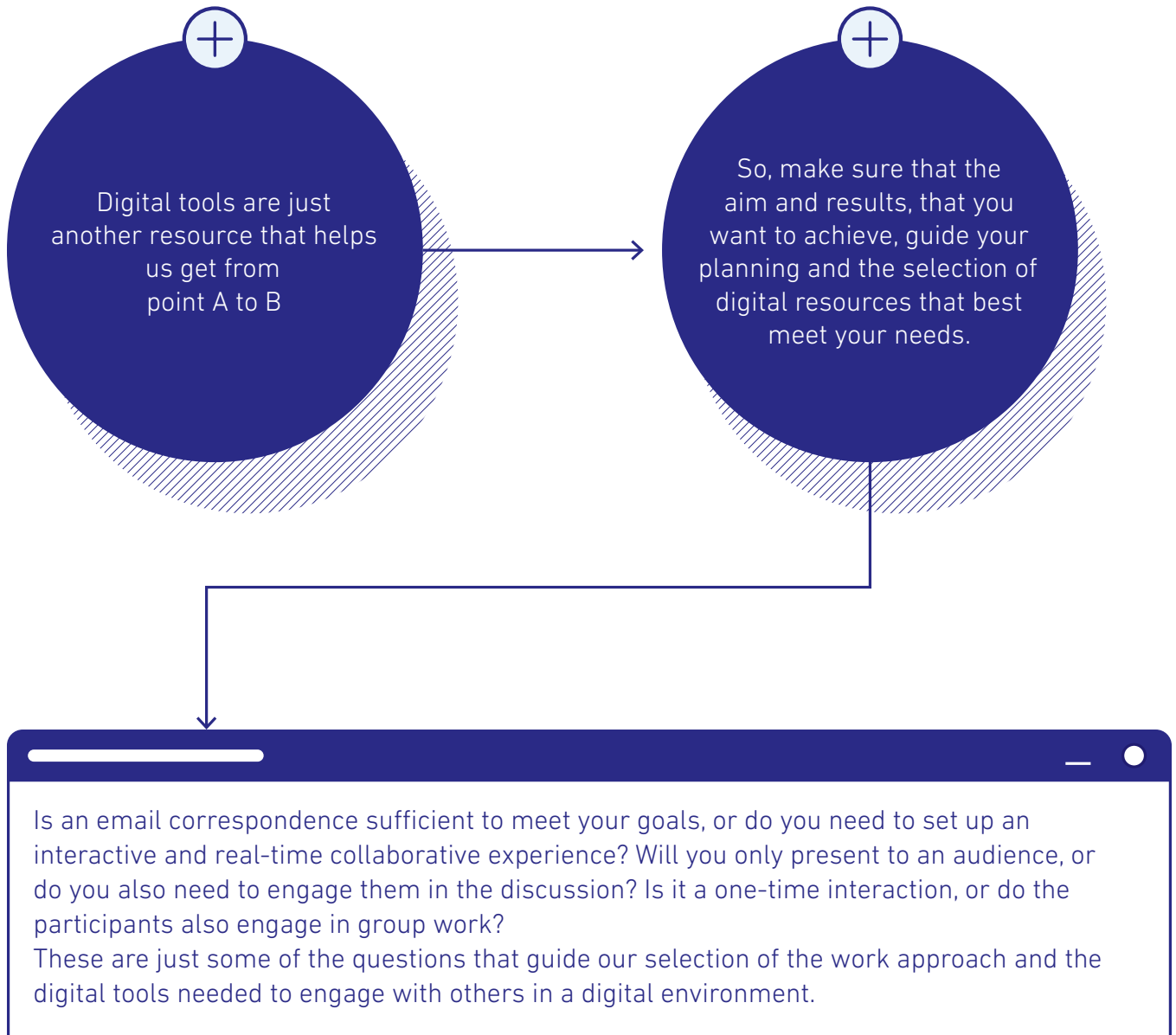
As individuals, we all have different sets of experiences, knowledge, skills, and perceptions. Therefore, it is imperative to create a positive outlook towards the utilization of ICT tools. Focusing on the opportunities and advantages brought about by using our selected ICT tools and recognizing the need to adapt to the recent global developments can be of great assistance when beginning to interact with digital tools. Whereas, with more experienced users, the adaption process becomes much easier because individuals already recognize the benefits and can assess their development trajectory and gains. Nonetheless, organizations must create a work culture that recognizes, encourages and supports learning and development. Within the digitalization process, particularly at the early adoption stages, it is also essential to reflect and discuss the possibilities resulting from the use of digital tools and provide capacity building to best use such opportunities.

Tips for creating a growth culture towards the use of ICT tools:

- ✔ Identify the benefits of using digital tools (engage in exchanges with others, conduct online research, or reflect on personal experiences);
- ✔ Read and discuss the good practices of utilizing ICT from organizations within your interest field, but don't limit yourself;
- ✔ Match up individuals with higher digital skills with those who have lower skills in co-organizing activities so that knowledge and skills can be transferred and spread out throughout the organization;
- ✔ Provide opportunities for capacity building through formal and non-formal education;
- ✔ Promote an organizational culture that encourages continuous learning and sharing of experiences and stimulates curiosity and creativity;
- ✔ Make preparatory meetings and debriefing sessions a regular part of your activities.

Digitalization is a process, so harvesting its advantages requires **patience, efforts** and **dedication**. This framework is an essential factor to keep in mind, and it should become a paradigm in your advancement of integrating digital tools into your regular work resources.

Additionally, the landscape of digital tools is so vast that now there is basically a digital tool for everything. Therefore, our development into becoming digitally competent should not be tied to mastering a single digital tool. Instead, we should develop our skills in such a way that we can choose and use digital tools that serve our purpose and aims.



Competences

Along with other social changes, the digital transformation has surfaced the need to develop competences that go beyond the technical use of a digital tool or technological equipment. Instead, key competences such as digital competence; personal, social and learning to learn competence; citizenship competence; entrepreneurship competence; cultural awareness and expression competence; scientific, technological and engineering competence; have surfaced to align with other necessary competences like literacy, mathematical and science competences that have long been in existence.

Moreover, the Recommendation adopted by the European Union highlights that 'skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, creativity, negotiation, analytical and intercultural skills are embedded through the key competences.' The key competences are considered 'essential to citizens for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.'

It is evident that the personal and professional development trajectory is a lifelong process that calls for the development of competences that supplement one another and are applicable across situations.

Regarding the ability to use ICT tools, such ability cannot be easily categorized into a capable or incapable user. Instead, it is a continuum moving from a user that utilizes ICT to perform simple tasks with guidance to a highly capable user who can solve complex problems, including proposing new ideas and processes.

Through the Joint Research Center, the European Commission has developed 'The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, also known as DigComp2.1. The revised framework, now DigComp2.1, groups the competences into five areas:

1. Information and data literacy: searching, evaluating, and managing data, information, and digital content;
2. Communication and collaboration: interacting, sharing, and collaborating using digital technologies simultaneously showing acceptable and proper behavior while being digitally present and being cautious about our digital identities;
3. Digital content creation: developing, integrating and re-elaborating (adapting, modifying) digital content; being aware of copyright and licenses; programming;
4. Safety: protecting devices, personal data and privacy, health and well-being and the environment;
5. Problem-solving: solving technical problems, identifying needs and technological responses; creatively using digital tools and identifying digital competence gaps.

Each competence area is further categorized into the 8 proficiency levels with each level, including the competence descriptors. Further on, the framework includes also examples of work to contextualize different employment and learning scenarios.

These competence areas can range from proficiency level 1 (foundation) to level 8 (highly specialized). It is thus evident that when it comes to using digital tools, one can be competent in different areas of ICT usage, and within each area, one can have different skills. For instance, within the competence of communication and collaboration, one person can be placed at the foundation level, while the other at the advanced or highly specialized level, depending on their capability. Much of the success in conducting digital events and activities depends on the preparation efforts we put into, and so, thorough preparations are always mandatory when organizing such events.

Therefore, on a planning and organizational level, it is essential to factor in the skills and abilities of the team engaged in tasks, activities and events made possible through the utilization of ICT tools. However, it is equally important also to consider the competences of participants. Of course, this does not mean that we need to limit ourselves to using only a selected number of ICT tools. In contrast, actions can be taken to encourage active participation.

Some ideas to ensure active participation in digital events:

- ✔ **Thinking about the participants' skills.** When there are no sufficient data available, a short questionnaire or poll can be circulated to get some more insights. Such information:
 - helps you structure the activities;
 - informs you if participants require additional technical support, which can be provided:
 - > before the event through guidelines, how-to materials, tips or practice sessions;
 - > during the event through step-by-step instructions or matching participants who are more skilled with those who might need more support.
- ✔ **Making sure that the participants know what is expected of them,** incl. the tools that will be used and the equipment needed to ensure successful participation.
- ✔ **Creating (or modifying existing) how-to manuals or guidelines** that give step-by-step instructions on using the selected digital tool (e.g., how to download an app, how to log in, how to navigate the app, etc.). Think of using guiding videos, where possible, as they can be easier to follow, can be replayed, and, at times, are more effective.
- ✔ **Running info or practice sessions before the actual event.** If the online experience entails active participation and interaction, group work that requires the use of specific digital tools, or similar, make sure to offer possibilities for practising the main features of the digital tools to be used before the event. In this way, during the actual event, participants will be (more) familiarized with the tools to be used and can focus more on the content of the event, which is, in fact, the primary goal. A lot of difficulties that arise in a digital environment result from the stress experienced by not being able to use the tools that make possible digital participation. So, it is important to take actions that reduce the potential challenges that participants might face.
- ✔ **Providing a timeslot before the event for technical check and support.** When drafting the agenda, make sure to include a timeslot, before the actual event starts, when participants can be assisted on a technical level (checking the microphone, camera, helping those who might have difficulties joining the event, or even giving some tips or refreshing the participants' knowledge on the key features to be used during the online event).
- ✔ **Making sure that the participants have the required digital tools available.** If key participants should be part of the event but do not have the equipment available (laptop, camera, microphone, internet) make sure to provide some resources for use during the event. In exceptional cases, you can also choose to group participants to share devices or even help each other navigate the online experience.
- ✔ **Taking time to design the activities.** Let the goal of each activity direct your preparation, but remain realistic as to how much you can achieve. Shorter activities can be more effective, so you might need to break down bigger activities into smaller ones. Clear and concise instructions help participants understand what is coming up next, what is expected of them, and what work modality will be used. It is important to prepare how to provide such instructions best.

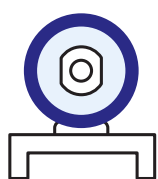
Key considerations

Digital infrastructure, accessories and tools are the primary resources that enable accessing the digital experience. During the initial planning of digital events, note down all the necessary technical resources to best bring to life your aim and content. The technical resources you need depend on the type of digital event you will organize. However, considerations such as existing hardware and software and accessories such as headsets and webcams are good starting points. Of course, if you plan to have an event that needs to be streamed to a larger audience, additional infrastructure is required. However, nowadays, such services can be contracted, so the organization does not need to invest in high-tech equipment that might not be used regularly.



Laptop(s) & Good internet connection

- Ensure that the devices you plan to use in the digital event are fully functional to minimize the chances of running into unforeseen issues.
- Keeping your laptop(s) organized, particularly the desktop will enable a smoother navigation of the tools and materials that will be used in the event.
- A good internet connection is also key in conducting successful digital events. If possible, use Ethernet connection (cable internet connection). In any case, make sure to test your internet connection and, in case you run into connection problems during your day-to-day tasks, make sure to fix such issues well ahead before the event.



Webcam

- Webcam has become a much-needed tool in digital events as it allows us to be better connected.
- Testing the webcam a few days in advance and 1-2 hours before the actual event ensures that it's functioning correctly and minimizes the risk of facing difficulties during the event.
- Integrated webcams in laptops are usually the most suitable option in terms of quality.
- Good lighting, along with a good posture, also contribute to the video quality.
- Use a solid background, or find a well-organized space so that the background does not provide distractions for the participants.
- During the event, make sure to sit in a well-lighted space. Do not turn your back to the light source, but rather sit in front of it.



Headset and microphone

- A headset with an integrated microphone is the preferable option in terms of quality as it provides a better audio source and usually minimizes background and surrounding noises.
- Testing the equipment earlier is a must to avoid issues during the event.
- Having an additional set might be helpful to avoid technical difficulties during the event.



Equipment needed for access and participation

- Make sure to inform participants well in advance on what is expected, how they will engage and what equipment do they need for successful participation.
- In cases when key participants lack infrastructure, consider providing them with space and equipment they can use, or simply suggest that they pair up with someone or use someone else's equipment.

Once this primary infrastructure is in place, we also need to think of the type of platform we want to use and if we need additional digital tools to support our activities. Ideally, you would want to choose a reliable, user-friendly platform that covers most of your needs for the successful organization of the event. However, your agenda and the content to be covered are the primary sources that guide your selection of digital tools.

Therefore, it is equally important that you include in your planning all other digital tools that will be used (e.g., a digital tool for collecting feedback from participants; a digital tool that enables assessing participants; a digital tool for enabling group work or another one that can be used as a virtual space for sharing materials with participants, or engaging them in discussions and exchanges during or after the event). Having broken down the agenda and the digital tools you will use, the next step is to create the materials needed for the event in a digital format.

Nowadays, countless digital tools can be used for creating a visually appealing invitation or agenda. But more importantly, in case you will have a highly interactive event in which participants are expected to contribute actively, then working materials should also be prepared well in advance.

Content materials

Just like you would use printed materials for a workshop or training, digital events also require creating content materials. This is particularly relevant for events that require participants' inputs and interaction. The advantage of using digital materials is that they are accessed, edited and saved in real-time. This also means that within the group work, the same material can be viewed by many participants who can also see each other's contribution and input on the document in real-time.

During the planning phase, together with other team members, schedule some time to **reflect** and **discuss** the working methods, the materials that will be used, the method for collecting input from participants, etc.

List all the materials that need to be created and shared with the participants. Such materials can be background reading materials, specific templates that facilitate group work, or simply a prompt question for reflection.

Create and **organize** the materials well in advance. This way, the facilitator(s) and the supporting team have ample time to familiarize themselves and so will be ready to provide clear instructions (and guidance when needed) to participants on the day of the event.

Each created digital material, especially those to be used by participants during individual, pair or group work, should include **clear and concise instructions** on what is expected from the participants and how to complete the given task.

Clear instructions should also be given before asking the participants to start working on a particular material. If particular digital skills are needed, you can also highlight **the key functions** to be used.

Make sure to set **the right privileges** (will the participants only view/read, or edit the offered material/document) for accessing and editing content within the digital tools that provide such functions (e.g., Google Docs, Padlet).

Creating **links** and saving them in a scheme that breaks down the agenda, the activities, working methods, timing is highly recommended as it enables more straightforward navigation during the event.

Facilitation team

When organizing digital events, it is vital to work alongside other people. Having a team in place offers possibilities for a better experience and fewer technical difficulties. Each team member has a specific role and is involved in preparation and organization accordingly.

Some of the key roles for digital events:

The role of the **Technical Support** can be covered by a technician, but not necessarily. Anyone attentive, detail-oriented and skilled in navigating ICT tools and solving problems can take on this role. The Technical Support team will mainly engage and participate in practice sessions and the event day to support the presenters

or facilitators. Most importantly, this role assists the participants with technical issues or difficulties they might face. The Technical support can also give instructions to participants at the beginning of the event on the key functions that will be used and how to use them, and perform testing with participants to see if the audio, video or other important functions are in place and working correctly.

The **Event Facilitator** supports the **Content Facilitator** by opening and closing the event, welcoming the participants, introducing the agenda, answering logistical or other process-related questions from online participants; managing Q&A sessions; moderating comments and/or questions provided by the participants and directing them to the Content Facilitator/Presenter; instructing participants to complete online exit surveys; giving out information on where and how the event materials will be made available to the participants; providing information on follow-up activities, future events; closing the event.

The **Content Facilitator/Presenter/Field Expert** can be the same person as the Event Facilitator or a different one. This decision depends on the capacities available, the topic in focus, the size of the event, etc. The role includes facilitating the content and topic in focus; giving presentations; leading and managing discussions; giving instructions for individual or group tasks; answering content-related questions; summarizing key points and inputs from the groups.

For larger events, you might want to assign more than one person for each role or even include more roles. It is crucial that each team member has a clear role and understand what is expected of him/her.

Handling unexpected technical problems

... and even though thorough preparations enable us to minimize most potential issues, we might still encounter technical issues during the event.

Of course, because you have carefully **prepared** in advance, have included a **supporting team** with defined **roles**, have **practiced** the selected **digital tools** and the **key functions** that you will use in the event, have become familiar with **the flow** and **the materials** to be used, managing such technical issues becomes much easier.

Some ideas to navigate possible technical difficulties during the event:

- ✔ Remain calm and don't be a panic-spreader. When the facilitator(s) is relaxed, the participants will feel that and respond likewise, and the issues are easier solved.
- ✔ Give attention to the participant(s) having difficulties.
- ✔ Identify the issue and find out if it is an isolated issue or if more participants are affected.
- ✔ Take a quick decision on how to move ahead. Can you reorganize any of the planned activities? Would that help? Is it an issue that can be easily fixed (e.g., muting the microphones because loud background noises are coming from some participants) or is it an issue requiring a longer intervention because most participants face the same difficulty? Do you need to introduce a short break until the issue is resolved, or maybe reschedule altogether?
- ✔ If there are specific people assigned to provide technical support, hand over the issue to them, if possible, to work on it separately. If individual support cannot be offered on the side while the rest of the group continues with the flow, kindly ask the rest of the participants to be patient until the issues are resolved.

And what about other not-so-technical difficulties?

You have prepared carefully and have put a lot of energy into designing the event, the content and working materials, yet it seems that the participants are bored. Or, at some other point, they may be distracted or confused by the task/exercise you have given. What should you do?

Some ideas:

- ✔ **Observe and understand the issue better.** Identify whether the above situations or other difficulties are a temporary thing or whether they have been continuing or repeating for a while now. In addition, try to identify how many participants are going through the same situation.
- ✔ **Try asking some questions to engage the participants in the discussion,** particularly if they have been listening passively for some time. Especially when trying to stimulate discussions, don't ask if someone has a question or something to say because if no one speaks, long pauses become awkward. Instead call out people by their names and ask for an opinion. Use previously prepared examples and guiding questions, and use the momentum to ask a question or go deeper into a discussion. As an alternative, you can give participants some time to write down their ideas in the chat (if available).
- ✔ **Stop the flow and introduce an energizer.** Energizers positively affect the group dynamics and are often used to refocus the attention.
- ✔ **Provide additional support and instructions for completing a task.** If participants have difficulties understanding a task or exercise that you have prepared, check if this is an isolated issue or if other participants feel the same. This will allow you to decide whether you can assign someone from your team to support the individual or group in completing the task; or whether you need to explain the exercise further this time contextualizing it, giving examples, or starting to work on the activity together with all participants. If the majority of participants have issues in understanding the task and what they are expected to do, this signals the need of reviewing the exercise and the instructions or modifying it altogether.

Creating and sharing event materials

Face-to-face meetings, info sessions, workshops, training, conferences or other activities that include participation and interaction almost always require preparation of one or more of the following: agenda, participants' lists, keynotes, presentation slides, working materials/templates to be used with the participants, background reading materials, flipcharts or similar to collect input during discussions, presentations or group work, exit tickets, and so on.

Such working materials, resources and facilitation tools are also needed to accompany our work in the digital environment. As mentioned before, the available ICT tools allow us to create, share and edit such materials in real-time with participants.

When planning and preparing for digital events, think and list the resources and materials you (or externally engaged facilitators) will use. As a next step, decide how these materials will be created and shared with the participants.

Some ideas on sharing event materials:

- ✔ Create a library/folder with the event materials. A good option is to use an online storage and sharing platform (such as OneDrive, Google Drive), which supports real-time collaboration. Using such tools enables all team members to work in the same documents without creating multiple versions and going back and forth via emails. In addition, such platforms allow you to create online documents which can then be shared and used by participants during the event. An advantage to these platforms is that documents can be read and/or edited by the participants with one click only because, when the right parameters are set up, no log-in is required.
- ✔ Think about the materials that need to be shared or used with the participants and when they need to be sent out (before, during or after the event).
- ✔ If you need to send out materials before or after the event, make sure to organize the materials and, depending on their size, decide whether you can send them via email. You can also use Google Drive when you have many materials, and size becomes an issue. Other available and easy-to-use services include WeTransfer, Dropbox, Padlet. Even though such services offer payment plans to utilize their functions fully, the free option/plan is always available and most often is sufficient to meet the needs.
- ✔ When it comes to materials to be used during the event for active participation and engagement of participants, make sure to organize the links to be shared and think how you will share these. Again, you have different options, some of which include:
 - > Sharing all links summarized in a PDF file or Word document with participants before the event: a convenient option, but which might trigger participants to check all activities before the event or distract them;
 - > Sharing the links as the activities are happening during the event via the chatbox, if available;
 - > Sharing the link on the screen so participants can type and open it on their own devices: this option would need short and easy to use links and might take more time until everyone accesses your materials.

Some digital tools and services for creating and sharing online

Tool	Use
Canva	Agenda, invitation, posters
Microsoft Office & Microsoft 365	Documents, presentations, charts and tables
Google Docs, Slides & Sheets	Documents, presentations, charts and tables
Padlet	Organizing materials (documents, videos, audios) in one virtual space
OneDrive	Creating, organizing and sharing files online
GoogleDrive	Creating, organizing and sharing files online
DropBox	Creating, organizing and sharing files online
WeTransfer	Sharing files and materials (especially when there are many and in large file sizes) via a link or email address
Tinyurl	Shortening long URL links for easier sharing with others
Bitly	Shortening long URL links for easier sharing with others

When you need to use documents and templates that allow participants to work individually or in groups in completing a specific task, a general recommendation is to create such materials in the online format. If you create an offline document and share it with your participants, they need to modify it individually and send it back to you. On the other hand, online documents (e.g., Google Docs or Microsoft Word online) allow participants to work simultaneously in the same template. There is no need to share or send the document back as it is saved automatically online. This simple strategy contributes to organizing the time and the activities effectively and, most importantly, enhances the participants' interaction and involvement in the digital event.

Task management

It is evident that organizing digital events, particularly longer ones with a high level of participant interactivity and involvement, involves planning and preparing many tasks and details. For easier management, make sure to put a team in place, define roles and responsibilities and use action plans and to-do lists for tracking the progress of task completion. Such task management tools such as action plans and to-do lists should be made available and shared with all the team members involved and in charge of organizing online events. A good option is to use online word processors or spreadsheets (such as the online version of Word or Excel, or Google Docs or Sheets) so that all members have access to real-time editing and updates. Another alternative is to use online organizers, and task manager apps specialized in task management (some options are presented in the third section).

Brand visibility

There are many ways you can keep your brand visible in digital events. From the use of logos in standard documents to the use of backgrounds in video conferencing platforms, brand visibility contributes to the organization's promotion and makes the materials and the event more appealing.

Some ideas on making your brand visible:

- ✔ Use virtual backgrounds with video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype. Virtual backgrounds allow you to promote your organization and keep away distractions with heavy-loaded physical backgrounds (e.g., when working from home or busy spaces). Make sure to use a simple design. Too many visual elements can become a source of distraction and indirectly overwhelm the participants.
- ✔ Use your brand in the templates you create to be shared and used with the participants, including the agenda, working templates, presentations.
- ✔ Think of including your organization's name or abbreviation in the links you create. Creating short links/URLs via available digital tools such as TinyURL or Bitly helps in sharing and accessing digital materials easier. In addition, it keeps your organization visible as such tools allow customization of URLs.

SECTION 2

SETTING UP AN ONLINE EXPERIENCE

As highlighted in the previous sections, just like with face-to-face events, ample preparation needs to be factored in when preparing for an online event. The aim, the agenda, the delivery mode and working materials are all factors that determine which path is chosen to achieve the results best.

In addition to these, when working in an online environment, other factors need to be considered. Which digital tool(s) serves us best to deliver the agenda and achieve our aim? What are the participants' competencies in navigating through our chosen tools? What are the facilitator's skills in navigating through the selected platform? How are the materials adapted to allow for high engagement and active participation? Is there a need for technical support in conducting an online experience? These are just some of the guiding questions that can help to create a successful online venture.

At the end of the day, technology is a tool, a gateway that allows us to move from point A to B. Like with all the other tools, digital tools likewise require a bit of familiarization, study, and practice to best use them. And when working with a group of people with different skills and knowledge, cautious preparations should be made to enable an engaging and successful experience in which all can participate.

Setting up a successful online experience is dependable on several factors. Consider these factors sequentially as one decision allows you to define the next steps you need to take.

- The aim that needs to be achieved & the agenda;
- Method of delivery (whether it is a presentation, an interactive discussion, group work or something in between);
- Working materials;
- Number of participants and level of involvement;
- Participants' competencies in terms of the topic and the digital tools to be used;
- Technical support available to support both the facilitators/presenters and the participants.

A general rule of thumb is:

the higher the active involvement of participants, the higher the preparation required, and a greater variety of digital tools used.

Yet, it is evident that when participants are actively involved, the final results are higher.

2.1 Type of experience

The topic and agenda are the first things that guide the organization of an event. These two elements help in determining what kind of event should be offered (whether it is a one-way presentation or presentation with interactive sessions; an info session; a workshop or training; round table; conference, etc.), what kind of materials will be used, how much and how often the participants will interact with the facilitator/trainer and the presented materials.

Consequently, several aspects are considered when planning and preparing for organizing an event (online or not) to address the chosen topic and the agenda we have put in place. These aspects, along with some possible ideas, are provided below.

Creating and using technical documents: participants' list, agenda, exit tickets.

Engaging the participants: icebreakers & energizers, brainstorming activity, polls, discussion, individual reflection, pair and group work.

Creating and using engaging content materials: instructions/working documents or templates for exercises and/or group work; well designed, concise and visually appealing presentations, reading materials, video resources, etc.

The organization's portfolio and activities provide numerous entry points where communication, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration with various stakeholders occur. The knowledge and experience of organizations in organizing info sessions, workshops, public discussions, round tables, workshops, training, and more are significant advantages that provide a solid basis for digitalizing such events and activities.

Number of participants

Because of the specifics of the digital experiences, more attention should be paid to the number of participants, duration of the digital event, dedicated timeslots for each activity.

A general rule of thumb:

The lower the interactivity with the participants, the higher the number of participants.

The higher the participants' interactivity, the lower the number of individuals participating in the event.

Or, to put it differently, if the digital experience will only offer expository material (e.g., presentation on a topic) without involving too much and too often the participants in discussions, group work, feedback, then a higher number of individuals can be involved as the communication is mainly one-directional. Of course, you can still include some interactivity so that participants feel involved. For instance, you can create a poll, brainstorm, ask them to write ideas/questions/comments in the chat (if available).

In contrast, with two-way communication where both the facilitator and the participants are highly engaged in discussion and collaboration within the digital experience, the number of participants should be limited.

Of course, there are exceptions to this general rule, and, in the end, each organization should define the number of participants based on the existing capacities (i.e., infrastructure, number of team members involved, aims of the activity, etc.). However, it is important to create a digital experience where all participants get the best outcomes out of it.

Duration of the digital event

Similarly, the duration of the event and the activities should not be overlooked during the planning and preparatory phase. Much of the attention, participation and engagement of participants is dependable on the facilitator's skills, the relevance of the topic, the way that topic is tackled and conveyed, and the supporting materials (e.g., visuals), among others.

Yet, digital ways of learning and working, at times, can overwork participants, especially when they are kept for long hours before a screen. Of course, this is a broad generalization as it comes down to the individual prior experiences and engagement with ICT. However, because digitalization is quite a recent topic, most users lose focus when sitting for very long hours in front of the screen. It is, therefore, important to also factor in the timing of the whole event and specific activities when planning. If participants will be engaged in group work and presentations, provide sufficient time not to rush the participants and keep up with your plan.

It is overall recommended that an online session should not be longer than 1.30 hrs. long. When the workshops, training or other more extended events are organized, follow the same principle and use breaks in-between the sessions. Preferably, within a day, you would want to conduct two sessions (with a short break in-between), have a longer break (1-3 hours) and then have two other sessions (again with a short break in-between sessions).

Sample two-day workshop/training agenda:

Day 1

Morning session

08.00 – 08.15 Welcome and technical support
08.30 – 10.00 Session 1
10.00 – 10.10 Short break
10.10 – 11.40 Session 2
11.40 – 13.30 Long break

Afternoon session

13.30 – 13.45 Welcome and technical support
13.45 – 15.15 Session 3
15.15 – 15.30 Short break
15.30 – 17.00 Session 4

Day 2

Morning session

08.00 – 08.15 Welcome and technical support
08.30 – 10.00 Session 5
10.00 – 10.10 Short break
10.10 – 11.40 Session 6
11.40 – 13.30 Long break

Afternoon session

13.30 – 13.45 Welcome and technical support
13.45 – 15.15 Session 7
15.15 – 15.30 Short break
15.30 – 17.00 Session 8

Depending on the group of participants, you might even want to try breaking down the schedule into four days with 2 sessions each. Naturally, you might have requests to make the breaks shorter, however, keep in mind that although we might be tempted to complete something faster, such decisions might affect the quality of our events. Informing the participants on time and emphasizing the reasons for choosing a not-so-common agenda might be useful to get participants on board and ensure their participation in the event.

In terms of the activities, a general recommendation is to use a variety of short activities, mixing and matching between them. Keeping balance can be an overall rule that guides your work here. For example, if you have a 20 minutes' lecture, think of including a short 5-minute activity where participants can summarize the main points they found most interesting (in groups if available), or insert a quick exercise/task that covers the main concepts of the lecture/presentation with participants completing it. In this way, you can also cross-check if the lecture was digested or if you need to come back to some elements for further elaboration.

A general principle is to keep shorter sessions for presentations or discussions (up to 45 minutes'). Longer sessions (up to 90 minutes') can be organized for group work, working on tasks and exercises, working on activities that build skills, or similar.

In addition, when there is a lot of information to be presented by the facilitator, such information should be broken down into smaller chunks. The presenter can split up the content and include a poll, question for reflection, or similar, to get some energy going and refocus the attention for the following content to be presented.

2.2 Actions to be taken before, during and after the online event

The following ideas provide a comprehensive checklist that can guide your preparation for organizing online events such as workshops, training, webinar, conferences. It can be said that investing energy and time in preparing minimizes the risk of running into difficulties during the online event and finding quick solutions when issues arise. In addition, thorough preparations contribute to a successful event in which the team, the presenters/facilitators and participants feel engaged and worthy of participating.

Feel free to modify this checklist based on your needs and prior experiences.

Before the online event

Step 1: Define the aim and topics to be addressed.

Step 2: Define the delivery method(s) and the level of participants' engagement.

Step 3: Think about your participants: how many will be invited and what are their technical skills.

Step 4: Define the agenda: The topics to be addressed will define the length of the event that needs to be organized. Please keep in mind that online events, particularly those involving a bigger number of participants, can be overwhelming if too long. Therefore, it is essential that you do not harm the content but also that you do not risk losing participants during the event or end up talking to a group of people whose energy and concentration levels are down. So, careful planning is crucial. If there is a need for a more extended online event, break it down into smaller sections (e.g., maximum up to 3 hours with a 10-15 min break included) with longer break intervals between sessions.

Also, don't forget to include a timeslot at the beginning for technical check and support for participants. It is important that you include this in the agenda for the participants to log in earlier to assist them with technicalities before the main session starts.

Finally, try to keep the activities varied so that the participants do not listen passively for three hours but are actively engaged. Asking questions, switching activities, including an energizer, or even solely opening and encouraging the use of the chat function can contribute to keeping the participants energized and engaged.

Step 5: Decide what human capacities are needed for the event (facilitators, technical assistance, tracking the interactions, etc.). When planning, think about the tasks you will conduct. Particularly when organizing online events that enable exchanges and group work, it is very demanding for one person to facilitate the event by presenting, listening, answering questions, and giving instructions for the next task. So, having additional team members on board who have specific roles is a great advantage and a must for organizing successful online events (e.g., providing technical assistance with screen sharing, using the tools, sharing links on the chatbox, etc.; tracking the group and their interactions: checking how has used the raise hand function, keep track of next speakers, reading the chatbox, answering questions or forwarding them to the facilitator).

Step 6: Choose the digital tool(s) that best facilitate your online event. Your aim, the delivery methods and the involvement of participants guide the selection of the digital tool(s) to be used. Think about the main platform you will use for video communicating with your audience. And then, think about other supporting digital tools that facilitate your event. For instance, you might choose to play a video from a video streaming service, or you might need an online document where the participants can work in groups to complete an exercise.

Step 7: Prepare the scheme delineating the agenda further (such scheme should contain all key information in one place, e.g., list of activities/delivery method (e.g., presentation/lecture, group work, brainstorming, video, reflection, etc.); time assigned; materials to be used and if stored online link for accessing the material; the person in charge; and other relevant details (see the given example template).

Step 8: Prepare the working materials, and if you include group work facilitated through a template, make sure to make enough online copies for each group and to set the proper privileges in settings (e.g., participants can only view the document, or participants can also edit it).

Step 9: Familiarize yourself with the selected digital tools, test the key options/functions alone or with your colleagues.

Step 10: Prepare materials to be shared with the participants. Make sure you send out the agenda, other pre-participation material, and the essential information on joining your event. Depending on the selected tool and the level of participant's involvement in the event, you can send out a guideline on how to access your event (e.g., instructions on downloading and using the tool). You can also circulate some general tips recommended to maximize the gains from the online event, for example:

- Remind them about the online event;
- Encourage them to prepare beforehand for the online event (e.g., please try to find a quiet place with a stable internet connection; if you need support in online participant see if you can ask a colleague, family member or friend to support you; use headphones is possible; keep the cameras open; inform them on the level of participation expected from them and give a general description of the activities that will be conducted etc.);
- Inform them if participation and/or active participation will be tracked and if the event will be recorded.

Step 11: Optional

If you offer online training, which has more specifics, is longer, requires participants' continuous participation through selected digital tools, and so on, think about providing Info Sessions before the actual online training date. Info sessions have numerous advantages: creating a space for getting to know one another (team and participants); introduction to topics in focus; agenda; expectations; familiarization with key technical features to be used. Most importantly, the info sessions minimize the overload of the first actual training day.

During the online event

Step 1: Join the event earlier (at least ½ - 1 hour earlier) to check that all technical issues at your end are in order (internet, camera, microphone, created online materials, etc.).

Step 2: When the participants join in, welcome and inform them that in the first 15 – 30 minutes, you will provide technical support for the participants. Call out specific participants, or ask them to introduce themselves so that you can confirm that they can listen and respond if needed. If some participants are having issues, try to give some instructions and provide assistance to resolve any problems. If no solution can be found, tell the participant(s) to try joining using a different device or even ask for help from someone who might be physically close to them. If you have other team members on board who are assigned to provide technical support, let the participants know who they can reach out to.

Step 3: Spend some time, without going into too many details, explaining the main features of the digital tool that will be used depending on how the online experience has been set up.

Step 4: Be original and patient. The online event brings together people who are accessing the event from different devices, have different technical skills, and are scattered across locations.

Try to set some ground rules and expectations for participants (e.g., participating actively, opening the microphones, keeping the camera open, raising hands or using the chatbox).

But, be patient with participants who might have difficulties on the way. Also, remind the participants that becoming competent in using technology is a process so that it is understandable that people have different competences and interact differently through digital tools. Try to encourage them by pointing out that they will become better once they start familiarizing themselves with the tools.

Being original enables a better connection to participants, hence allows you to convey your messages better. Although you are not close to each other, there is still room for employing your presentation and facilitation skills. Try to observe the participants, their facial expressions and their attention focus. Do you need to repeat something? Do you need to draw someone's attention? Maybe you need to give some space to participants to ask questions. Or perhaps you need to improvise and do a quick energizer to increase their concentration level, or at least give a 5-minute break so that they can move around and come back refreshed.

Make sure to be original and engaging with the presentation of the content and information. Do not use presentations slides that are overloaded with text and do not simply read from the screen (the participants can do that on their own). Think about the visual aspects and how you can use them to supplement the information you are giving and to engage the participants with the materials.

Address participants by name, ask questions to the whole group but also address them to individuals. Acknowledge the contributions and inputs given by the participants.

And finally, be a positive role model.

Step 5: Silences can be awkward, especially in an online event with many participants. Therefore, if you need to open up a presentation, are waiting for a link to open, or just need some time to move from one activity to the other, make sure that you are vocalizing the steps you are taking (e.g., I am now sharing my screen so you can see my presentation. Let's move now into watching a video, I will quickly open the video, etc.).

Step 6: Give instructions if participants are expected to interact. For example, if there is a discussion in the plenary format, you can instruct on opening the microphones and cameras. To avoid long silences because no participants are willing to speak up, try calling individuals by their name, but be careful not to push them too much.

Or, if they are expected to work in smaller groups to discuss or work on the same document/template, before sending the participants to work in groups, make sure they understand the instructions by sharing them on the screen along with any template material you have prepared. Also, inform groups how they will present their work to know in advance about what's coming next.

Think about the instructions before coming to the event. Try to keep the instructions short and concise, and be ready to paraphrase if some people need further elaboration.

Step 6: If participants are expected to work in groups (something that has been already defined in the first phase when preparing the agenda and deciding on the delivery methods), make sure that a team member or another facilitator is part of each group. This is particularly useful if participants are new to your online work methods and the online group work. The team member and/or facilitator can support the group with accessing and editing the online working templates, if any; can encourage and direct the discussion and make sure that the participants are not drifting away from the task.

After the online event

Step 1: Reflect, reflect, reflect. Once the event is over, make sure to hang around a bit longer so that the facilitators and the supporting team can reflect on the experience, the flow, things that went well and things that can be improved. Although such reflection might end up being very detailed or technical oriented, it is imperative to engage in such reflections and discussions right after the event. Also, make sure you note down your conclusions or alternative options for the next times. In the online environment, perhaps even more than in the physical one, the details count. A discoordination between when to open and when to close all the microphones or a function that could have been set up differently plays a significant role in the flow of the event. So, keeping notes on such issues (particularly if you are just recently taking on the online events or a new digital tool) will allow you to perform better next time.

Step 2: Exit tickets. In case you have not distributed the exit tickets before bringing the event to an end, make sure to share with participants a link where they can give their feedback on the event (preferably choose a tool that enables anonymity, and encourage participants to fill it in so that you can be better prepared and offer a better online experience in the future).

Step 3: If you need to share some follow-up information, materials, presentation slides with the participants, use the opportunity to reach out to them after the event. Make sure to let the participants know that you appreciate their active participation in the event.

Careful preparation must be carried out in all phases (before, during and after the event). When planning, it is also helpful to think about what might go wrong so that you already think about plan B or C if A does not work.

However, keep in mind that flexibility and adaptation are also key in conducting successful online events. So, if something drifts away from your general plan, particularly because of some difficulties arising from the digital environment, be quick in finding an alternative solution (e.g., if none of the group members can access the online template you have created for the group work, make sure that members providing technical support take over in opening, screen sharing and filling in the document by encouraging the participants to articulate their input.

EVENT SCHEME – the more detailed, the better. The event scheme can be beneficial in helping you prepare, keeping organized and facilitating the online event.

If you use a scheme that includes all the online event details, there will be no need to jump through folders or online windows. Instead, you use the scheme and just click on the links which take you to the materials that have been previously created online.

If within your online event, you have created online resources that the participants will use (e.g., a SWOT template, a group work exercise, a brainstorming activity), make sure to include the links into the scheme so that they can be easily shared with the participants during the event via the chat function.

When you are using materials from your device, make sure to organize all the materials into a shared folder for easier access.

Just as an illustration, several digital tools have been integrated into the following scheme. However, choosing which tools to use and how many derive from your aims and results you want to attain.

* links included in the following scheme are given as an example, and so they are not functional.

Morning sessions (1&2)

Session 1: Importance of using digital tools for work processes

#	Activity	Work method	Materials When using online links, include them after the specific material for easier access	Time
1	What do you use digital tools for?	Brainstorming	www.aswergraden.ch	10 min
2	Why use digital tools in our work?	Presentation	PowerPoint Presentation – Part 1	20 min
3	How are other organizations using digital tools?	Video case study Plenary discussion	PowerPoint Presentation with guiding information on what to focus/what to observe? – Part 2 Video: www.youtube.com/casestudyvideo Google Docs for keeping note of the key ideas during discussion www.google.com/docs/plenary1	30 min

Virtual coffee break

Optional: play music in the background and use a picture of your logo or another picture

15 mins

Session 2: Integrating digital tools

4	Integrating digital tools: Some key considerations	Presentation	PowerPoint Presentation – Part 3	20 min
5	Check-in	Individual responses	Poll: revising key concepts Google Forms https://forms.gle/asxc4asdf	10 min
6	Integrating digital tools: Going further	Presentation	PowerPoint Presentation – Part 4	20 min
7	Putting it in practice – Part 1	Group work (5 groups assigned randomly to 5 break out rooms)	Working templates (incl. instructions for group work) Google Docs Group 1: www.google.com/docs/group1 Group 2: www.google.com/docs/group2 Group 3: www.google.com/docs/group3 Group 4: www.google.com/docs/group4 Group 5: www.google.com/docs/group5	40 min



KEEP IN MIND

Utilizing digital tools is a process, and the more we experiment with them, the better we become. So, when struggling with finding the right way of using a digital tool, remind yourself and your participants that the next times will become easier. Practice shows that the first sessions are usually a bit more hectic, while in the following sessions, participants already start getting a feel on the tool(s) and begin focusing more and more on the content. Of course, info sessions organized to give essential information and introduce the working methods and tools, expectations, agenda, or the distribution of materials and how-to guides to participants before the event, are a great help in minimizing the overwhelming feeling that can build up during the first session.

SECTION 3

DIGITAL CHOICES FOR SYNCHRONOUS DIGITAL EVENTS

So far, we have seen that integrating digital tools requires taking a design approach. In each step, we reflect on the goals we aim to achieve on a macro (type of event) and micro-level (task and activity level), the resources available (infrastructure level, human level) and make choices accordingly.

When planning an event (info session, presentation, webinar, conference, training, workshop, round table, etc.), we think about the agenda, topics and facilitators, and the resources needed and organize our work following such initial decisions.

Similarly, we have seen some approaches we can take on things to consider and resources needed to conduct successful digital events.

This section presents several digital tools we can choose from to connect with our audiences and participants. In addition, it offers tools that can help us stay organized when planning and preparing for digital events, create content to be used before, during or after the event, store and share content, and interact and collaborate. In addition, for each category, several possible activities are highlighted.

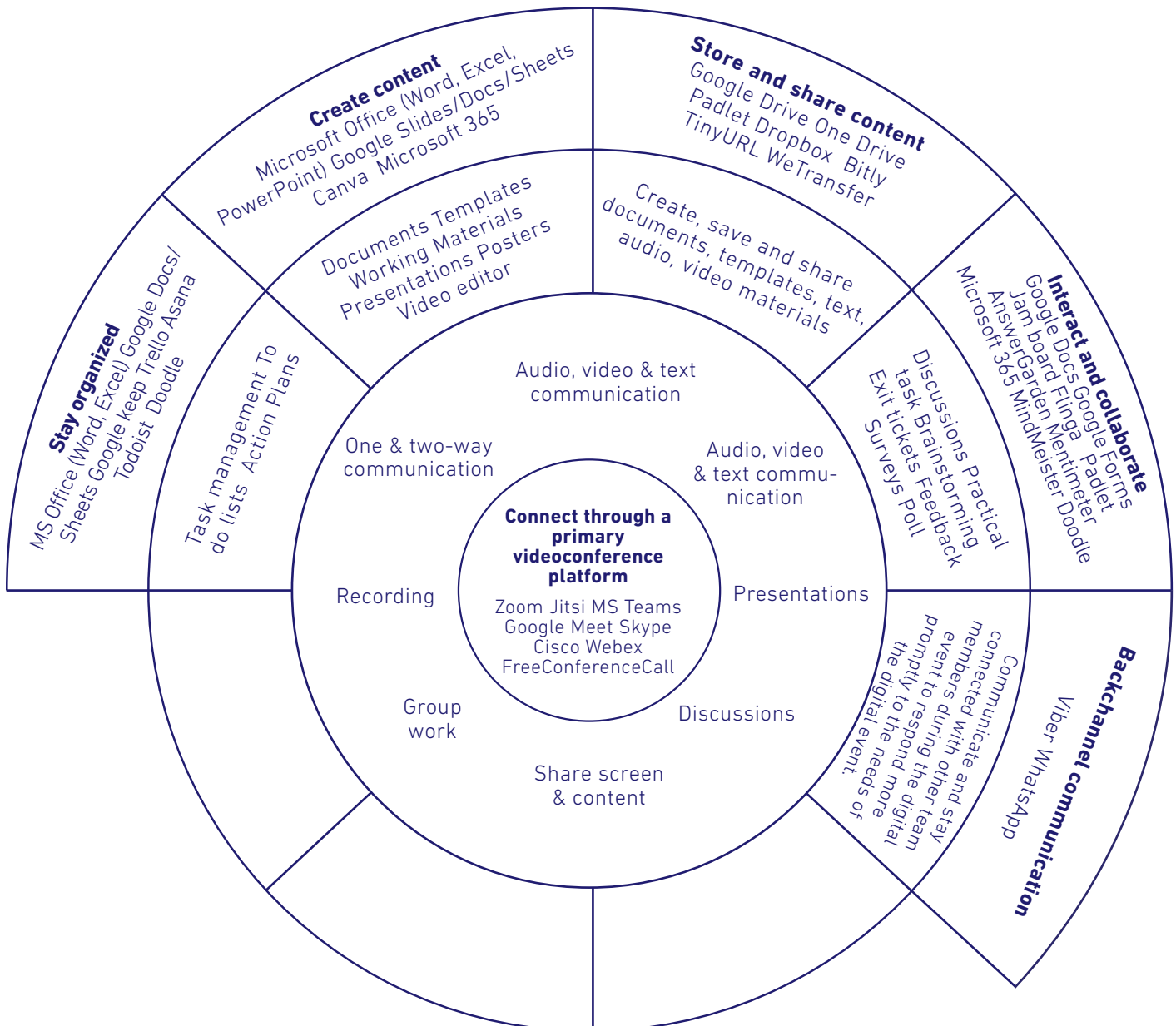
3.1 All the options we have

Nowadays, there are many options we can choose from when we want to connect with others, create materials and content, interact and collaborate. Zoom, Skype, Google Meet are just some of the available tools for video communication that let us connect and transmit voice, video and text messages via the internet. Although most video communication platforms have some similar basic features (audio and video connection, screen sharing, etc.), there are differences in additional features that such tools offer.

When we organize a short event, which offers mainly one-way communication and is conducted solely through presentations, we need to make fewer choices because a video communication tool is usually sufficient.

However, suppose we plan to offer an interactive event that provides possibilities for actively engaging the participants. In that case, apart from the main video communication platform, we can also choose other tools to create, store and share working materials, enable group work, offer a brainstorming or polling activity, etc.

The following figure groups some of the available tools based on their purpose and highlights activities for each group.



3.2 So, what tools to choose?

Having all these options available might be more challenging to decide which tool to use. When there are similarities, the organizations can choose the platform they are already familiar with or partially use the existing services. For instance, if an organization uses Microsoft, then OneDrive might be a more preferred option to Google Drive for creating online documents, storing and sharing them.

However, organizations should be open to learning more about the tools, experimenting, and deciding which option is better to meet their goals, even if this requires a bit more familiarization with the selected tool.

The successful use of digital tools depends on several factors, including what the tool offers, how we use it, how we present and guide the participants, and the participants' skills in using the chosen tools. Therefore, it is important to select tools we are familiar with or familiarize ourselves with the tool before using it in the actual event. Test the tool yourself, but as needed, invite some colleagues to join your online event so that you can try out all the available options.

Even when you are familiar with the tool, always make sure to set some time apart before the event to ensure that all is working on a technical level (e.g., internet connection, microphone, camera, screen sharing, materials you have created, etc.). This way, when participants start joining in, you will be fully present and ready to start interacting with them.

Recommendations highlighted in previous sections on being selective with choosing tools that best serve our needs, dedicating some time for practice both as organizers and offering participants opportunities for practice sessions or sharing step-by-step guidelines on using the tool before the actual event are critical considerations for a successful event. In addition, the facilitator or the technical support team have to be well prepared for offering simple and straightforward instructions to participants to access and use one of the chosen tools during the event, all the while being patient in providing such instructions and help.

In relation to **video conference platforms**, most existing services such as Microsoft or Google have already advanced their features and video communication tools. Nonetheless, many organizations continue to prefer using Zoom, perhaps because it is one of the specialized video communication services that has integrated many valuable features in their platform.

The table below compares some of the most popular video conferencing platforms, focusing on some key features that enrich the online events' flow and success.

For a one-way presentation or events with fewer participants, organizations might pick a very easy-to-use platform such as Jitsi. Yet, when organizing interactive events, they may opt towards Zoom or MS Teams as they offer features such as breakout rooms for group work, allow for integrated polls, or might just support a higher number of participants.

VIDEO CONFERENCE PLATFORMS

Platform	Zoom		Microsoft			Google Meet meet.google.com		Jitsi Meet meet.jit.si	FreeConferenceCall www. freeconferencecall. com
Features			Skype Meet now	MS Teams					
Cost	Free	Starting at \$14.99 USD / license/ month (up to 9 licenses can be purchased per account)	Free	Free	Starting at \$5 per user/month (plus tax)	Free	Starting at \$8 per active user/month	Free	Free
Length limit	40 mins group meetings (unlimited 1:1 meetings)	Up to 30 hours	Up to 24 hours	60 mins (because of COVID-19 currently 24 hours)	Up to 24 hours	60 mins group meetings (1:1 meeting 24hrs max)	Up to 24 hours	Unlimited	Unlimited
# of participants	Up to 100	Up to 100	Up to 100 participants	Up to 100 (because of COVID-19 currently 300)	Up to 300	Up to 100	Up to 150	Up to 100	Up to 1000
Access	Web browser and download option (PC and smartphones)		Web browser and download option (PC and smartphones)	Web browser and download option (PC and smartphones)		Web browser and download option (PC and smartphones)		Web browser and phone app	Web browser and download option
Who can create meetings	Anyone who registers for a Zoom account via an existing email		Anyone (with or without a Skype ID)	Anyone who has a Microsoft account		Anyone who has a Google account or uses Google workspace editions		Anyone	Anyone who registers or connects via an existing Google, Facebook or Apple account
Log-in options for participants	Meeting ID or Link + password		Guest access via link	Guest access via link		Anyone inside or outside the organization can join with a link	Anyone inside or outside the organization can join with a link	Guest access via link Password can be created*	Access via a link; Participants are asked to write their email and name
Screen sharing	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
		(multiple screen sharing)					(multiple screen sharing)		
Chat function		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
		To all and as private messages						To all and as private messages	To all and as private messages
Gestures / icons	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
	Raise hand Applause, like etc	Raise hand Applause, go faster/slower etc	Raise hand, like, etc	Raise hand, applause, like, etc.	Raise hand, applause, like, etc.		raise hand	raise hand	Raise hand, applause, like, etc.
Breakout rooms	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+
Whiteboard	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+
Interpretation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		(available in the business plan or webinar/large meeting add ons)							

VIDEO CONFERENCE PLATFORMS

Platform	Zoom		Microsoft			Google Meet meet.google.com		Jitsi Meet meet.jit.si	FreeConferenceCall www.freeconferencecall.com
Features			Skype Meet now	MS Teams					
Recording	⊕ on local device	⊕ On cloud (1 GB/licence) or on local device	⊕ All can record	⊖	⊕	⊖	⊕ Saved to Google Drive	⊕ save to Dropbox only	⊕ Saved to cloud (up to 1GB). A link is sent out to email after the event
Live streaming		⊕ Facebook Live, Youtube, 3 rd parties)	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊕	⊕ through Youtube only	⊖
Virtual waiting rooms	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊖	⊕	⊕
Roles	Host	Host Co-host(s) Interpreter	⊖	Organizer Presenter Attendee	Organizer Presenter Attendee	⊖	⊖	Moderator Participants	Host Co-host(s) Attendee
Mute participants	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕		⊕	⊕
Remove participants	⊕	⊕	⊖			⊕		⊕	⊕
Virtual background	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕		⊕	⊖
Calendar integration		Google Outlook	⊖	Microsoft calendar	Microsoft calendar	Google		Google & Microsoft	Google, Outlook
Other options		Features can be added by purchasing Add-on Plans (can be paid monthly): Large meetings (500 – 1000 interactive participants); Video webinar (100 interactive video panellists; Q&A; text-chat; polling; Interpretation; Attendees to Panelists; whiteboarding) Polling Participants can name & rename themselves			Attendance report Meeting notes		Polls & Q&A Attendance reports	Share directly from youtube Participants can name & rename themselves Speaker stats	Mode change for participants: Open Mode, Mute All, Lecture, Q&A Hold and Lock/Unlock meeting features Meeting reports sent to the email
								*Other participants can change the password, record the meeting & mute and disable the camera for other participants	

Staying organized is a process already very familiar to organizations. Action plans, to-do lists, and other task management tools help us stay organized and particularly come in handy when collaborating with others towards achieving joint goals.

Collaborating effectively with other team members is a key aspect in organizing activities and events, particularly those involving many participants, and require a high level of interactivity with attendees and resources. In the first section, specific roles that can be used in getting organized for the needs of the digital experiences were presented. To actively engage and coordinate team members who have particular roles, yet contribute to achieving the same goal, can be difficult, but when done correctly, a highly rewarding one.

It is therefore important to create a participatory approach where all team members can contribute. Digital tools are a great resource that support team collaboration. A digital workspace offers a platform for planning and staying organized while documenting and making the whole process visible. In addition, automation features like assigning tasks, receiving notifications that enable having a workflow overview supplement the regular team meetings where objectives are set, and roles are defined.

As such, some of the most common digital tools that we already use for to-do lists and action plans are apps from the Microsoft Office such as Word and Excel, and for users who have already started moving to the online environment, Microsoft 365 and Google Docs and Sheets are great tools that enable real-time collaboration and editing.

When it comes to digital events, using online solutions such as Google Docs or Word in Microsoft 365 are preferred solutions. They help us save time with editing numerous documents, creating different versions of the same document or going back and forth via emails.

Other digital tools are specialized in task management. Trello, Asana and Todoist are just some of such options. Of course, one can simply use the traditional way of making to-do lists and keeping up with tasks and still have a successful digital event. Yet, with large interactive digital events, there are many details to go through so that the actual event goes seamlessly. Some key features of the newer digital tools are highlighted below.

The following table provides a comparison of the free/basic plan only. While the payment plans, which offer more features, range from \$3-4 per month for Todoist and between \$10 – 14 per month for Asana and Trello.

Visual Collaborative Task Management Tools			
	Asana	Trello	Todoist
Cost	Free plan	Free plan	Free plan
Log in	Create an account or log in via a Google account	Create an account or log in via Google, Microsoft or Apple account	Create an account or log in via Google, Facebook or Apple account
Boards/projects	Unlimited	Up to 10	Up to 5
Collaborators	Up to 15	Unlimited	5 per project
Assignee and due dates	Yes	Yes	Yes
File uploads	Unlimited (100 MB per file)	Unlimited (10 MB per file)	Unlimited (5MB)

Creating content is also a regular task in the day-to-day work of organizations. Participant lists, agendas, meeting notes, presentations, videos, working templates for workshops and training, exit tickets are just some of the materials created and shared with participants. Like task management tools, Microsoft office (as well as Microsoft 365) and Google Apps are the preferred solutions for creating documents, presentations, tables, charts, or similar.

We want to highlight two additional tools here: The Microsoft Video Editor (previously known as Movie Maker) and the cloud service Canva.

The Microsoft Video Editor is an app already installed in most Windows computers and is a great digital tool to create and edit videos. Videos are a great resource to bring into our digital events as they help keep our events interesting and engaging.

Another excellent digital tool is Canva, a platform for graphic design used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents and other visual documents. Canva is very easy to use, offers many templates which can be edited and personalized. The created products can be shared with other team members for co-creation, and they can be published to other platforms or downloaded in different formats (as PNG or JPG images, PDFs, MP4 videos or GIFs). Although Canva offers paid plans, the free plan provides enough alternatives, and in addition, Canva offers its design tool for free for registered nonprofit organizations.

A general advice for creating content that will be shared, used and edited by the participants during interactive digital events is to use Microsoft 365 and Google Apps for the working documents/templates. Through such digital tools creating, sharing and using the documents with participants of the event becomes much more manageable. Once these materials are prepared before the event, the organizer can then share such materials during the event as links (via the chat feature) instead of sending the documents to the participants beforehand, requiring them to download and edit the documents and then send them back to you. At the same time, when groups or participants are asked to present their work during the online event, accessing the online materials is much easier. Finally, you as an organizer will have complete control over the documents as you can see as they are edited in real-time, don't need to ask the participants to send their work back to you via email as it is already saved on the cloud, and in cases when groups cannot share their screen to present their work, you can take over, and participants will still be able to present. Therefore, using cloud services contributes to time efficiency and more successful events.

If you are planning to organize a digital event in which the participants take an active role of not only listening and reflecting through speaking but also in conducting small tasks and exercises individually, in pairs or groups, **storing and sharing content** most easily is also something to consider and prepare in advance.

Having created content following the previous recommendations (using cloud services such as Microsoft 365 or Google Apps), storing and sharing becomes easier since both these services offer online storing and sharing features. OneDrive and Google Drive are two of the most popular file storage services offered on the cloud.

This implies that the content you create within these two platforms (documents, presentations, survey forms, etc.) can be edit in real-time by you as the owner/author of the content and the people you share the document with. Another advantage is that the documents can be shared via links – making file transfer very easy and fast – and all users can see each other's input, although they are located in different places and use different devices. These platforms also allow setting privileges, meaning that a file can be shared with others as an editable document or readable only version. Finally, as mentioned before, the event organizer will have full access to the content used with the participants during the digital event.

These two services are a great starting point because you can create, store in one place numerous documents, which can then be shared via links with the participants. This way, you have a one-stop online space to keep all the content you create for the digital event.


Both these services come with membership plans; however, they do offer a free version as well. The free plan is still functional, yet it would require better organization of documents and content as they need to be removed and replaced by other newer materials due to the available drive size, which is limited in the free plan.

Another great alternative to store the content of the online event is Padlet. This platform can be used as an intermediary resource for sharing the content with the participants easily. Padlet is recommended for occasions when you have many working documents that the participants will use, especially during workshops or training. By using Padlet, you avoid sharing each content material with the participants through individual links, but instead, you would share the link to the Padlet you have created in advance. On the other hand, the participants need to go to Padlet and open the content materials once guided by the event facilitator/trainer. However, keep in mind that participants who do not have experience with Padlet might need a bit of guidance on how to open or use Padlet. In addition, the facilitator or the support team would have to guide the participants on opening the right link/content material. Also, keep in mind that using Padlet would still require you to prepare the materials and upload them to Padlet. Again, using cloud services such as Microsoft 365 or Google Apps would enable real-time editing by a group of participants.

Dropbox, another file storage cloud service, can be considered an alternative for Padlet as it can store files and folders which can be shared with other users. However, Padlet is a much more visually appealing platform. On the other hand, Dropbox offers the possibility to create content directly in the platform using the Microsoft 365 apps (Word, Excel, Presentations) or Google Apps (Docs, Sheets, Slides). Another difference between these two platforms is the options they offer within their free plans. While Dropbox offers only 2GB of storage with the free plan, Padlet has stricter limitations. The uploaded file size should be 10MB only, however using online documents created via Microsoft 365 or Google Apps circumvents this issue. In addition, a user of the free plan in Padlet can create only up to 3 Padlet walls, yet these walls can be reused, and if additional space is needed, the payment plan costs €5 per month when paid annually.

Sharing content becomes much easier when such materials are created on cloud services. All it takes is sending the link to the users we want to collaborate directly to their email or copying the link and sharing it via other platforms. However, the links we get from platforms such as Google Apps or Microsoft 365 are very long, making them less appealing and harder to type when needed.

A solution to this is using URL shortening web services. Such services make it possible to shorten the long URL links we usually get from other platforms when we want to share something by copying the link. For instance, compare the following links:



Original link to access a Google Doc

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p7aPe2qwlJw-L-iFqqcAfdwk-D9MtzhB8UtKbKvoYT0/edit?usp=sharin>
- Edited link via Bitly: <http://bit.ly/shortURLCSOs>
- Edited link via TinyURL: <https://tinyurl.com/shortURLCSOs>

All these three links take you to the original document created via Google Docs. However, the second and third links are shorter, easier to copy and write. And when you need to share numerous links with your participants, having a cleaner and more concise view is always a preferred option. In addition, the second half of the link can still be customized and personalized. This way, it helps with being organized and can be better received by the users.

While the paid plans of these two services offer more options and can even include branding and visibility, the free plans can be used for shortening URLs. In this regard, TinyURL has an advantage as it offers unlimited access to shortening URLs and customizing the second half of the link, while with Bitly, up to 50 links can be customized per months.

WeTransfer is another digital tool recommended for sharing content with others, especially when you have multiple materials to share that you cannot send via email. So, WeTransfer can be helpful when you want to share multiple files at the same time. Sharing is done via a transfer link or an email transfer. An advantage is that there is no need to sign up or log in to share the materials. When you need to send out numerous materials to your participants, particularly before or after the event, WeTransfer can be the option to go to.

The free plan offers only the sharing function for up to 2GB, and the paid plan includes a larger size and additional features.

Interaction and collaboration are crucial aspects when organizing online events. Offering interactivity and collaboration opportunities directly engages the participants in our events more actively, making our event more participatory.

Of course, the level of interaction and collaboration with the participants depends very much on the type of online event we organize. Nonetheless, each event type requires making the participants' voice heard. For instance, an info session or presentation event focuses majorly on a one-way communication where many expository materials and information need to be transferred to the audience. In this case, the interaction level is relatively low, yet participants can still ask a question or provide their opinion (via audio or the chat function), can respond to a poll or can complete an exit ticket at the end of the event.

On the other hand, workshops and training sessions often require the complete involvement of the participants in taking part in discussions, completing a task or an exercise, working in pairs or groups.

Some of the video communication platforms, as presented earlier, do offer some options to ensure participants' involvement; however, they are still quite limited. Therefore, we need to use other digital tools to create resources that guide participants while working individually or in groups.

For instance, if participants will draw something during a workshop session, they can still do that in their notebooks and show their drawing through the camera. In cases when they are asked to discuss something, they can take turns to give their opinions. But, if they are asked to work as a group to create an action plan, do a SWOT analysis, or plan their next campaign, it is evident that the group members need a resource where they all can collaborate in completing the given task.

Generic documents or templates that give instructions and can be used as an online 'flipchart' can be easily created via the previously introduced cloud services such as Google Apps and Microsoft 365. The benefits of using online documents are numerous. They can be easily shared via a link and edited in real-time by multiple users. Therefore, participants can be split into smaller groups using the breakout room function offered by some of the video communication platforms. They can work jointly to complete a given task, which is afterwards presented to the big group.

There are also alternatives for online word processing services. Framapad and Riseup Pad are two online services that enable real-time group collaboration on text documents. In both digital tools, the user creating the online templates/documents can personalize the documents by giving a name and setting how long the document will be available. Both these tools are easily shared with other participants and collaborators through links.

Google Form is a great tool to create surveys and exit tickets. At the same time, it can be employed to develop quizzes with points assigned to each question, and grades can be issued once the quiz is submitted by a user or at a later date when the quizzes are reviewed manually.

Padlet can also be used as a collaborative tool. In Padlet, posts can be created, and others can view, comment and respond as needed. Posts can be created by uploading a document, adding a text message, audio recording, videos, and links, among others. For instance, the facilitator might post five different topics or questions and assign participants to groups, with each group having to provide ideas in their corresponding post in Padlet.

Jamboard and Flinga are also great collaboration tools that offer an online whiteboard that can be customized and used depending on the needs. These two tools can be used independently by the participants who need to work in groups or by the trainer to facilitate a particular activity. Both Jamboard and Flinga can be used to plan, brainstorm, map and diagram, among others. They use sticky notes, shapes, text and pictures to create a collaborative board. The Jamboard (a Google App) can be shared and accessed by participants via a link, while Flinga can be shared via a link or access code.

A digital tool that enables giving feedback, brainstorming, leading to real-time audience participation is AnswerGarden. It is a free digital tool that is easy to use, and it is very suitable for activities that require short responses from the participants. The participants are given a question or statement set up beforehand in AnswerGarden, and they simply open the link, enter their answer and click enter. The responses received by the participants are shown right away on the screen (or after refreshing), making it an excellent tool for brainstorming.

Presentations are a valuable resource for presenting content and a resource used frequently by organizations in almost all of their events. PowerPoint presentations are a familiar tool enabled by Microsoft Office. However, alternatives for creating presentations through cloud services or finding presentation templates are also prevalent nowadays. Google Slides is a cloud-based service, an alternative to PowerPoint presentations. Google Slides enables the creation of slides and presentation. In addition, it offers the possibility for receiving questions in real-time from the audience by using a link that, when enabled, is shown on top of the screen alongside the presentation. Using such a tool creates opportunities to engage the participants actively. They are offered the option to comment or ask questions without needing to interrupt the presenter or wait until the Q&A session is opened.

Another digital tool used to create online presentations and, in addition, to interact with the participants during the presentation is Mentimeter. So, the facilitator has the option to create slides and include question types or quiz questions in between presentation slides. The responses from participants are also shown in real-time on the selected slide, which contributes to engaging them and making them feel valued as their opinions are made visible right away. Accessing Mentimeter as a participant is very easy as they are required to simply open a link and use a code – both shown at the top of the slide while the presentation is taking place.

The free plan of Mentimeter does not limit the number of slides included in a presentation or the number of audience participants who can view the slides and respond to questions, polls, and brainstorm in real-time. In addition, Mentimeter also supports receiving questions from the audience as the presentation is taking place. However, there are other limitations. For example, in the free plan, only two questions and 5 quiz questions can be included within a presentation. Nonetheless, Mentimeter, even when using only the free plan, is a great option to make the presentations more engaging. It allows participants to ask questions while the presentation is taking place or during the Q&A slides and by integrating questions and quiz competition to answer and view the responses in real-time.

MindMeister is another digital tool that offers online mind mapping that can be used to enhance the engagement and interactivity with the participants through real-time collaboration. This platform provides ready-made templates that can be used for brainstorming, notetaking, project planning, and creating new templates from scratch, adapting them to more specific needs (e.g., illustrating how a work process works or placing items in categories).

The tool, like others, can be used and edited by the facilitator during the online event by collecting ideas from the participants (by taking turns to speak or collecting feedback in writing through the chat function). In addition, the facilitator can set up the task in advance and ask the participants to complete a mind map in groups. The free plan of MindMeister offers only 3 mind maps, which means that the participants need to be set up in three groups (when the number of participants is not too high). After the event, the mind maps can be extracted and deleted so that up to 3 other mind maps can be created for other future events.

Participants lists allow us to collect necessary information from our participants and record their attendance at our events. Moving to the digital space requires adjusting the way we collect information from our participants. There are some options in keeping track of attendees.

Some of the introduced video conferencing platforms do offer this service through the reports that are generated. Such reports usually include the list of participants, their participation time, active participation time, etc. This is a straightforward solution; however, there are two aspects to keep in mind. Only some tools offer this for free (e.g., FreeConferenceCall), while such reports are made available in other platforms with membership plan (e.g., Zoom) and, with some tools, parameters need to be set so that the participants go through registration. Secondly, names matter, particularly in participants lists. So, it is important that you check the options of the tool for registering, naming and renaming and that you inform the participants accordingly.

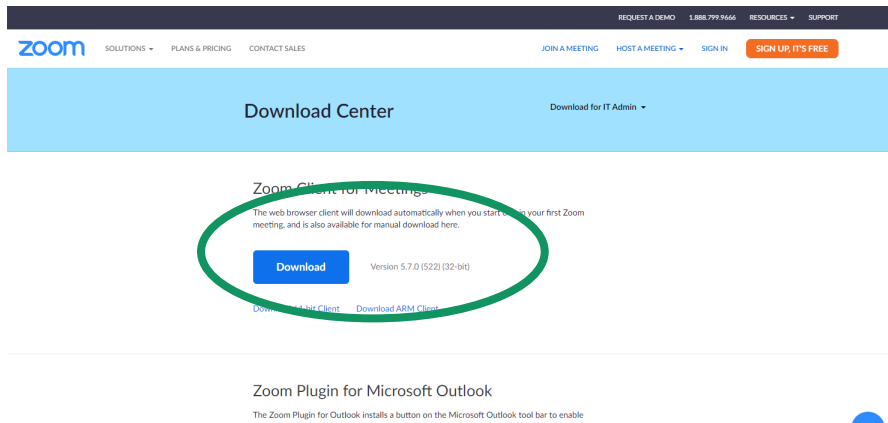
If your selected tool does not support issuing reports of participants present in the digital event, you can always use an alternative option. Google Form, which is used as a survey software, can be easily adapted to allow participants to register (either at the beginning or before ending the event). Keep such a form simple and include only the key information you need (name, email, job position, etc.). Afterwards, you can generate the responses in one document for your files.

3.3 Visual tips on setting up and using some digital tools

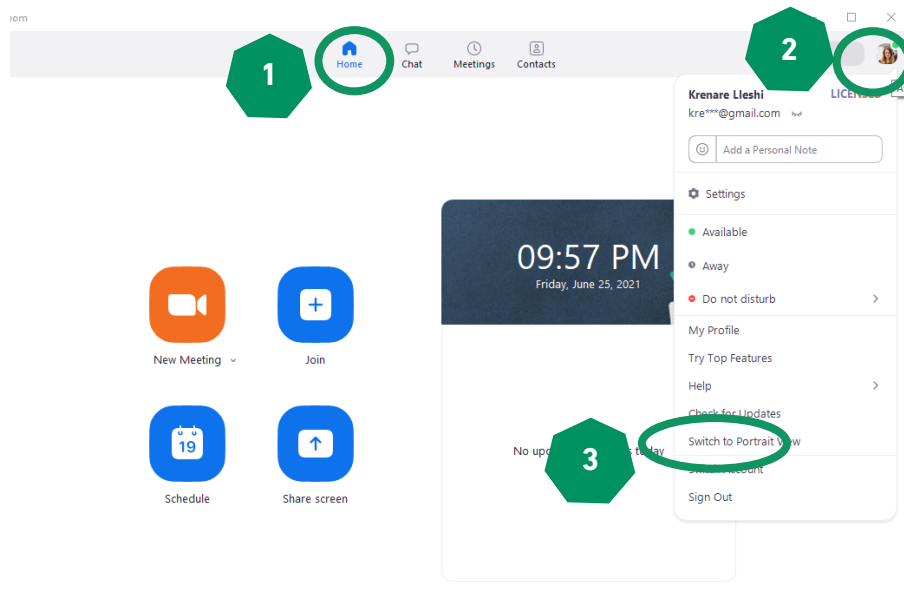
Zoom: Basics

Downloading Zoom on personal devices (laptop/computer)

- 🕒 **Step 1:** Go to <https://zoom.us/download>
- 🕒 **Step 2:** Choose the first option 'Zoom Client for Meetings'



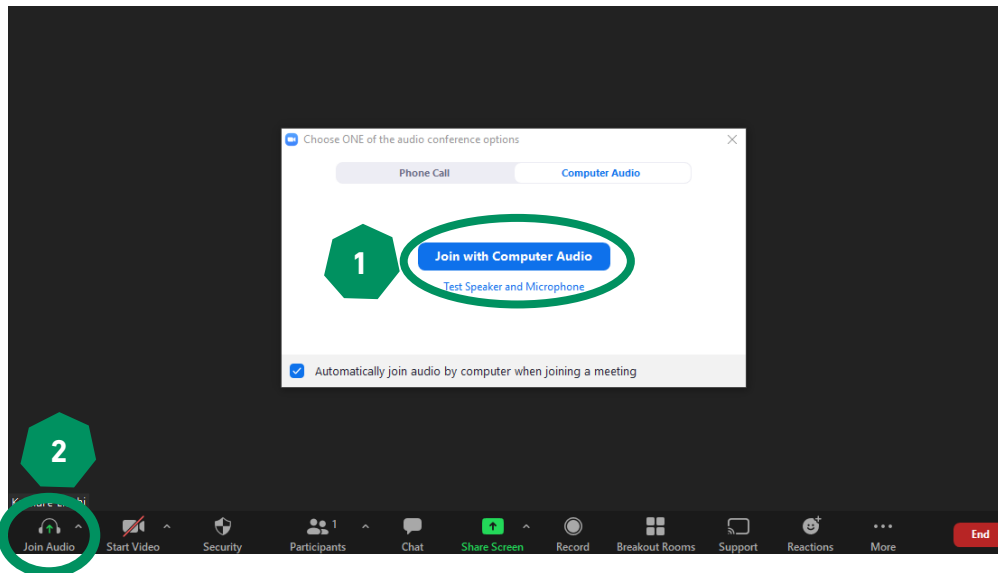
- 🕒 **Step 3:** If you have already installed Zoom on your devices, check if you have the latest version for a better performance



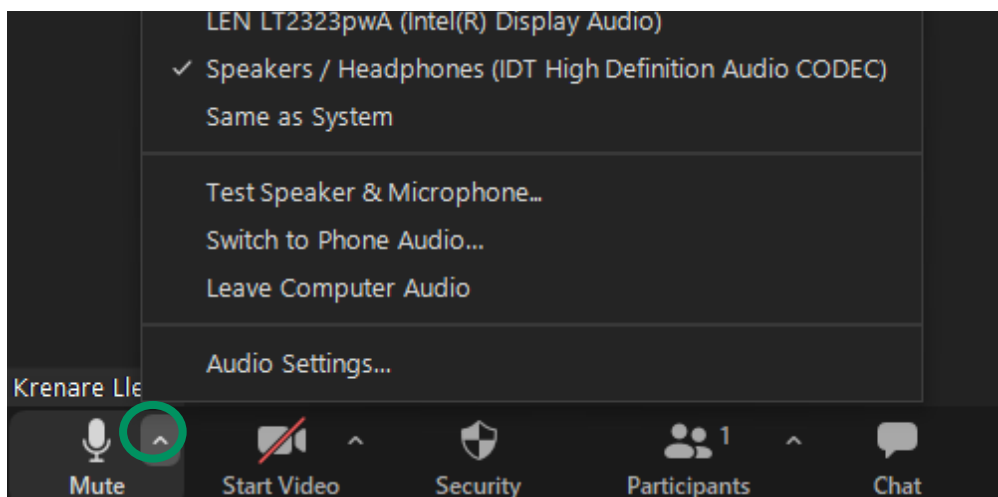
Connecting to Audio in the Zoom Meeting Platform

Connect Audio: the first item shown when accessing a meeting. Click on Join with Computer Audio, or use the second button, Test Speaker and Microphone, to perform a soundcheck.

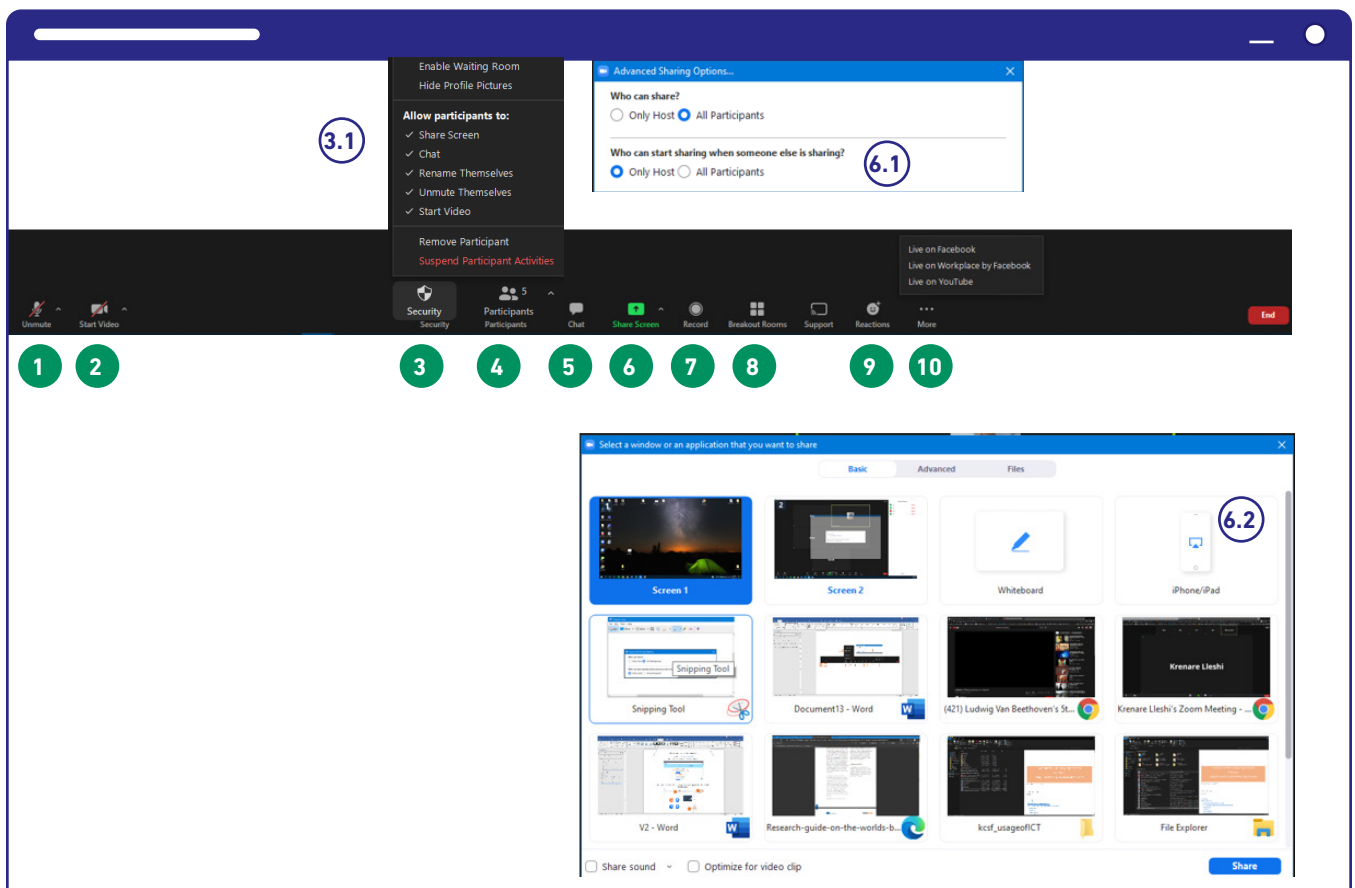
If you did not connect properly at the start, or have issues with your audio, go through step 2 to connect your audio source.



If you or your participants run into issues with the audio source, click the arrow next to the microphone option and try out the different options included in this window. When using a headset with an integrated microphone, it will be shown as one of the options, or you can also use your device's system, but be careful as the quality might be lower.



Main features in the Zoom Meeting platform



- 1 Mute and unmute button
- 2 Start or stop video/camera source
- 3 Security-related issues. A helpful menu for setting up parameters for participants. Depending on what type of experience you have set up, define whether participants can share their screen, chat, rename themselves, unmute themselves or start the video. If an uninvited participant joins the meeting, you will find the option for removing participants in this menu.
- 4 Opens the window where the participants are shown, and additional features are offered. (See below for more information).
- 5 Opens the chat window where communication via text takes place. The same space can be used to send messages to all participants or individuals and share links. (See below for more information).
- 6 Sharing the screen so that participants can access your presentation slides or other materials you open on your device.
(6.1) When using the arrow next to the Share screen button, you are shown a new window where you can set the parameters on who can share.

(6.2) Once you want to share and you click the Share Screen button (6), you are shown a new window where you need to decide if you wish to share the whole screen (first row) or a specific window within your screen (second row onwards).

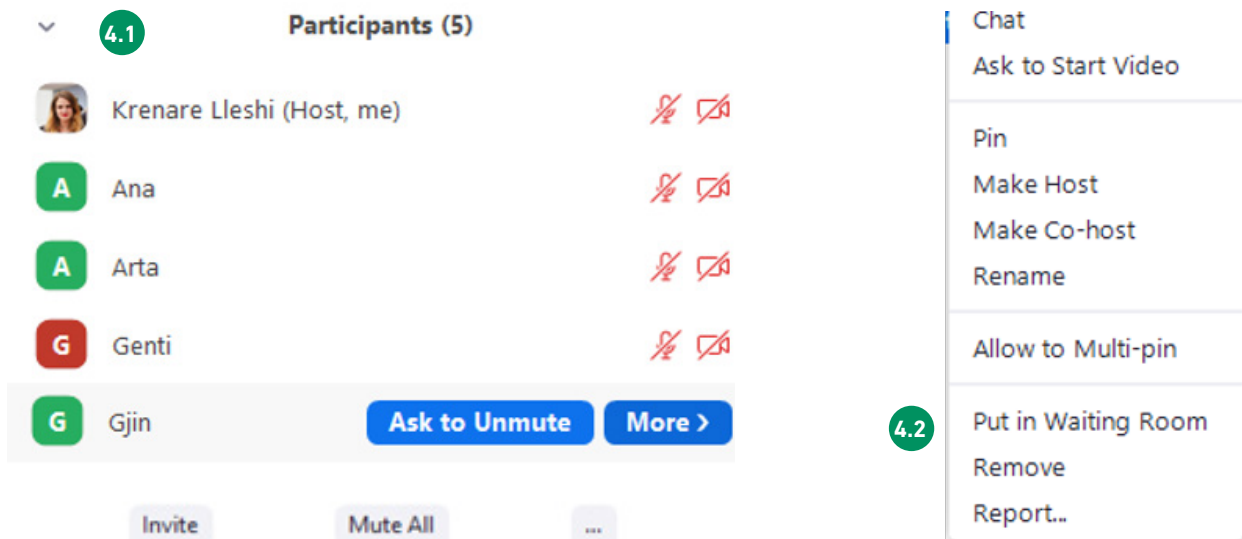
If you share a video or audio and need to share the audio, make sure to click on the two small boxes in the last row (Share sound and Optimize for Video clip).

Click Share to start sharing once you have defined the parameters you want.

In this same window, you will also find the Whiteboard feature that can be used to keep notes. Although, for easier typing (especially when you keep note of many things), we recommend Google Docs as a more practical solution.

- 7 The button for Recording. Once selected, you need to decide whether you want the recording uploaded in the cloud (in your Zoom account) for downloading it later or on your computer.
- 8 The button for opening and setting up the breakout rooms. (See below for more information).
- 9 The button for Raising the Hand or using other reactions.
- 10 If you need to stream your event to social media, use this button to set the live streaming up following the shown steps.

(4) The participants' menu



The screenshot shows the Zoom interface with a list of participants under the heading "Participants (5)". The participants listed are Krenare Lleshi (Host, me), Ana, Arta, Genti, and Gjin. The "Gjin" participant is selected, and a context menu is open over them. The context menu includes options like "Chat", "Ask to Start Video", "Pin", "Make Host", "Make Co-host", "Rename", "Allow to Multi-pin", "Put in Waiting Room", "Remove", and "Report..".

- 4.1
- 4.2
- 4.3 Ask All to Unmute
- Mute Participants upon Entry
 - ✓ Allow Participants to Unmute Themselves
 - ✓ Allow Participants to Rename Themselves
 - Play sound when someone joins or leaves
 - Enable Waiting Room
 - Lock Meeting

Once we click on the button Participants (number 4 in the picture above), a new window is shown on the right. In this window, we are given several options.

The total number of participants is shown on the top, and all participants are ordered in the window below 4.1.

If we hover with the mouse over a participant's name 4.2, we can send a message to the participant to ask him/her to unmute themselves or click on the More button. Once we open the More button, we are shown another window. Here you can: chat with participant individually, ask the participant to open the camera, pin the participant so that it is displayed on all participants' devices, regardless of the view mode they have chosen; you can assign a participant as a host or co-host (a role which is attributed to organizers and offers access to all the available options and privileges); rename the participants or remove them.

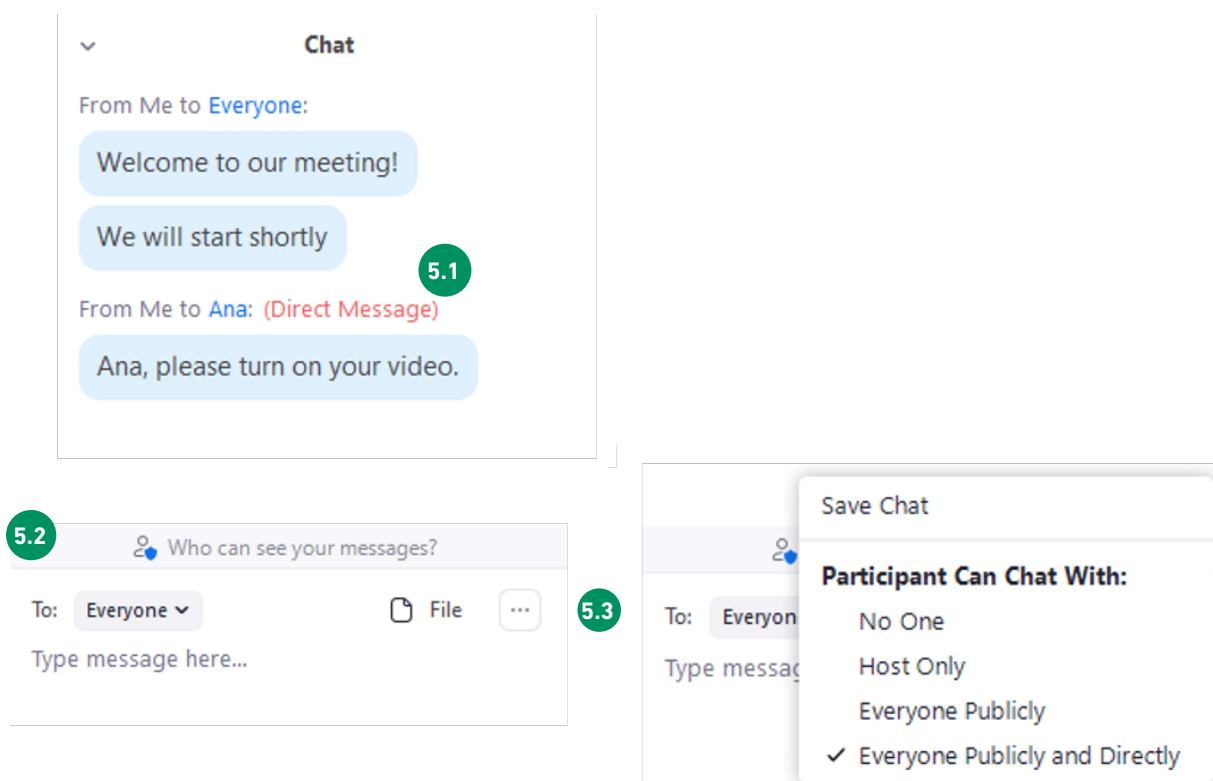
At the bottom of the participant's window, there are additional buttons 4.3. If you need to invite someone to the meeting, you can use the Invite button and copy the link for sharing with others; you can mute all participants at the same time (particularly useful when only the presenter needs to speak and when you notice background noises coming from the participants); and by clicking on the three dots (...), you will get access to some more options.

If all participants are muted, and you need to open the discussion activity, you can send a direct message to all participants by clicking on the 'Ask All to Unmute' button.

When Enable Waiting Room is activated, all incoming participants will need to be approved manually by the Host or Co-host before entering the meeting. This can be a handy option if you need to track attendance.

The feature Lock Meeting means that no new participants can be admitted to the meeting once locked.

(6) The Chat Menu



Once we click on the button Chat (number 5 in the picture above), a new window is shown on the right. In this window, we are given some options.

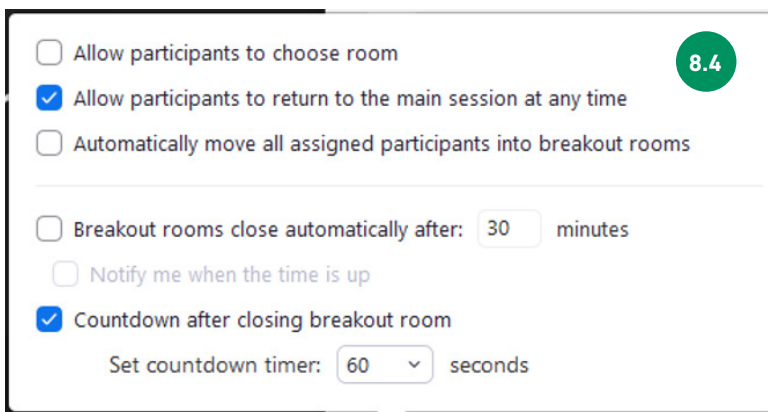
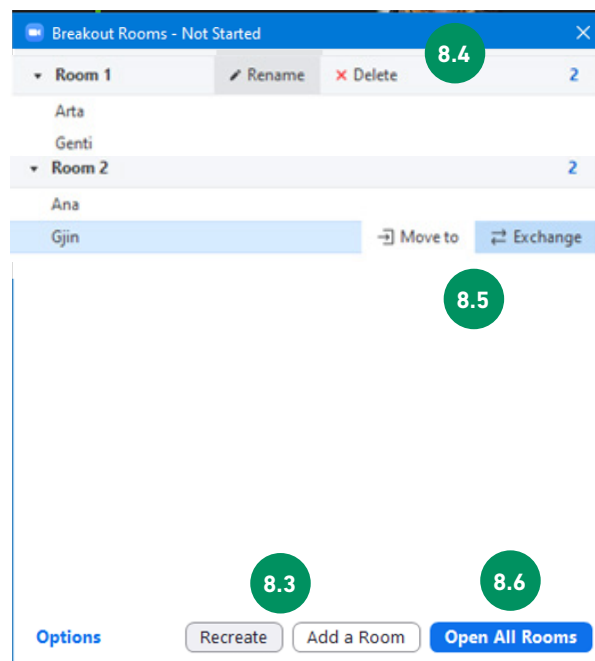
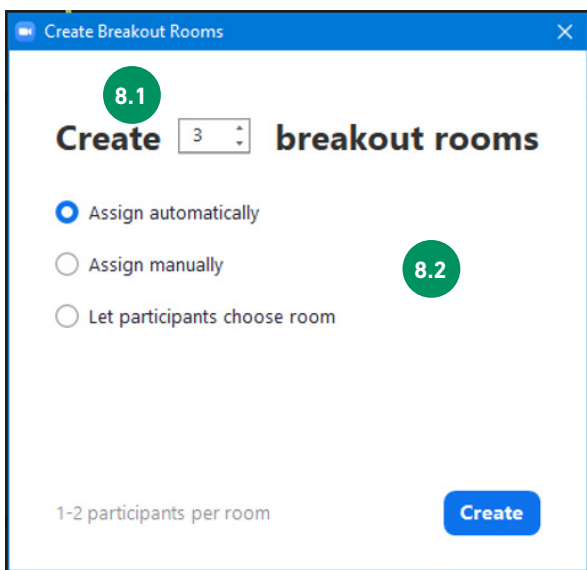
On the top, we see all the messages that we have sent or received. Messages can be sent to everyone or as direct messages to individuals 5.1

You can choose who to send the message to by clicking on the arrow next to the TO button 5.2

In the same place, you will also see a FILE button in case you need to share a file with the participants. Once you click, you are offered the option to find and select the file that will be uploaded from your device 5.2

If you click on the three dots 5.3 you are shown a new menu where you can set the privileges for Chat functions and enable or disable the chat altogether. You will also find the option for saving the written messages (Save Chat) in the same menu if you need them for later use.

(8) Breakout rooms



Click on the Breakout Rooms button to create and open the break out rooms (number 8 in the picture above).

A new window will be opened where you can set up the rooms. Define how many groups you will need to create [8.2](#) and choose between the three options you are given on how participants are assigned to the rooms [8.2](#). You can assign participants automatically, manually or let them choose which breakout room they want to go to. This needs to be defined before the event during the planning phase, depending on which modality works best for a particular activity.

Once you are ready, hit the CREATE button. ... but there is more.

The two buttons under [8.3](#) allow you to Recreate the rooms if you notice that something is not as you wanted, or you can Add a Room if you need more.

Very important settings are found under the Options button [8.4](#). If you want to allow the participants to return to the main session at any time, you can click on the box. We recommend activating the 'Automatically move all assigned participants into breakout rooms,' so that the participants are automatically taken to the assigned room without clicking on their devices.

On the same menu, you can also define how long the rooms will stay open and whether they should be closed automatically after your set time. Activating this option might help you in being effective with time. Even if activated, you can still decide to keep the rooms open longer if the groups need a couple more minutes to finish their task/activity.

If you hover the mouse over the heading Room 1 [8.5](#), you will see two buttons: Rename – if you want to give a specific name to the room, and the Delete option.

And if you need to rearrange participants into the breakout rooms, you have to hover over a participant's name [8.6](#) to see more options. You can either move the participant to another room using the Move to button or exchange participants between breakout rooms using the Exchange button.

And, when you are happy with all the settings, you can click on the Open All Rooms [8.7](#). As a host/organizer, you can also join the rooms and leave as needed. Once you have opened the rooms, you will see a Join button next to the Room's name.

Answer garden

- ① **Step 1:** Go to www.answergarden.ch
- ② **Step 2:** Click on Create AnswerGarden

AnswerGarden is a minimalistic feedback tool. Use it for real time audience participation, online brainstorming and classroom feedback.

AnswerGarden has many different users: classroom, conference and corporate audiences, creative teams, online crowds, mindmappers, and more!

AnswerGarden fits educational, professional and creative purposes, is standalone and embeddable, and shows thousands of answers in a glance!

[AnswerGarden Demo](#) [Create AnswerGarden](#)

- ③ **Step 3:** Write your topic in a statement or question form. You can write just about anything as long as it is short

Create a new AnswerGarden

Topic (required)

Type the topic of your new AnswerGarden. This can be a question or a topic, such as:

"What do you need for a good speech?"

Enter your question or topic here...

🕒 **Step 4:** Set other settings as needed (you can set or skip these options depending on your needs)

More options (optional)

For your convenience, you can change the following settings for your new AnswerGarden. If you're using AnswerGarden in the classroom, we recommend that you provide a password, so that you can moderate the contents during the session.

🕒 **Step 4.1** Choose the mode

AnswerGarden Mode

Brainstorm

Classroom

Moderator

Locked

In Brainstorm Mode, participants can submit an unlimited number of answers, including unlimited copies of the same answer.

AnswerGarden Mode

Brainstorm

Classroom

Moderator

Locked

In Classroom Mode, participants can submit an unlimited number of answers, but each answer can be submitted only once.

AnswerGarden Mode

Brainstorm

Classroom

Moderator

Locked

In Moderator Mode, answers are not shown directly on the screen because they first need to be approved manually.

AnswerGarden Mode

Brainstorm

Classroom

Moderator

Locked

In Locked Mode, the AnswerGarden is closed and no new answers can be submitted.

🕒 **Step 4.2** Choose the answer length. An answer can be 20 or 40 characters long.

Answer Length

You can set the answer length to 20 or 40 characters. For clear and understandable AnswerGardens we recommend using 20 character answers.

20

40

- **Step 4:** Set other settings as needed (you can set or skip these options depending on your needs) - continued
- **Step 4.3:** Decide if you want to use an Admin Password. Setting a password enables you to edit the AnswerGarden later on.

Admin Password

You can enter a password that enables you to edit this AnswerGarden (such as the topic, unwanted answers and mode) afterwards. Do not forget this password, as there's no way to recover it.

 Show password

Setting an Admin Passwords allows you to edit the AnswerGarden you have created later on. For instance, you can change the settings from Locked to the Moderator or Brainstorm Mode. You can also edit the topic, the answer length, or remove all answers and reuse the same AnswerGarden again.

- **Step 4.4:** Decide if you want to receive a reminder email with the AnswerGarden link and the admin password (if you have set one). If you don't want to share your email, you can always copy and save the link in your existing schemes and other working documents that are being prepared for the event.

Reminder Email

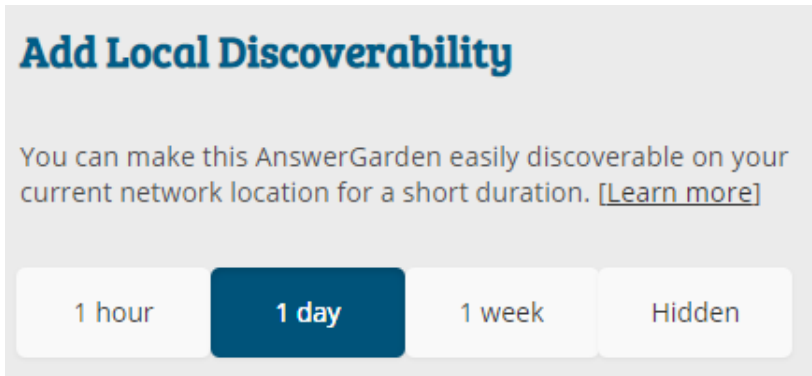
Enter an email address and you'll receive an email containing the AnswerGarden link and admin password. Your email address will not be stored, we're gentlemen!

- **Step 4.5:** Decide if you will use a spam filter to detect and remove common unwanted answers.

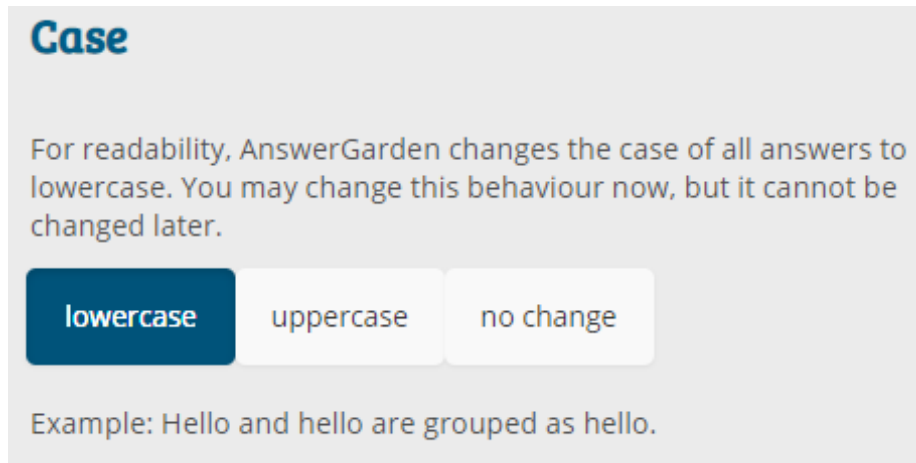
Spam Filter

On Off

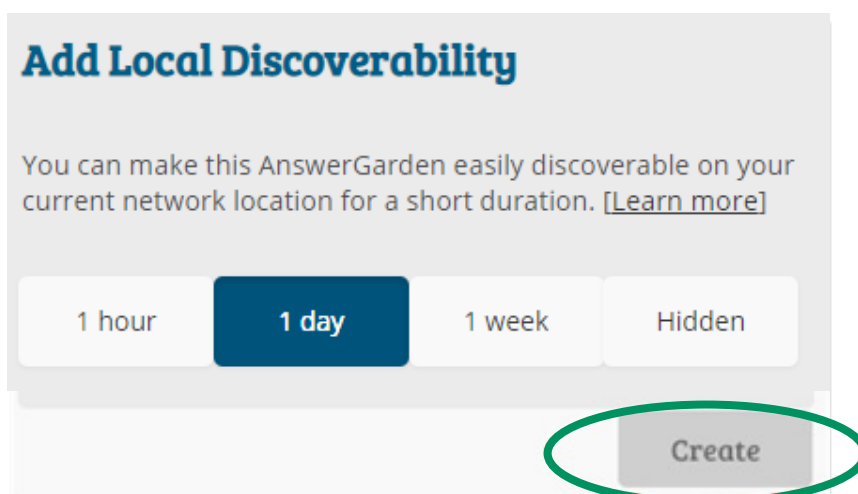
- Step 4.6: Decide if you want to make your AnswerGarden discoverable within your existing local networks, so that other people can find and access it by searching for it.



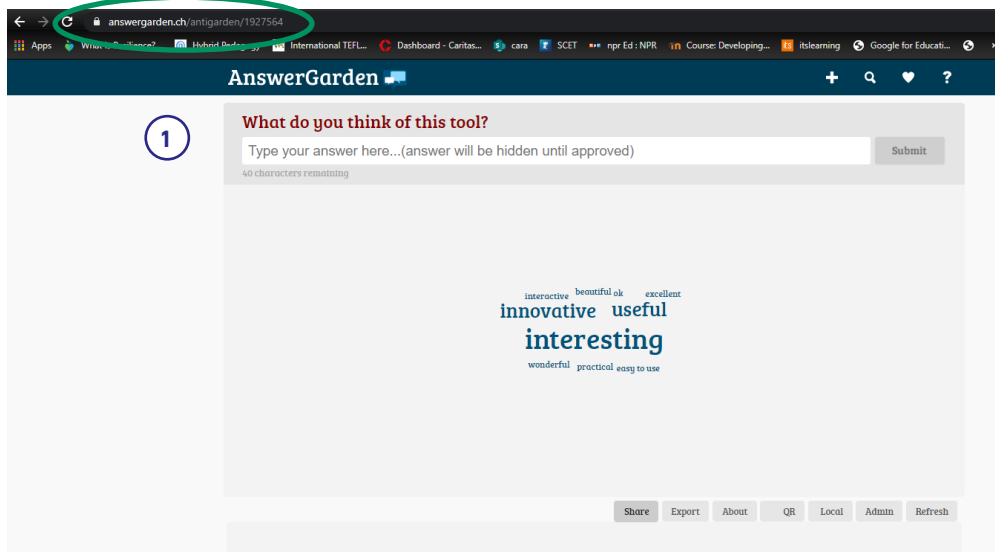
- Step 5: Choose how the responses will look like. You can choose between all lowercase or UPPERCASE in which case different variations will be grouped (e.g. Hello and hello = grouped as hello or HELLO). If you select the 'no change' option, the responses will be presented as typed by the users (e.g. Hello, hello, HeLlo are all presented as separate answers).



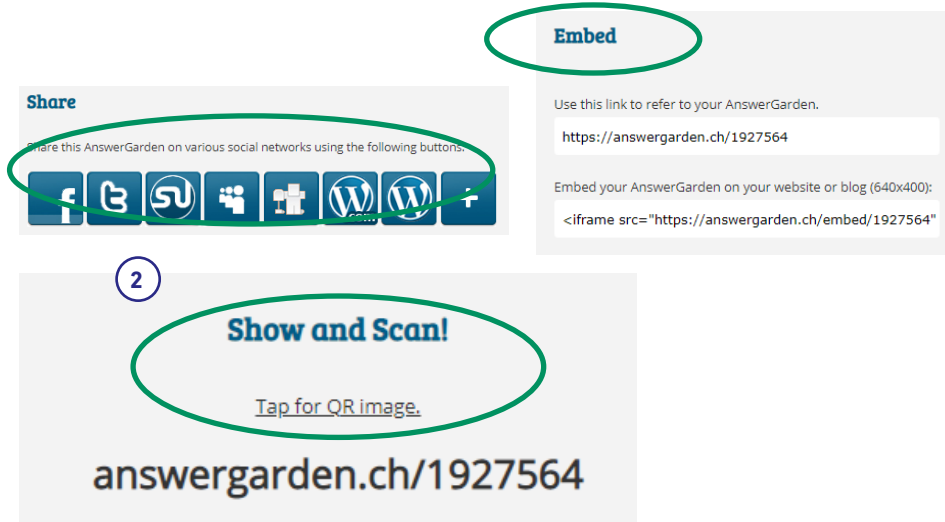
- Step 6: Click on the 'Create' button to create our AnswerGarden and start using it.



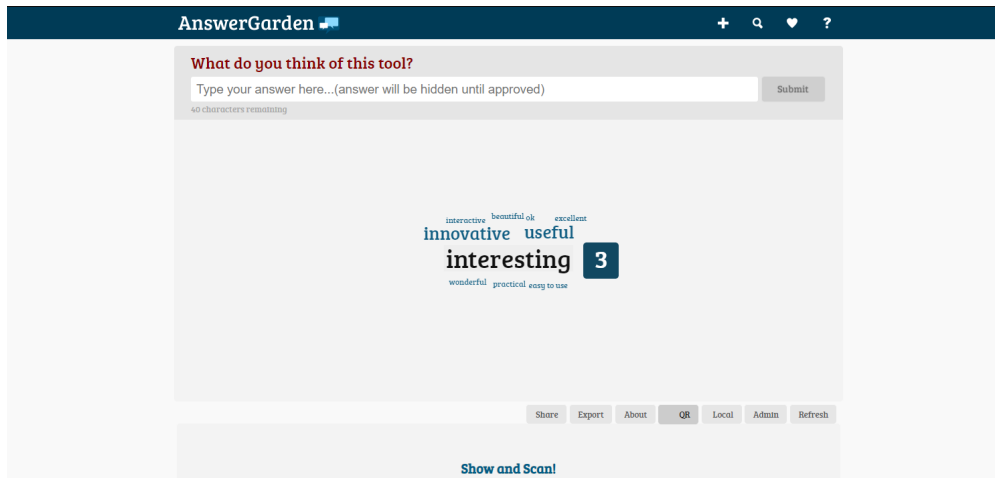
Step 6: Share the AnswerGarden you have created



You can share via the link you are given once the AnswerGarden is created. (1)
Or if you have used an Admin Password, you can also share to Social Networks (2), Embed the link (3) or use a QR code (4). The easiest option is to copy the link and put it in our organization scheme where all the documents and materials for the conference are saved.



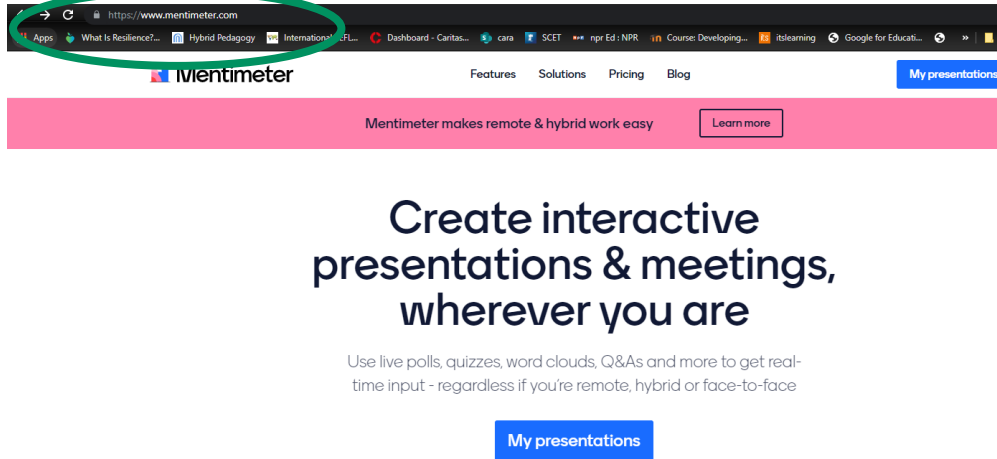
Practical information



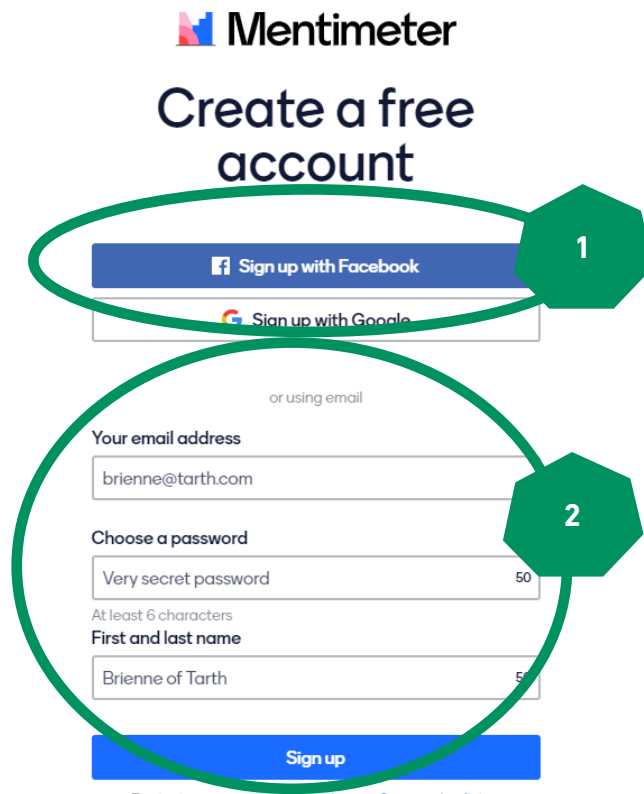
Once participants access the created AnswerGarden by opening the link, they can quickly type their answers and click submit. They need to repeat this for each response they give. The facilitator and all participants see in real-time the responses that are added. If the same idea is mentioned several times by the participants, then that particular idea is visually presented as a bigger item. Users can also hover across the words to see the frequency of entered ideas. Click the refresh button from time to time to see if new entries are added.

AnswerGarden is a very easy to use and practical tool used to make our events more interactive and engaging for the participants. Its uses are limitless as it can be used to collect ideas, trigger prior knowledge on a specific topic, brainstorm, recall presented information, and raise interest in a new topic that will be presented. Use it creatively and experiment to see how and where within the event it best fits to be used.

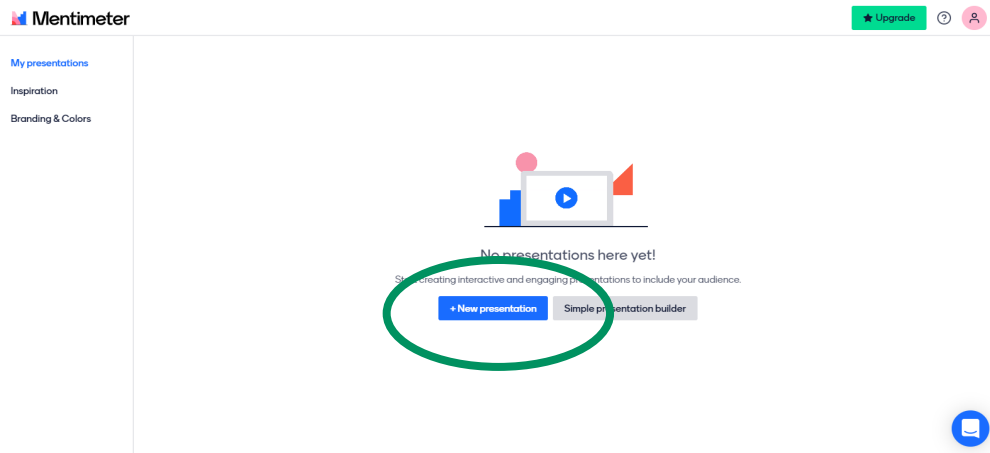
🕒 **Step 1:** Go to www.mentimeter.com



🕒 **Step 2:** Click on Signup and complete the information. (If you already have an account, skip to Log in). When signing up, you can use your existing accounts in Google or Facebook (1) or create a new account (2) within the Mentimeter. For easier management of accounts, using an existing account can be easier and more productive.

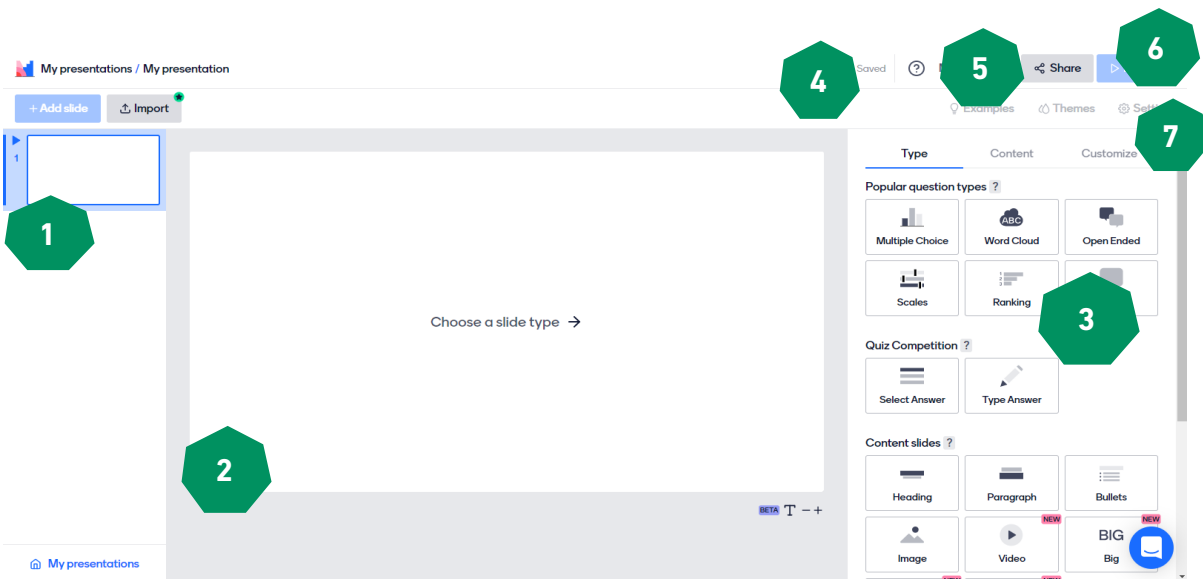


Once you are set up with Signing up and Logging in, you will arrive in the following page which is your canvas where your created presentations will be located.



🕒 **Step 3:** Click on New Presentation to start creating your interactive and engaging presentations which offer the possibility of involving participants in real time.

Step 4: Make use of the available tools to create your interactive presentation



- 1 On the left side, similar to PowerPoint Presentations, you can add new slides and see all the slides that you are creating.
- 2 In the center is located the workspace where we populate our slides with content (heading, titles, text, paragraphs, images, or Questions; or Quiz items. Remember that Questions and Quiz items are used interactively with the participants as the presentation is taking place. Participants are presented with a question item on the screen. They access the presentation via their devices (laptops, smartphones) using a link and code and give their answers shown in real-time on the presenter's screen. Also, with a free plan, within a presentation, up to 2 questions can be integrated and up to 5 quiz items.
- 3 The panel on the right side offers templates that can be added to the presentations that are being created. It is grouped in three subsections (Type, Content, Customize). When creating the presentation, you first need to select the type of content (Content slide, Question type, Quiz competition or Advanced questions). Then that content is populated and edited within the Content subcategory, and settings are further defined in the Customized group.
- 4 On the top, we see that our presentation is **SAVED** in real-time as we are using a cloud-based service.
- 5 Under **SHARE**, we find the options for making our presentation with interactive questions available to participants. The presentation can be shared via a code, a QR or a direct link.
- 6 The button for **Presenting** is also located on the top. Once the presentation is ready to share with our participants on the event day, the **Presentation** button needs to be selected. This way, the participants are shown on the screen the link and the code to access our slides and questions.
- 7 Other features such as examples of previously created slides, selection of themes and other settings are located on the second row from the top.

🕒 **Step 5:** Create content

- 🕒 **Step 5.1:** Select the Type you want to use. You can start with the third group Content slides to add a title and heading to your presentation. You can also include some information slides, and then create questions for interaction with the audience. Our selected option is shown in the center of the screen.

My presentations / My First Presentation ✓ Saved ? Mentimeter BETA ↔ Share

+ Add slide ↕ Import 🔍 Examples 🏠 Themes

1 Will you use Mentimeter in...

Go to www.menti.com and use the code 5174 6630

Will you use Mentimeter in your work?

0 Yes 0 No 0 I don't know

Popular question types

- Multiple Choice
- Word Cloud
- Open
- Scales
- Ranking
- Q

Quiz Competition

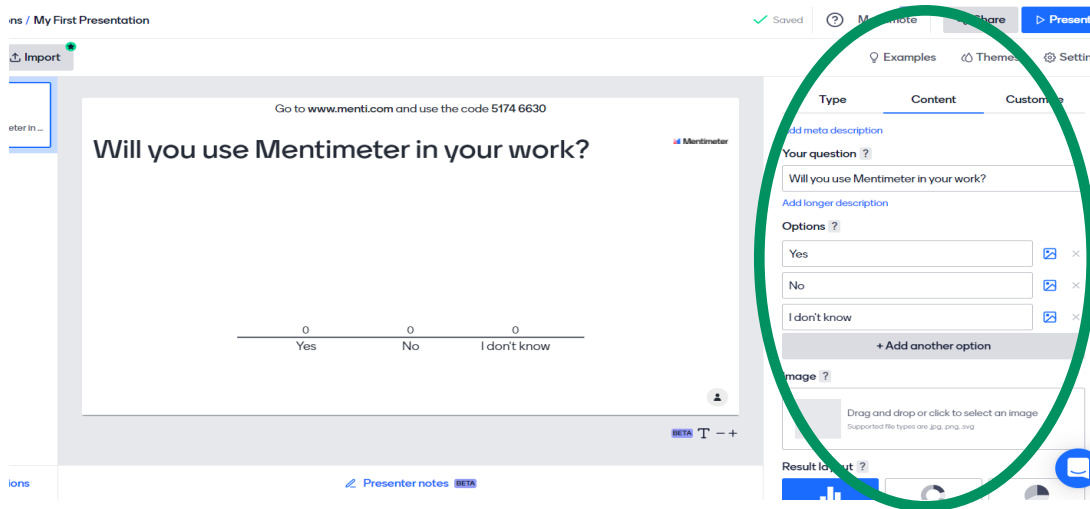
- Select Answer
- Type Answer

Content slides

- Heading
- Paragraph
- Bul
- Image
- Video

My presentations 📄 Presenter notes BETA

🕒 **Step 5.2:** Add content to your chosen layout by clicking on the second category CONTENT.



As you are working on the presentation, your additions will be reflected directly on the center panel. As in this example, we have chosen a question type; we can type our question and provide options for participants to choose from. You can add additional options as needed, an image, select the layout of the question and how it looks visually. In addition, at the bottom of this panel, you can choose whether you want to show the correct answer, whether the results should be shown as percentages and whether participants can choose more than one option.

🕒 **Step 6:** Share your presentation and the link for participants to interact with your questions.

Once you have defined these basic settings and have created the slides you need to present, you are ready to go.

Make use of the Presentation button shown in Step 4 to share your presentation slides with the participants. When the presentation slide with the question for participants comes up, you can guide the participants to open the link shown in the screen, write the code and give their ideas and opinions by answering the given questions (In our example, the link and the code are underlined in the picture above).

Practical information

Mentimeter is a great digital tool for creating interactive presentations. Besides putting the presenter in focus, it also provides opportunities for the participants to engage with the information and content presented actively.

Once participants are invited to answer the questions that have been included in the presentation, it is important to give them enough time to respond. In addition, it is crucial that the results from the questions are shown to participants and discussed briefly.

This digital tool is excellent for raising the participants' interest in the topic presented as a question can be integrated before the actual content presentation is given by the facilitator. It can also be used to cross-check how much of the presented information has been grasped by our audience or as a gauging mechanism to guide the content that we will introduce next.

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