

NEB4All

New European Bauhaus for All

Practical Guide for NEB NCPs: Organizing National Online Events



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1 Executive Summary

With this practical guide for New European Bauhaus National Contact Points (NEB NCPs), the NEB4All project provides a comprehensive resource to support the planning and delivery of impactful online events at national level. The guide serves as a compendium to help NCPs navigate the wide range of available online meeting and event tools, enabling them to design events that are tailored to the needs of their national stakeholders.

The guide offers practical information and guidance on:

- ❖ Different types of virtual events,
- ❖ How to include interactive elements,
- ❖ Strategies for effective event promotion,
- ❖ Approaches to participant management.

This publication represents the first step towards a broader platform for NEB National Stakeholder Online Events, which will be launched by the NEB4All project in September 2025.

2 Introduction – The Aim of this Guide

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is an ambitious initiative by the European Commission that aims to bridge the worlds of science, technology, art, and culture in the transition toward sustainability and inclusion. Within this framework, the NEB4All project is designed to provide support to National Contact Points (NCPs) through training, knowledge sharing, and strategic coordination across Europe. One of the key mechanisms for reaching national stakeholders and delivering tailored support is the organization of national online events.

This practical guide serves as a comprehensive resource for NCPs engaged in planning and implementing national online events associated with the NEB Facility. The document addresses all stages of event organization – from conceptualization to execution and follow-up – and includes best practices, technological guidance, and communication strategies. The objective is to build the capacity of NCPs, promote awareness of the NEB Facility, enhance feedback mechanisms to the European Commission, and empower stakeholders through accessible and impactful virtual events.

This guide is part of an online platform that will be set up as part of the NEB4All project. The platform will provide NEB NCPs in different countries with comprehensive support to help them host and deliver events on the NEB Facility. The platform will contain materials to support the execution of national events by NCPs, including templates for agendas, invitations and promotional materials. The installation of the platform aims to ensure the consistent delivery of impactful events that are aligned with the objectives of NEB4All by equipping NCPs with tailored resources.

3 Why virtual events?

Virtual events have become a vital component of stakeholder engagement across Europe, particularly in the context of public sector initiatives. For NEB NCPs, organizing national online events offers a flexible, scalable, and cost-effective approach to disseminating information and fostering collaboration. These types of events are particularly important when time, geographical diversity, and inclusivity are critical considerations.

In the NEB context, virtual formats allow NCPs to bring together stakeholders from different sectors – architecture, research, policymaking, civil society, and cultural institutions – across regions that would otherwise be difficult to reach simultaneously. With increasing familiarity with digital tools, stakeholders are now more receptive than ever to participating in online formats, making virtual events a strategic tool in advancing the NEB mission.

The benefits of organizing national online events for NEB NCPs include:

- **Broader Reach:** Virtual events enable the inclusion of participants from different cities, regions, or even countries, without the limitations of travel or budget constraints.
- **Reduced Costs:** Online events eliminate venue rental, catering, and travel expenses, allowing more efficient use of public funding.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Reducing the carbon footprint by eliminating travel aligns directly with the NEB's sustainability goals.
- **Increased Accessibility:** Participants with mobility challenges or caregiving responsibilities can join from their homes or workplaces.
- **Recording and Replay Options:** Sessions can be recorded, providing a resource for future reference or for those who could not attend live.
- **Data Collection:** Online platforms facilitate the collection of participation statistics, engagement metrics, and feedback that can be systematically analysed.
- **Flexibility and Scalability:** Events can range from small workshops to large conferences, adjusting easily to changing needs or resources.

In many situations, online formats are not only viable but also preferable. For example, when targeting a dispersed audience or launching new calls for proposals with tight timelines, a national online event can offer immediate reach and rapid feedback. Virtual formats also allow for the archiving of sessions, creating a valuable repository for stakeholders who could not attend live. The recent rise of virtual events align well with the NEB4All mission to foster inclusive participation, knowledge sharing, and efficient coordination across all Member States and Associated Countries.

4 Types of Online National Events organized by NCPs

A diverse range of online event types can be employed by NEB National Contact Points (NCPs) to serve various strategic purposes depending on the specific context, goals, and target audiences. Choosing the right event format is critical to achieving desired outcomes, whether those include information dissemination, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, or collaborative design. With careful planning, each format can leverage the virtual setting to expand reach, lower barriers to participation, and ensure inclusiveness across different regions and sectors.

Information sessions are one of the most common formats, particularly suited for conveying official announcements and updates. These sessions are typically scheduled shortly after the launch of new NEB-related funding calls or strategic policy changes. They feature formal presentations from representatives such as policy officers, programme managers, or legal and administrative experts. The main aim of information sessions is to offer clarity and transparency regarding procedural rules, funding opportunities, timelines, eligibility criteria, the structure of the NEB Facility and strategic objectives. As such, they tend to follow a webinar-style format and often include time for Q&A to address participant uncertainties.

Training sessions provide an opportunity to deepen participants' understanding and improve their skills and readiness to participate in NEB calls or initiatives. These sessions may focus on practical topics such as writing strong project proposals, interpreting evaluation criteria, or navigating submission platforms. Unlike information sessions, training events typically involve a higher degree of interactivity. Participants may be engaged through practical exercises, group work, quizzes, or case studies. These sessions work best with smaller groups or breakout rooms to allow tailored feedback and one-on-one support.

Workshops are collaborative spaces intended to promote dialogue, idea generation, and co-creation among stakeholders. They are especially effective for facilitating matchmaking among potential project partners, gathering input on emerging themes, or aligning local needs with European priorities. Workshops require active participation from attendees and benefit greatly from structured agendas, experienced moderators, and the use of interactive tools like collaborative whiteboards (e.g., Miro, Mural), polls, and breakout discussions. Their participatory nature makes them well-suited to the NEB values of inclusiveness and co-design.

In addition to these core formats, **consultation events** are increasingly used by NCPs to solicit feedback from stakeholders and build consensus around future directions. These sessions may be structured around guiding questions or thematic clusters and are usually framed with a clear reporting goal. The outcomes of such events often

feed into policy briefs, recommendations, or coordination meetings with the European Commission.

Another emerging format is the **virtual networking or community-building session**, which focuses on fostering relationships between stakeholders from various regions and disciplines. These informal sessions may include open discussions, peer introductions, or short project pitches. While less structured, they contribute to long-term engagement and capacity-building by creating trust and familiarity within the NEB community.

In summary, the most common types of online national events organized by NEB NCPs include:

Information Sessions: For announcing funding opportunities, explaining legal and administrative rules, and outlining strategic priorities.

- **Training Sessions:** For skill development and capacity-building in proposal writing, evaluation criteria, and budgeting.
- **Workshops:** For participatory dialogue, co-creation, and partner matchmaking.
- **Consultation Events:** For gathering structured feedback and input from key stakeholders.
- **Networking Sessions:** For fostering collaboration and community-building in an informal virtual setting.

Each event type should be chosen based on a careful assessment of the goals, stakeholder needs, and available resources. The digital environment provides numerous tools to support these formats, and when applied thoughtfully, it enhances the reach, quality, and inclusiveness of NEB engagement activities. Aligning the chosen format with the NEB's overarching mission, promoting sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion, ensures that virtual national events remain both effective and mission-aligned.

5 Basic steps to organize an effective online event

Organizing a successful virtual event requires a structured and phased approach that ensures coherence, professionalism, and interactivity. First, it is essential to define clear objectives: what is the purpose of the event, who is the target audience, and what are the expected outcomes? A shared understanding of these questions among the organizing team sets the foundation for effective planning.

Next, a timeline should be established. Planning should begin at least eight weeks in advance for major events. This includes confirming speakers, preparing promotional materials, designing the agenda, and setting up registration tools. The timeline should also incorporate technical testing, content development, and rehearsal sessions.

A strong internal coordination team is crucial. Roles must be clearly assigned – event lead, communications coordinator, technical support staff, moderators, and note-takers. Communication among the team members should be continuous and well-documented.

Stakeholder engagement must be considered throughout the planning process. This means identifying potential participants, understanding their needs, and ensuring that the event's structure supports accessibility, language diversity, and inclusion. Finally, an evaluation mechanism should be embedded from the outset, including the design of feedback forms and indicators for success.

6 Preparation phase

6.1 Detailed planning

Proper planning is the backbone of any successful online event, and this is especially critical for events organized by NEB National Contact Points. While general principles of online event planning apply across all Horizon Europe activities, NEB national online events bring specific expectations and priorities to the forefront. These differences demand particular attention during the preparation phase.

What distinguishes NEB NCP events from general Horizon Europe NCP events is their thematic and methodological orientation. NEB events are typically aligned with a broader vision that combines environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and design excellence. As such, the tone, structure, and content of the events often reflect values of creativity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community co-creation. While Horizon Europe events may focus more exclusively on funding mechanisms and research priorities, NEB events seek to engage stakeholders in a more holistic conversation that spans architecture, urban planning, culture, and innovation.

This broader vision impacts how NEB NCPs plan their online events. First, the target audience is often more diverse and may include not only researchers and policy officers but also artists, civil society actors, local governments, designers, and community leaders. Second, the objective of NEB events goes beyond simple information sharing, it often includes building shared understanding, stimulating dialogue, and encouraging cross-sector collaboration. These goals require a thoughtful balance of technical information and inspirational content, structured presentation and participatory exchange.

Moreover, the visual and aesthetic dimension of the event should be considered carefully. While this may not be a standard requirement in other Horizon Europe events, the NEB emphasis on design and atmosphere encourages organizers to think creatively about visual presentation, user experience, and the emotional tone of the session. This may include the use of visually engaging slides, music, cultural elements, or curated visuals that reflect the NEB ethos.

In addition, attention should be paid to accessibility and inclusion, not only in terms of language and platform access, but also in terms of format and facilitation style. The inclusive nature of NEB requires that all participants feel empowered to contribute and engage, regardless of their professional background or technical familiarity with EU programmes. Planning should include consideration of accessibility features such as live captioning (i.e. the real-time display of spoken words as text), multilingual materials, or flexible formats.

In summary, planning an NEB national online event requires careful alignment of objectives, content, methods, and tools with the unique values and stakeholder composition of the initiative. This level of planning begins well in advance of the event date and must involve coordination across multiple roles and expertise areas, from technical support to content development, communications, and facilitation.

6.1.1 Virtual event planner checklist

Organizing a successful virtual event requires meticulous planning and coordination across multiple dimensions. A comprehensive checklist can ensure that all necessary steps are considered and implemented in a timely and efficient manner. This checklist serves as a practical tool for NEB NCPs to navigate the planning process while aligning with the goals and values of the NEB. Each task in the checklist should be accompanied by clear responsibilities and deadlines to foster accountability and coordination among team members.

A detailed virtual event planner checklist is provided in *Table 5.1* that can be adapted for various types of national online events.

Using a structured checklist ensures that no critical component is overlooked, enhances time management, and supports coordination among all team members involved in the organization of NEB online events. For recurring event formats, this checklist can also serve as a template for future planning, with adjustments made based on prior feedback and lessons learned.

Task Description	Notes/Status
Define event objectives	Ensure alignment with NEB4All goals
Identify target audience	Tailor format/content to audience
Select event format (info, training, etc.)	Based on strategic purpose
Choose date and time	Consider time zones and availability
Select online platform	Evaluate platform suitability
Secure and confirm speakers/moderators	Include bios and contact details
Draft and finalise agenda	Ensure logical flow and timing
Develop content (slides, documents, etc.)	Align with session objectives
Design engagement strategy (polls, etc.)	Select tools for interactivity
Launch event registration	Use smart registration tools
Promote event (email, social media)	Coordinate outreach with partners
Conduct technical test run	Check audio, video, and tools
Prepare contingency plan (tech issues)	Have backup contacts and guides
Develop and test feedback tools	Align questions with event goals
Prepare event logistics checklist	Links, timings, access instructions
Hold pre-event briefing with all staff	Assign clear roles and protocols

Table 5.1: *Virtual Event Planner Checklist*

6.1.2 Agenda setting

The agenda is one of the most influential tools in shaping participant experience and engagement in national online events. It serves as both a structural framework and a communication tool that guides attendees through the event's logic and flow. For NEB NCPs,

agenda-setting must take into account the unique diversity of participants and their expectations, ensuring the structure of the session accommodates both informative content and interactive engagement.

An effective agenda should be built around a logical sequence that gradually introduces the theme, deepens knowledge, allows for exchange, and concludes with clear takeaways. For example, starting with a short, compelling welcome that frames the event in the context of the broader NEB vision helps set the tone and creates coherence. Including introductory remarks from both national and EU-level speakers can further strengthen legitimacy and alignment.

The agenda should reflect a logical flow of content, alternating between presentation and interaction to avoid screen fatigue. Sufficient time should be included for discussion, and moments should be built in for reflection or feedback. Interactivity can be introduced through short polls, live Q&A segments, breakout rooms, or interactive whiteboards. Even in shorter events, these tools help diversify the experience and create a sense of dialogue. The agenda should specify the tools that will be used for interactive engagement, as informing participants in advance can help them prepare for active participation rather than opting out of interaction.

Discussion time should not be squeezed into the end. Rather, time should be explicitly allocated within each segment for clarification and questions. This is particularly important for training events or workshops where real-time exchange and feedback are critical to learning and participation. Similarly, reflection time or feedback moments (e.g., through surveys, comment boxes, or visual tools) should be embedded within the agenda rather than left as an afterthought.

When organizing longer sessions (over two hours), it is crucial to plan for short breaks, ideally every 60–90 minutes. These breaks not only help reduce cognitive overload but also offer time for informal interaction through chat functions or networking lounges, if available. Breaks can be creatively used, for example, by playing music, sharing short videos relevant to NEB values, or showing visual inspiration to maintain the atmosphere.

Tips for successful agenda setting in NEB NCP events:

- ❖ Start planning the agenda well in advance and involve speakers early
- ❖ Allocate time realistically, including buffer time to accommodate overruns
- ❖ Alternate between listening and participation to keep participants engaged
- ❖ Include both high-level inspiration and technical detail
- ❖ Plan for moments of interaction at regular intervals
- ❖ Keep breaks structured and purposeful, especially in longer sessions

- ❖ Reflect NEB values in the agenda content, visuals, and speaker selection

A thoughtfully crafted agenda can lead participants through a meaningful experience that not only educates but also energizes and inspires them, fostering a deeper sense of connection with the values and vision of the New European Bauhaus.

6.1.3 Invitation emails

Drafting effective invitation emails is a crucial part of ensuring strong attendance and engagement at national online events organized by NEB NCPs. The invitation serves not only as an informational message but also as a first impression of the event's tone, relevance, and professionalism. As such, the language, layout, and clarity of the email can significantly influence whether recipients decide to register and attend.

At a minimum, each invitation should clearly present the essential details: the event title, date, start and end time (including time zone), digital platform to be used (e.g., Zoom, Teams), and a functioning registration link. Additionally, a short but compelling description of the event's objectives helps recipients understand its relevance to their interests or professional work. A brief overview of the agenda, highlighting key speakers or features, can further pique interest. Where relevant, mention of simultaneous translation, accessibility features, or networking opportunities may also boost participation (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

To increase effectiveness, invitation emails should be visually appealing and easy to navigate. Use bold headings or bullet points to structure content and avoid long paragraphs. Include a call-to-action (e.g., "Register Now" button or link) placed prominently near the top and bottom of the message.

Personalization is also key. Whenever possible, send invitations through networks or mailing lists that the recipients trust, or address recipients by name and role. Tailored messaging for specific stakeholder groups (e.g., municipalities, designers, researchers) can make the invitation feel more relevant and increase response rates.

Follow-up is equally important, as it can support higher turnout. Best practice is to send one reminder email approximately one week before the event and another the day before. These reminders should be shorter but still include the title, date, time, platform link, and a registration link if it's still open. Adding an "Add to Calendar" link can also increase attendance rates.

6.1.4 Introducing breaks

Breaks are essential to maintaining attention and wellbeing. Evidence shows that people begin to lose focus after 60–90 minutes of continuous virtual engagement, making regular breaks a key design feature for effective virtual sessions (WHO, 2021).

For sessions under two hours, a single short break may suffice. For half-day events, a 10–15-minute break every 60–90 minutes is recommended (WHO, 2021). Longer sessions should include at least one longer break of 30 minutes. The content intensity and participant profile (e.g., academic, practitioner, policymaker) also influence the optimal break schedule.

Using countdown timers or background music during breaks can create a sense of continuity and help signal the transition back to active participation.

6.1.5 Q&A sessions

Ideally, Q&A sessions should follow each major presentation or thematic block. This helps maintain continuity and ensures that participants can immediately address questions related to the content just delivered. Grouping questions by topic or theme, when possible, can also help streamline the discussion and avoid redundancy (Bailenson, 2021).

Effective moderation is critical. A skilled facilitator can manage the flow of questions, maintain time discipline, and ensure balanced participation. The moderator's role includes prioritizing commonly asked questions, flagging urgent ones, and steering the discussion back on track if it diverges from the session's focus.

Multiple methods can be used to collect questions. One approach is to invite participants to submit questions during the registration process. This allows organizers to anticipate themes of interest and prepare more targeted responses. During the event itself, live questions can be submitted through the chat or Q&A functions provided by most platforms. Tools such as Slido or Mentimeter offer features like anonymous questioning and upvoting, which help highlight the most relevant or widely shared concerns. These tools are particularly useful for large-scale events where time does not permit responding to every question individually.

Good Practice: Structured Q&A for better flow

Q&A sessions are most effective when they combine pre-submitted and live questions. Collecting and grouping questions in advance allows organizers to identify themes and prepare targeted responses. During the event, additional live questions can be collected through Slido, or Mentimeter where participants can upvote those most relevant to them. This blended approach ensures that the most pressing topics are addressed, keeps the discussion focused, avoids repetition, and creates a sense of shared ownership over the dialogue.

6.1.6 Mixing various elements

To keep online events dynamic and engaging, NEB NCPs are encouraged to mix a variety of content elements throughout the agenda. A single-format delivery, such as a series of uninterrupted slide presentations, can quickly lead to cognitive fatigue and disengagement among participants (Mayer, 2002). Instead, events that alternate between visual, auditory, and participatory formats tend to foster better attention and retention.

A well-balanced session might incorporate *PowerPoint presentations* for structured information delivery, combined with *short, pre-recorded videos* to reinforce key messages or showcase project examples. Including *live interviews* with policymakers or experienced beneficiaries provides a personal and contextual layer to the discussion. *Panel discussions* can bring multiple voices into conversation, enriching the narrative through contrasting perspectives or highlighting collaboration among stakeholders. Additionally, *storytelling elements*, such as case studies or testimonials, can personalize complex information and foster a stronger connection with the audience.

Further dynamic components include *infographics* and *visual maps* to summarize dense data, *on-screen whiteboards* for co-creation activities, *live demonstrations of digital tools or application procedures*, or online *polls and quizzes* that can measure comprehension or stimulate engagement.

The use of varied content modes contributes to dual-channel learning, appealing to both visual and verbal processors, reducing cognitive overload and enhancing long-term retention (Clark and Mayer, 2016).

6.1.7 Including interactive parts

Interactivity is a critical element for online events, especially in the context of NEB NCPs, whose audiences often include creative professionals, researchers, and policy stakeholders. While interactivity should be maximized to maintain engagement and foster dialogue, it must also be manageable given the time constraints and technological capacity. Too many interactive segments can overwhelm participants, particularly in larger webinars. Instead, strategic moments for polls, Q&A, breakout sessions, or collaborative exercises should be selected and aligned with the event's goals. Interactivity enhances not only learning but also the co-creation of knowledge, a key NEB principle. (See also *Section 6.3*)

6.1.8 Support staff needed

The success of a virtual event depends heavily on the behind-the-scenes support. A well-functioning support team includes a technical facilitator to manage the platform, troubleshoot audio/visual issues, and coordinate screen sharing or breakout rooms. Additionally, a content moderator ensures the flow of discussion, introduces speakers, and manages time-keeping. A chat moderator can filter questions and direct them to the right speakers. For larger events, a helpdesk person may be needed to assist participants who encounter problems with registration, access, or sound. Clear coordination and rehearsal among support staff are crucial to ensure smooth delivery.

6.2 Selection of a suitable online platform

Choosing an appropriate platform is a crucial step in organizing national online events. The platform not only serves as the technical foundation for the event but also significantly influences the participant experience, the type of interactivity possible, and the event's overall accessibility. Given the diverse nature of NEB-related activities and the varying needs of different target audiences, the choice must be both strategic and context-specific.

Below, the advantages and disadvantages of different platforms for organizing national online events are outlined:

Zoom remains one of the most popular platforms for interactive webinars and workshops due to its intuitive user interface, robust features, and high compatibility across devices. It allows for the easy management of breakout rooms, polling, and screen sharing, which makes it well-suited for both training and workshop formats. However,

it is worth noting that certain advanced features, such as webinar hosting or extended meeting times, require a paid license, which may impact budget planning.

Microsoft Teams is particularly effective in institutional or corporate settings where participants are already integrated into the Microsoft 365 ecosystem. Its strengths lie in real-time document collaboration and team-based channels. While Teams is excellent for closed-group collaboration and structured training events, its limitations in breakout room flexibility and external guest usability may present challenges for broader stakeholder events.

Webex by Cisco offers advanced security and event management features, making it a strong option for large-scale information sessions or high-profile public engagements. Its webinar and virtual conference capabilities are robust, although the platform has a steeper learning curve and requires thorough pre-event testing, especially for guest speakers unfamiliar with the interface.

Google Meet is another lightweight and accessible option, particularly for short updates or informal briefings. It integrates seamlessly with Google Workspace and requires no additional downloads for most users. However, its limitations in terms of engagement tools (e.g., no built-in breakout rooms or polls in the basic version) make it less suitable for highly interactive sessions.

Other event-specific platforms such as *Hopin*, *Airmeet*, and *Remo* provide extensive customization, virtual networking lounges, and event expo features. These are especially useful for matchmaking or multi-track conferences, but they come at a higher cost and may require technical onboarding for both organizers and participants. For NCPs considering these platforms, pilot testing and support staff training are strongly recommended.

Ultimately, the platform selection should be guided by the scale of the event, the type of interactivity required, audience familiarity, and budget constraints. Accessibility features such as live captioning, multilingual interpretation, and screen reader compatibility should also be factored in to ensure inclusiveness. A matrix comparing key features across platforms can be a useful decision-making tool during the planning phase.

When weighing the advantages and disadvantages of various platforms, factors to consider include whether simultaneous interpretation is needed, whether breakout rooms will be used for workshops, the scale of the event, and the accessibility requirements of participants. Testing the platform in advance with both internal staff and a small pilot group of external users can uncover potential issues and help improve the final delivery. *Table 5.2* below provides a comparative overview of key features of various online platforms.

Platform	Ease of Use	Breakout Rooms	Interpretation	Polling/ Interaction	Max participants	Notes
Zoom	Intuitive	Yes	Built-in simultaneous interpretation	Native & 3rd-party	1,000+ (with add-ons)	Widely adopted, reliable for webinars & workshops
MS Teams	Moderate	Yes	Limited / Recently introduced	Native & via MS Forms	~1,000	Strong integration with Microsoft 365
Webex	Moderate	Yes	Supports interpretation channels	Built-in	1,000+	Suitable for corporate & multilingual events
Google Meet	Simple	No	Captions only, no interpretation	Limited	~500	Easy to use, but lacks advanced features
Hopin	Moderate	Yes (via integrations)	3rd-party plugins required	Strong native tools	100,000+ (tiered)	Designed for large-scale interactive events

Table 5.2: A comparative overview of key features of various online platforms used for organizing national online events

6.3 Promotion of the event

Effective promotion is key to ensuring strong participation and visibility for national NEB events. It is not enough to rely on email lists or internal networks; instead, promotion should be approached as a targeted campaign, leveraging multiple communication channels.

Email campaigns remain a powerful promotional tool, particularly when supported by a strong subject line, personalized content, and clear calls to action. Strategic timing is also important, emails sent 10 to 14 days before the event with a reminder 2–3 days in advance tend to yield the highest registration rates (Eventbrite, 2021). Segmenting email lists by stakeholder type (e.g., municipalities, cultural actors, research institutions) helps ensure messaging relevance and improves the chances of emails being opened and read.

Social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook can greatly extend the event's reach. Scheduled posts, hashtags, speaker highlights, and teaser videos are all ef-

fective ways to build anticipation. In particular, LinkedIn is valuable for reaching professionals in architecture, sustainability, and innovation – key communities for NEB. Paid promotions can be considered for high-priority events but should be used strategically.

In addition to direct communication, collaboration with strategic partners, such as universities, national ministries, or cultural networks, can enhance reach. These entities can help distribute invitations through their own networks or co-host the event to lend credibility and broaden impact.

6.4 Event registration

A smart registration process is essential not only for managing attendance but also for gathering useful data. Registration forms should go beyond name and email to include fields for sector, organization type, language preference, and topics of interest. This data can inform event design and facilitate follow-up communications.

More advanced registration and participant management systems provide organizers with a suite of automation tools that can significantly streamline event logistics and elevate the participant experience. These systems, such as Eventbrite, Hopin, and Zoom Events, offer features including automated confirmation emails, personalized calendar invites, and unique access credentials. These tools not only reduce the manual workload for organizers but can also enhance the professional image of the event.

For instance, platforms like Eventbrite automatically send branded confirmation messages upon registration and allow for customized reminder scheduling. Zoom Events, tailored for multi-session or multi-track events, integrates registration, access control, and calendar syncing into a single interface. Similarly, Hopin provides organizers with the ability to send confirmation and reminder emails embedded with “Add to Calendar” functionality, individual login links and QR codes.

These features are not only about convenience, they also enhance attendance rates and perceived professionalism. Attendees are less likely to miss an event if they have a calendar reminder and receive timely prompts in their inboxes. Moreover, by ensuring that each registrant receives a unique link or access code, these systems support better security, attendance tracking, and engagement analytics.

Data protection compliance, especially under GDPR, must be ensured at every stage of data collection and storage.

Good Practice: Engaging participants before the event

Reaching out to confirmed participants about a week before the event can increase both preparedness and engagement. Organizers may encourage attendees to interact with the platform in advance – for example, by submitting questions for the speakers or by testing their access and reporting any technical issues. This early interaction helps participants feel involved, reduces the risk of last-minute technical challenges, and fosters a smoother, more engaging event experience.

6.5 Content development

Developing compelling and informative content is at the heart of a successful virtual event. Speakers should be carefully briefed to align their presentations with the event's objectives and the NEB narrative. Content must be clear, accessible, and adapted to an online format. This often means shorter presentations, more visuals, and explicit key messages.

Supporting materials such as infographics, handouts, or summary slides can enhance participant understanding and retention. These should be made available in advance, particularly for events with multilingual audiences or accessibility needs. All materials should be branded consistently and, where possible, made available on the NEB or NCP website post-event.

For improving the aesthetics and layout of presentations, Canva is a practical tool that allows users to create graphics, presentations, videos, and documents. It offers thousands of customizable templates, stock photos, fonts, and design elements, making it easy to produce professional and visually appealing materials without advanced design skills.

6.6 Technical check / testing

Comprehensive technical testing is essential to ensure a smooth event experience. At least one full rehearsal involving all speakers and moderators should be scheduled to test audio, video, screen sharing, and breakout room and whiteboard logistics. A checklist should be followed to verify internet connectivity, platform compatibility, access permissions and audio quality. Backup plans should be prepared in case of technical failure, including alternative logins and pre-recorded content.

Providing a technical support guide to participants, explaining how to join, troubleshoot sound issues, or switch interpretation channels, can prevent confusion and minimize support requests during the live session. Assigning a dedicated technical support contact for the day of the event is also recommended.

7 Execution of the event

Delivering a successful event on the day requires precise coordination, confident facilitation, and responsive technical support. The event should begin with a clear and engaging introduction that outlines the purpose, agenda, and interactive features. Participants should be encouraged to engage actively, and housekeeping rules such as muting microphones and using the chat for questions should be explained.

7.1 Balance of content delivery and interactive components

Maintaining a balance between information delivery and interactivity is essential. Plenary sessions are valuable for setting the stage, presenting authoritative content, and ensuring message consistency. However, too much one-way communication can lead to fatigue and disengagement. Interactive segments – such as breakout rooms, polls, and chat discussions – help maintain energy and reinforce learning. Alternating between these formats ensures that participants remain engaged and active.

7.2 Static elements of the event

Static elements such as welcome remarks, agenda overviews, and institutional presentations play a vital role in providing structure, clarity, and continuity during an online event. These segments help frame the experience and reinforce the event's professional tone (Mayer, 2002).

Welcome remarks set the stage for the session by establishing its purpose, acknowledging participants, and briefly highlighting expected outcomes. These should be kept concise, ideally 5–7 minutes, and closely aligned with the event's overarching goals (Clark and Mayer, 2016).

Agenda overviews offer a visual roadmap, helping participants understand the session's flow. When paired with infographics or interactive slides, these overviews can improve engagement and comprehension (Mayer, 2002).

Institutional presentations should remain focused and be supported by multimedia elements such as short videos, infographics, or brief stories from the field. This helps personalize the content and maintain attention (Clark and Mayer, 2016).

7.3 Interactive elements

7.3.1 Event types influencing interactivity

The type of online event organized by NEB NCPs directly shapes the level and form of participant interactivity. Each event type – information sessions, training sessions, and workshops – offers distinct opportunities and constraints for engagement, and these must be carefully considered during the planning phase.

Information sessions, typically designed to disseminate structured content such as new calls for proposals or program updates, often rely on presentations delivered by policy officers or experts. These sessions generally feature limited interactivity, with Q&A segments serving as the main form of participant engagement. However, tools like live polling or interactive quizzes can be incorporated to sustain attention and collect instant feedback (Mayer, 2002; Clark and Mayer, 2016).

Training sessions, on the other hand, are inherently more interactive. Their goal is to deepen participant understanding through applied learning. This might involve breakout discussions, collaborative exercises, or simulations. Such learner-centred methods increase retention and promote the application of knowledge (Clark and Mayer, 2016). In larger virtual settings, platforms like Zoom or MS Teams allow facilitators to segment participants into smaller breakout rooms, which is ideal for these training components.

Workshops represent the highest level of interactivity among these formats. They are specifically designed to foster dialogue, co-creation, and peer-to-peer learning. In NEB contexts, workshops are commonly used for matchmaking, feedback collection, or policy co-design. Here, interactive whiteboards (e.g., Miro or Mural), collaborative documents, and structured group exercises are crucial to create shared ownership and meaningful participation (Booth and Kellogg, 2015).

Selecting the event format in line with the intended level of interaction enhances both user experience and the quality of the outcomes. NCPs must also ensure that the technology and facilitation skills align with the event type to fully realize its interactive potential.

7.3.2 Use of engagement tools

Polling tools like Mentimeter and Slido can be used to assess prior knowledge, gather feedback, or spark discussion. Live Q&A sessions should be facilitated to maintain order and ensure a diversity of voices. Gamification elements such as quizzes (via Kahoot or Quizizz) can energize participants and reinforce learning.

Chat rooms, especially persistent or parallel ones, allow informal networking and are useful for participants to share resources, ask questions, and connect with peers. Tools like Discord or Slack can extend this experience beyond the event itself.

7.3.3 Use of engagement tools for warm-up

Warm-up activities play a crucial role in activating participant attention, fostering comfort, and establishing a welcoming online atmosphere. When deployed at the start of an event, these tools help participants transition into an engaged learning mode and signal that their presence and input are valued.

Opening polls are among the simplest and most effective ways to involve participants from the outset. Organizers might ask about participants' familiarity with the NEB initiative, their expectations for the session, or their professional background. These responses can then be used to tailor content or to highlight the diversity among attendants. Evidence suggests that real-time polling increases attentiveness and gives participants a voice early in the session (Bryson, 2013).

Icebreaker questions, particularly those that encourage personal or creative responses, can help establish a relaxed tone. For example, participants could be asked to share "one word that describes your week" or "your favourite example of sustainable design." These questions are especially effective in smaller groups or breakout rooms, where participants can speak or use the chat to respond (Booth and Kellogg, 2015).

Short tasks, such as generating a word cloud around a theme (e.g., "What does 'beautiful' mean in the context of NEB?"), provide a shared visual output that participants co-create. Platforms like Mentimeter and Slido support such functions and can display the results in real-time.

Breakout room discussions offer a more intensive warm-up for smaller events or workshops. A short, focused question, such as "What brought you here today?" can help participants connect with one another and the session content. Facilitators should give clear instructions and time limits and assign roles if needed.

Using **Mentimeter**, in particular, allows a wide variety of warm-up formats, from ranking priorities to live word clouds or Q&A boards. These tools require no login from participants, are mobile-friendly, and can be integrated into slide presentations seamlessly.

By integrating warm-up tools with purpose and creativity, NCPs can generate early momentum that carries through the rest of the event. Importantly, warm-ups should not feel like filler content, they should align with the session goals and reflect the tone of the gathering.

7.3.4 Interactive tools for mid-session engagement

While warm-ups and closing reflections are important, the middle part of an event, typically when the core content is delivered, also requires thoughtful engagement strategies. Interactive tools used during this phase can help maintain energy, deepen learning, and ensure participants remain mentally present. These tools should align with the learning objectives and the event type, whether it's an information session, a training, or a workshop.

Polls and Live Voting

Live polls are highly versatile tools that can check comprehension, gather real-time opinions, or steer discussion. Platforms like Slido, Zoom Polls, and Mentimeter allow organizers to embed questions directly into the session. Examples for poll types:

- Knowledge checks (e.g., "Which of the following is eligible under the NEB call?")
- Opinion gauges (e.g., "How optimistic are you about the NEB's impact in your region?")
- Content feedback (e.g., "Was this section clear?")

Good Practice: Using Polls to spark discussion

Polling works best when results are shared immediately and used to drive the conversation forward. For instance, after displaying poll outcomes, the moderator can invite a speaker to comment on the results or ask participants to reflect on differences in opinion. This not only keeps the audience engaged but also transforms polling from a passive activity into an active bridge to deeper dialogue.

Quizzes and Gamification

Adding quizzes introduces a playful challenge that supports active recall. These can be used during training sessions to reinforce learning or after a long presentation block to reenergize the group. Tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Wooclap support gamified formats that encourage competition and interaction. When quizzes are perceived as low-stakes and fun, they contribute to a positive learning environment and increased participation (Huang and Hew, 2018).

Quizzes can also offer instant feedback to participants, reinforcing correct answers and providing clarification on misconceptions. Timed questions, audio cues, and visual effects increase immersion and enjoyment, helping to sustain attention even during dense content

delivery. Moreover, gamified quizzes help diversify delivery methods, which is particularly useful in long-format events.

Gamification goes beyond quizzes. Other techniques include like points (e.g., scores awarded for correct task completions), leaderboards, and rewards (Landers, 2014), as well as team-based competitions, where small groups earn collective rewards for solving challenges. These approaches can foster collaboration, increase social interaction, and boost motivation across different engagement levels (Domínguez et al., 2013). Leaderboards can be used not only for individual scoring but also to highlight team contributions, helping create a shared purpose.

Good Practice: Lightning Rounds - Energizing engagement through rapid challenges

*Lightning rounds are fast-paced, time-limited activities where participants respond to a series of quick questions or tasks, typically under pressure. These can be executed using tools like **Kahoot**, **Wooclap**, or even a timed Google Form. The goal is to inject energy, sharpen focus, and increase participant engagement through an element of urgency and fun. Lightning rounds work particularly well after dense content blocks, as a “reset” mechanism to re-engage the audience.*

This method could be effectively used in an online proposal-writing workshop, where facilitators use a 5-minute lightning round with five rapid-fire true-or-false questions on eligibility rules. Participants compete via Kahoot, with points awarded for both speed and accuracy. The activity boosts attention, reinforces key rules, and introduces a light-hearted competitive spirit that enhance group morale.

When designing lightning rounds, it's important to:

- *Keep the number of questions short (3–7).*
- *Set clear instructions and time limits.*
- *Provide instant feedback and highlight correct answers.*
- *Celebrate top scorers to encourage participation.*

This format is especially effective in large group settings where active involvement may otherwise lag. It reinforces content, promotes healthy competition, and adds variety to session dynamics, all of which are central to effective gamified learning (Landers, 2014).

Mini Reflection Moments or One-Minute Takeaways

Asking participants to write brief reflections or reactions in the chat – such as “What's one key takeaway so far?” – creates a moment of pause and encourages deeper thinking about the content. These reflective pauses also help transition between topics and keep audiences cognitively engaged (Nilson and Goodson, 2021).

Quick tasks

Short collaborative tasks, like ranking priorities, sorting statements, or completing sentence stems, are ideal for maintaining attention. Tools like Padlet, Jamboard, or Miro allow visual or text-based input that appears in real time, giving everyone a visible role.

Mid-session breakout discussions

Breakout rooms are not only for warm-ups or brainstorming. Mid-session small-group conversations can help digest dense content or apply concepts. For example, after a presentation on evaluation criteria, participants could be asked to apply those to a mock proposal in breakout rooms.

Live panels

Live panel discussions add dynamism to mid-event segments by bringing together multiple voices to share diverse perspectives in real time. These sessions are typically moderated, allowing for structured interaction between speakers and the audience. Panels work particularly well in events focused on policy, project showcases, or expert insight, as they encourage dialogue and can respond fluidly to audience questions or topical developments.

When well moderated, panels promote participant engagement through integrated Q&A, live polling, or chat-based reactions. Using tools like Zoom Webinar, Slido, or Hopin, organizers can collect questions during the session and highlight recurring themes. It's important to brief panelists beforehand and define clear time limits for responses to ensure smooth flow and equal participation.

To prevent live panels from becoming monotonous, a common pitfall, moderators should actively manage pacing, rotate speakers frequently, and pose provocative or audience-sourced questions. Using real-time polling, visual aids, or brief audience input (e.g., via chat or Slido) can inject energy and responsiveness into the discussion. Ensuring panelists represent diverse viewpoints and delivery styles also helps sustain attention and engagement.

Good Practice: Keeping Live Panels engaging

In online policy dialogues the moderator can prevent the panel from becoming monotonous by combining structured rotation with interactive tools. Each speaker is given no more than three minutes per intervention, after which the moderator invites either a question from the audience or a quick poll to reset attention. The questions submitted by the audience are filtered and posed throughout the discussion rather than saved for the end, which keeps the exchange lively, and participant driven. This format maintains energy, ensures balanced contributions from all panelists, and gives participants a sense of active involvement in shaping the conversation.

Embedded Q&A activities

Instead of waiting until the end, mid-session Q&A rounds allow participants to clarify points and reduce confusion. Platforms with upvoting features, such as Slido or Zoom's Q&A tool enable prioritization of questions, keeping the session efficient.

When properly integrated into the flow of the event, these interactive tools keep the audience engaged and improve the overall learning outcomes. They should be selected based on the session's goals, duration, and participant profile.

7.3.5 Use of tools for joint content development

Effective brainstorming and co-creation sessions benefit greatly from purpose-built digital tools that support real-time collaboration and idea organization.

Whiteboard platforms

Collaborative whiteboard platforms, such as Miro, Mural, Padlet, Google Jamboard, and Conceptboard, each offer unique strengths that support brainstorming and co-creation. Miro is excellent for structured design sessions, while Padlet is highly intuitive and accessible. Mural excels in team collaboration with pre-built templates and facilitation features. Google Jamboard, while more basic, is easily integrated into Google Workspace. Conceptboard provides strong visual mapping features useful for planning.

The choice of tool should be based on the task's complexity, the number of participants, and the familiarity of users.

Table 6.1 compares the advantages and disadvantages of several commonly used whiteboard platforms:

Platform	Advantages	Disadvantages
Miro	Highly customizable, great for design thinking	Steeper learning curve for new users
Mural	Templates for team brainstorming, great facilitation tools	Requires user accounts for full use
Padlet	Very intuitive, supports multiple formats	Limited structure and layout customization
Google Jamboard	Easy to use, integrates with Google tools	Basic features, limited collaboration scalability
Conceptboard	Good for visual planning and sticky note use	Less modern interface, fewer templates than competitors

Table 6.1: Advantages and disadvantages of commonly used whiteboard platforms

Good Practice: Whiteboards for collective idea building

Using a digital whiteboard during a co-creation session allows all participants to contribute ideas in real time, creating a shared visual workspace. For example, the facilitator can start with a central question and invite participants to post notes, images, or links around it. Clustering related inputs and visually mapping connections helps structure the discussion and makes collective thinking visible. This approach not only enhances creativity but also ensures that every participant's input is captured and valued.

Breakout rooms

Small-group discussions using breakout rooms can support co-creation, brainstorming, and deeper conversations that help participants digest dense content or apply new concepts. In larger events, breakout rooms offer smaller, focused environments that foster effective co-creation - especially when paired with collaborative whiteboard tools. As an example for digesting content, after a presentation on the evaluation criteria, participants could be asked to apply those to a mock proposal in breakout rooms.

Collaborative text tools and chat functions

Shared documents - such as Google Docs, Microsoft Word Online, or Etherpad - enable participants to co-edit text in real time, which is particularly valuable during collaborative writing, note-taking, or brainstorming sessions. These tools support synchronous input, allowing multiple users to contribute simultaneously, suggest edits, or comment on one another's ideas. This co-creation process fosters ownership and transparency and is particularly effective for tasks like drafting shared statements, compiling group insights, or completing templates.

At the same time, *chat functions* integrated into platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Webex allow participants to engage in side-discussions, raise questions, or react to ongoing content without interrupting the speaker. These channels can also serve as a low-barrier entry point for less vocal participants, encouraging more inclusive interaction.

To ensure these tools are used effectively, clear facilitation guidelines are essential. Facilitators should set expectations, assign roles where needed (e.g., a live note-taker), and establish how outcomes will be collected or shared. Without guidance, such tools can become fragmented or underused.

7.3.6 Use of engagement tools for closing

The closing moments of an event are critical not only for summarizing key takeaways but also for reinforcing learning, gathering feedback, and providing a sense of completion.

Final polls are a simple yet effective way to gauge participant understanding, track changes in opinion, or collect feedback on the session. Tools such as Mentimeter, Slido, and Zoom Polls can be used to ask wrap-up questions like "What was the most valuable takeaway?" or "How confident do you feel applying this knowledge?" These quick pulses also help organizers assess session impact in real time.

Feedback forms – delivered via platforms like Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, or integrated survey tools in Zoom and Teams – are effective tools for collecting structured responses about the event's effectiveness, content clarity, and logistics.

Reflection prompts, such as asking participants to share in the chat "What's one thing you're taking away from today?" or "What action will you take after this session?", offer a moment of personal synthesis that promotes cognitive closure and helps participants consolidate what they've learned.

Visual tools such as Padlet and Mentimeter can be used for final activities like *word clouds*, where participants contribute one word that captures their experience. This creates a

shared visual expression of the group's collective insights or mood. In addition, Zoom's *annotation features*, collaborative *whiteboards*, or shared Google Docs can be used for collective summaries or final reflections, allowing participants to co-create a shared wrap-up output.

Good Practice: Using Zoom Annotations for collaborative wrap-up

Zoom's built-in annotation feature can be used to create an engaging, collective wrap-up at the end of an online session. A facilitator can share a blank slide titled "Key Takeaways & Reflections" and invite participants to add a word, phrase, or symbol using the annotation toolbar.

Participants contribute directly on the shared screen, highlighting insights, expressing appreciation, or posing final questions. The result is a lively collage of thoughts and reactions visible to everyone in real time. This collective summary reinforces key messages while giving each participant a visible voice in the closure process.

The approach is especially useful in larger sessions, where not everyone has the chance to speak but still wishes to contribute. It fosters shared ownership and creates a more memorable ending by turning a functional wrap-up into a participatory moment. The annotated slide can also be saved and shared afterward as a visual takeaway. Explaining how to access the annotation toolbar helps ensure smooth execution. With a time limit the activity can be kept focused and energetic.

These tools help participants feel a sense of closure and reinforce key takeaways in a collective, visual way.

In larger events, where personal engagement may be limited, these tools also help add a human touch to the closing, offering everyone a chance to voice a final thought or appreciation. A well-facilitated close reinforces group cohesion and boosts post-event satisfaction and long-term recall of key messages.

7.4 Integration of pre-recorded sessions

Integrating pre-recorded presentations into live events introduces flexibility, minimizes technical risks, and ensures content consistency. Pre-recorded segments allow speakers to deliver polished messages without the pressures of a live setting, which can be especially valuable if the speaker is in a different time zone or unavailable during the event. These recordings also reduce the likelihood of disruptions due to connectivity or hardware issues. However, to ensure continuous audience engagement, pre-recorded content should be tightly synchronized with the live agenda and delivered with clear context and framing by a live moderator.

To maintain interactivity and audience attention, pre-recorded sessions should be paired with live elements such as real-time Q&A, chat discussions, or follow-up polls. One possible approach is that a pre-recorded keynote is followed by a live panel or an open Q&A, allowing participants to reflect and respond in real time. Embedding such content directly into the main session - rather than sending participants to an external link - helps preserve a cohesive event experience.

7.5 Using online timer during breaks or tasks

Online timers help structure sessions by setting clear boundaries for breaks, tasks, or collaborative activities. Tools such as TimerTab, Zoom's integrated timer, or PowerPoint countdown slides keep events on schedule. Timers are especially useful during breakout room activities, reflection moments, brainstorming sessions, or short content-processing tasks. They add structure to the session without requiring verbal reminders and promote a sense of urgency and shared pacing. Displaying a timer during a 5- or 10-minute break keeps attendees informed and encourages timely returns, ensuring that the session resumes smoothly.

7.6 Wrapping-up

The wrap-up segment serves as both a cognitive and emotional conclusion to the session. It should include a summary of the key messages or learnings, acknowledgment of participants' contributions, and provide information about next steps or follow-up actions.

For longer or more complex events, including interim wrap-ups between major sections can help participants consolidate their understanding and transition smoothly between topics. These interim wrap-ups can be scheduled after key presentations or activities, using quick polls, summary slides, or brief facilitator-led recaps to highlight what has been covered and preview what's coming next.

8 Virtual event feedback

Post-event feedback is critical for evaluating success and guiding future improvements. Feedback forms should be short, focused, and include both quantitative and qualitative questions. Topics should cover content quality, technical experience, interactivity, and suggestions for future events. Tools such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, or built-in feedback modules within event platforms offer accessible and flexible ways to collect participant feedback.

Feedback should be analysed systematically, with key findings summarized in a debrief report. Sharing highlights with participants shows responsiveness and builds trust.

After the event, organizing a short internal debriefing session allows the team to reflect on what went well and what could be improved. This discussion should cover participant feedback, technical performance, facilitation dynamics, and content delivery.

9 Social media integration

Social media should be integrated across the event lifecycle. Pre-event promotion builds anticipation; live coverage amplifies participation; and post-event content extends reach. Promotional activities should start 2–3 weeks in advance and include teaser posts, speaker highlights, and save-the-date visuals. Creating a content calendar and using scheduling tools (e.g., Buffer, Hootsuite) ensures consistent messaging across platforms. Before sending the official invitation email or publishing teaser posts, the event should be introduced to stakeholders through other communication channels, such as newsletters.

Social media walls, live tweets, event hashtags, and highlight reels (i.e. short-form content that showcases the most memorable, engaging, or important moments from the event) all contribute to a vibrant online presence. Speakers and partners should be encouraged to share event content. Quotes, screenshots, and testimonials can be repurposed for ongoing NEB communications. Event pages on LinkedIn or Facebook also provide continuity and facilitate community building.

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