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## ICOS Science Conference 2020

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A virtual conference can be much more than another lengthy video meeting. The Integrated Carbon Observation System (ICOS) research infrastructure was aiming for 400 participants with a traditional physical conference. Yet the organisers were pleasantly surprised when their virtual Science conference attracted more than 1000 participants. What were the key elements of this success?

The abstract submission and review process of a virtual event doesn't have to be different from a face-to-face conference, but the double-anonymous review process used herein was considered one of the main elements of the success, because it allowed several junior scientists, and even PhD students as speakers in plenary sessions. Another benefit of using virtual platform is that it allowed participation even without any own presentation, because there are no travel nor lodging costs. Our conference was also free of charge and without any registration fees, which is in accordance with EU Open Science Policy. This encouraged student - and worldwide participation.

With regards to the technicalities, selecting well-experienced, professional virtual event organizer as a partner is essential. Keeping track of the work flow between partners and within the organisation team members is easier when the work division is agreed on at the start and a "master file" is created to keep everyone on track. This also allows for any questions and requests to be shared easily, allowing for systematic updates and traceable flow of information. Uploading of presentations two weeks in allocated voluntary practice sessions to be organized for all speakers before the conference. This practice together with professional studio video-streaming team secured running three parallel sessions smoothly throughout conference. In future, those pre-rehearsals could be made mandatory but even with this 50% of speakers practising, no major difficulties in presentations were encountered. Compared to physical conference the timing of parallel sessions succeeded with highest precision that enabled audience to switch between the sessions without missing any of the presentation beginnings nor causing any disturbance to the speaker or delays in the programme.

A dedicated public text chat in every session was found useful and essential in a virtual conference. This could easily be implemented in any physical conference as well. The chat helped the chair to select questions based on content, and even those questions which did not get floor time were answered afterwards in the chat – either by presenter or other community members. Everybody was getting an equal opportunity to ask their question or making their comment and

thus getting their voices to be heard.

Recording all sessions and having them available online for limited time allowed participants a chance to listen to talks from parallel sessions afterwards, and encouraged participation across time zones.

The overall participant feedback was positive and encouraging to include some of the virtual elements in the future ICOS conferences even when pandemic situation allows traveling.