

**Lessons learned from the OIE webinar for OIE National Focal Points
for Communication in the Americas: Focus on ASF**



Event coordinated by the OIE Communication Department (CD) and the Regional Representation for the Americas (RRA), which welcomed over 35 participants from 32 countries - three webinars were held in one week, each lasting two hours.

Registration

Registration was managed by the Events Coordination Unit (ECU), as they had previously sent the invitation letters to the participants. A form was created on Microsoft Forms, in English and in Spanish, to facilitate the registration. Microsoft Power Automate was used to establish a flow to automatically send an e-mail notification following each registration to ECU, the RR and the Communication Department, as well as a personalised reply to the participants. A table listing participants, drawn initially from a TIGER extraction of the Communication Focal Points, was shared among the three teams on One Drive and kept up to date by ECU.

After registration, participants were given access to the OIE e-Learning Platform by the Capacity Building Department (CBD). The CBD did not have access to the shared table as it contained supplementary information to that needed to register participants on the e-Learning platform. The CD therefore had to extract new registrations and sent an update to CBD, which was creating unnecessary work.

Several countries contacted the RRA for assistance, either because they did not receive the e-mail granting access or because they were unable to access the e-training with the given credentials (mostly, it was unclear to them that they needed to copy-paste the password instead of typing it).

It is recommended:

- To cross off the Focal Points who will not attend as they will be substituted by someone else, so as to minimise confusion in the follow-up table.

- To use the same shared table between the CD, the ECU, the RR and the CBD. This table needs to be adapted to the needs of CBD to facilitate automatic import for the creation of participants' access to the e-learning platform and to explore friendlier ways of access (e.g. not only copy-pasting the password but also allowing the option to type).

e-Learning platform

Participants were required to carry out training on the platform to familiarise themselves with the Organisation as well as to go through the [OIE Communication Handbook for Veterinary Services](#). The latter would be used as the basis for exercises during the webinar.

Some participants were unable to log onto the platform and eventually did not do the training. When participants experienced problems, they communicated this information to the Regional Representation rather than with CBD. The RRA translated all messages and forwarded them to CBD, then provided support to the countries with CBD responses and in cases where the countries could not access the platform, the *OIE Communication Handbook for Veterinary Services*.

It is recommended:

- To have a short explainer video on how to connect to the platform (what not to do, as some participants ended up creating their own passwords). This can be included in the e-mail welcome package that is sent to all registered participants.
- That participants write directly to the CBD to allow for direct communication and the quicker resolution of problems.

Welcome package

A welcome package was developed containing a welcome e-mail with an info sheet and guidelines on how to use [Zoom](#) as an attachment. This was sent to all the registered participants one week in advance of the preliminary meeting.

Zoom

The webinar was held on Zoom using the Communication Department's Pro account to host the meeting. [Roles and responsibilities](#) were distributed among the members of the Organising Committee which constituted staff from the Communication Department and the Regional Representation in the Americas prior to the webinar. Several tests were performed before the webinar to check the functionality of each role.

All members of the Organising Committee were co-hosts for management purposes. The speakers were also given co-host roles in order to share their screens.

Interpreting

Remote simultaneous interpretation was provided in English and Spanish by one interpreter who worked from and into both languages. Prior to the webinar, a detailed agenda was shared with the interpreter in order to make her aware of when there were PowerPoint or video presentations during the webinar. Specific vocabulary that would be used during the webinar, was also provided in both languages. The interpreter was requested to record her interpreting as Zoom only records the speaker's language (and not that of the interpreter). This was done so that the interpreted audio could be added into the video and allow us to have both English and Spanish videos of the webinar.

It is recommended to:

- Consider allocating a break in the programme in the form of a video presentation with subtitles. This will allow the interpreter to take a break.
- Provide participants with a five-minute break to stretch and reset their attention.
- Provide interpreters with the OIE videos to be displayed during the webinar in the languages of the webinar as well as the scripts to facilitate the interpreting.

Video presentations

Focal Points who were giving presentations were requested to record videos of themselves giving their presentations. This was done to avoid possible problems with Internet connectivity at the speakers' end. Subtitles were added to the videos to allow the interpreter some breathing space.

It is recommended to:

- Define in advance the technical aspects of the required video (quality, size, format, codecs, etc.).
- Edit the videos if they are deemed to be too long so that the time allocated can be strictly adhered to.
- Have a copy of the presentations prior to the webinar in the event that the speaker cannot connect to the webinar on the day.
- Download the presentations and the videos on at least two computers in case one of the hosts experiences challenges with Internet connection.

Audio

Challenges were experienced on the second day when the audio of some presenters was much louder than that of the interpreter, making it difficult for those who needed to follow the interpretation. Despite tests having been performed prior to the event, this proved to be a random occurrence and did not occur with all speakers. This was put down to a technical difficulty that Zoom could not solve. However when one of the Spanish speakers chose the English audio channel, this appeared to solve the problem, although the audio channels are meant for participants to choose the audio output rather than for a speaker (not interpreter) to speak into.

It is recommended to:

- Test the interpreting function with the speakers and interpreter in advance.
- Notify the speakers of the possibility of the Zoom malfunction concerning audio levels in interpreting and advise them which audio channel to use.
- Request the speakers to do a video recording of their presentation, which then would be played live on the day of the webinar and interpreted by the interpreter, to cut down on the possibilities of problems with audio.

Breakout rooms

Breakout rooms were used for group work with participants being divided into three Spanish-speaking groups and one English-speaking group. This was done to facilitate ease of communication within the groups considering that the interpreting function does not work in breakout sessions. Although the group configurations had been established beforehand and the file with the participants of each group uploaded onto Zoom, the automatic partitioning did not work. Therefore, this was done manually.

It is recommended to:

- Match the language of the columns in the CSV table downloaded from Zoom with the language that the Zoom account being used is in, as if it is in a different language, Zoom will not register the details in the table. Despite having done this, the automatic room allocation did not function.
- Check with IT that you have the latest version of Excel as older versions could not upload the table to Zoom.

- Prepare an Excel table with the group partitioning, with the country name, the participant's name and the e-mail addresses of each group member.
- Print out the table to facilitate the manual partitioning.
- Request participants to rename themselves by COUNTRY+NAME as soon as they join the meeting. This will make it easier to recognise the participants when doing the manual partitioning and to ensure that each participant has been allocated to the correct breakout room.
- Prepare the manual partitioning as soon as all the participants are in the meeting; to avoid making the partitioning a lengthy process the moment that the participants should break out into groups.

Wooclap

[Wooclap](#), an interactive learning platform, was used for interactive sessions and for live poll sessions during the webinar. The platform is free, intuitive and is easy to configure. While Zoom does offer a poll option, Wooclap allows users to upload PowerPoint presentations which avoids juggling the presentation and the poll on different platforms. Further, the Wooclap interface is visually more attractive than that of Zoom and allows for online brainstorming, showing the responses written by participants. Given that participants need to connect on their smartphones, this allows them to take their eyes away from the computer screen and gives them an activity to do with their hands, which proves to be useful if they have to concentrate on their screens for an extended time.

Participants are required to connect on their smartphone. One participant did not connect with her smartphone, and wrote her responses on the Zoom chat, which slightly distorted the results of the poll as her answers were not considered by Wooclap.

In order to move on to the next question, participants are obliged to refresh the Wooclap page every time there is a new question.

It is recommended to:

- Keep the Wooclap event short to avoid requesting the participants to refresh their pages constantly.

Evaluation

Microsoft Forms was used for the evaluation form ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)), the links to which were shared with the participants on the Zoom chat on the last day of the webinar.

It is recommended to:

- Create a comments section for each day rather than one for each presentation as this can make the evaluation cumbersome.
- Create a short link for the evaluation form as the link generated by Microsoft is very long and can look unprofessional. The links were created with [bitly.com](#).

We wish to thank our colleagues from the Communication Department for submitting this article to the OIE News Team.