



INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION DURING **COVID-19**



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PREFACE

The guide will focus on the organisational and digital adaptation of information and consultation processes, including practical tips and instructions. Indicative contents include how to organise meetings, elections, and other activities online, including technical issues, translation, confidentiality, representativeness, and other issues.

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INTRODUCTION

i. Pandemic: socio-economic consequences

The crisis triggered by the pandemic has had multiple socio-economic, cultural, and political consequences. The repercussions on the economy were enormous. It is estimated that world GDP decreased by 3.5%, while at the European Union level the recession was 6.6% compared to the GDP of 2019 (Association of SA and Ltd companies, 2021). Unemployment in February 2021 recorded 8.2% in Europe (Eurostat, 2022). Covid-19 has not only had enormous consequences on the GDP of countries but has also contributed to the increase in poverty and inequality and in general has affected the protection of workers' rights (UNDP, 2022). People have lost the equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs worldwide; many businesses have been temporarily closed or have undergone significant personnel reductions; inflation increases (Otieno et al., 2021). The crisis has also had repercussions on the work organization. Many employees have been confined and isolated in their homes to prevent the spread of the virus. Therefore, digital ways of working have been implemented. This has caused various problems especially to people who have no digital skills and/or to those who live in a house where it is difficult to find a quiet room with a good Wi-Fi connection.

ii. The effect of Covid-19 on trade unions

Violations of trade union rights, such as the right to be organized, collective bargaining and strike for all workers, are widespread due to social restraint measures (Otieno et al., 2021; ILO, 2021a). Collective bargaining, information and consultation procedures and social dialogue in general have become more difficult now. This has a strong impact on the protection of employee rights, especially for those working in non-standard or precarious types of work. In other words, the changed socio-economic variables are not only a threat to workers/employees, but also to their representatives.

Furthermore, trade unions now face economic informalization, automation and technological change. Their ability to organize and serve workers in these situations is becoming crucial. As illustrated by a study published by the ILO (2021b), the restoration of social dialogue may be one of the effective mechanisms to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19. Therefore, trade unions can play a vital role in offering a response to the crisis if they can adapt to new situations. During and after the pandemic, it is important that unions are flexible, effective and know how to use the applications and tools technology made available.

This guide will help achieve this goal by providing advice to trade unions and workers'/employees' representatives on how to adapt to the changed situation. The guide will be structured as follows. The first chapter will focus on the information and consultation process; the second chapter will focus on teleworking; the third chapter will present the technical guidelines on how to host online meetings.

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CHAPTER 1.

INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION DURING THE EPIDEMIC CRISIS

1.1 Introduction

The rights of workers to information, consultation and participation do not cease due to the COVID-19 emergency (CES, 2020). The European Parliament (December 16, 2021) has in fact underlined that not only the right of employees to information and consultation must always be guaranteed, but also that this must be done in a timely manner. The European institution is also convinced that the introduction of new digital technologies can potentially have a positive impact on the working environment. However, some conditions are needed for this to happen. Technologies must be reliably implemented and monitored, which will require timely and meaningful information and consultation, to ensure full compliance with workers' health and safety, data protection, equal treatment, employment stability and social assistance.

1.2 Meetings online

In principle, there is nothing to prevent the collective consultation process from taking place remotely (Ashraf, June 3, 2020). Several national emergency laws have in fact been implemented following the European recommendations on information and consultation during Covid-19 and on the use of teleconferencing.

They intend to adapt the information and consultation procedures of employees' representatives to the new circumstances, so that it is effectively possible to exercise the employees' rights during the current health crisis. These laws provide for the systematization of the use of videoconferencing, conference calls and instant messaging to use them as valid tools for online meetings. However, such measures are recommended to remain exceptional, and vigilance is required. In France, on Sunday 22 March 2020, the French emergency law to tackle the Covid-19 epidemic was approved by Parliament. Among other things, it provides for the systematization of the use of videoconferencing for the consultation of social and economic committees, extending it beyond the limit to 3 meetings per year that exists today. Following the same line, decisions made by videoconferencing are considered legally valid in Germany (ETUC, 2020). These measures go in the same direction as the World Health Organization (2019), which recommends the use of virtual meetings after the reopening of workplaces. In Italy, a tripartite protocol, with the same value as the laws, was signed by the government and social partners on March 14 2020 and was integrated on April 24 2020¹. The document provides for maximum use of smart working², where possible, and the organization of online assemblies, meetings and

¹ The protocol is called: "Protocollo condiviso di regolamentazione delle misure per il contrasto e il contenimento della diffusione del virus Covid-19 negli ambienti di lavoro"

² To know more about this, see Chapter 2

elections for information and consultation. The protocol also provides for the principle according to which, if the envisaged measures are not implemented by the company management, the activity can be suspended. In Germany, the government introduced the “Works Council Modernization Act” (Betriebsrätemodernisierungsgesetz)³, that came into force the summer of 2021, described by the German government as “The “Act to Promote Works Council Elections and Works Council Activities in a Digital Working World”. Regarding the virtual meetings, the Act allows work councils to hold meetings by video and telephone conference under their own terms. Still, the law highlights its preference to face-to-face meetings when is possible. However, digital meetings may be held. This requires (1) a corresponding amendment to the works council's rules of procedure, (2) no objection from works council members and (3) the preservation of confidentiality in the digital meeting.⁴ Additionally, works council's members may also participate in meetings partly in person and partly virtually and only the works council may decide whether to conduct a works council meeting on a (partially) virtual basis.⁵ In Spain, the Council of Ministers approved the Royal Decree Law 28/2020⁶, that among others regulated distance work. The law was a direct outcome of tripartite social dialogue, grants remote workers the same rights as those who carry out their activities in the company's premises and is based on voluntariness and the agreement of workers and employers.⁷ In regards to the workers communication with their legal representatives, under the Spanish Law 10/2021, that amended the Royal Decree Law 28/2020, every company must provide the legal representation of the workers with the necessary elements for the development of their representative activity, including access to communications and electronic addresses for use in the company and the implementation of the virtual board, when necessary, compatible with the form of provision of remote work.⁸

1.2.1 Recommendations

There are several recommendations to follow when organizing online consultation and information meetings (ETUC, 2020).

1. Does your management want to cancel an important meeting or propose to hold the meeting remotely via videoconference?



Ask for the meeting to be postponed and physically take place as soon as possible after the end of the COVID-19 emergency.

³ “Act to Promote Works Council Elections and Works Council Activities in a Digital Working World” (Betriebsrätemodernisierungsgesetz – Works Council Modernization Act), effective since the 17th of June 2021, <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Gesetze-und-Gesetzesvorhaben/betriebsraetmodernisierungsgesetz.html>

⁴ sec. 30 para. 1 BetrVG

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Boletín oficial del estado (2020) ‘Real Decreto-ley 28/2020, de 22 de septiembre, de trabajo a distancia’, Sec. I. Pág. 79929, https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-11043

⁷ Eurofound (2020), Regulation of remote work, case ES-2020-39/1321 (measures in Spain), COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch, Dublin, <http://eurofound.link/covid19eupolicywatch>

⁸ BOE-A-2021-11472, Artículo 19. Derechos colectivos de las personas que trabajan a distancia (Collective Rights of people working remotely), <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2021/07/09/10>

This recommendation aims to ensure that videoconferencing does not replace face-to-face meetings and that management does not use the COVID-19 crisis as an excuse to cancel regular meetings.

HOW?

You can find concrete examples below (ETUC, 2020)

A scheduled meeting was cancelled in the insurance company Generali. Therefore, the Committee asked the Management to share the electronic copies of the scheduled presentations.

At Coca-Cola European Partners, the first EWC meeting was to take place at the end of March. The meeting was postponed and not cancelled.

The same happened in Korian, a group active in elderly care services. There too it was decided not to cancel a meeting but to postpone it.

- You must keep in mind though that postponing a meeting would be a good idea if the epidemic crisis was to last for a few months. With the actual length of the crisis postponing could be used as a synonymous of cancelling. The use of online meetings is recommended therefore, under specific conditions to be agreed between the parties. Consultation meetings with employee representatives are likely to take place via video or audio conference (preferably via video conference).

Establish rules for using online meetings **in advance**, before the first meeting. This is extremely important. An example of a viable way to set up rules for online meetings can be found in the Appendix I (ETUC 2020).

- Given the current situation, particular attention should be paid to ensuring effective communication between representatives and employees.

TIP: An idea is to create internal email groups or intranet sites so that information can be shared easily (preferably using no company emails or facilities, in order that the employer or management has no access to them).

Successful example of information and consultation during the pandemics, the case of Heineken in Bergamo

For years, I have been a united trade union representative at the Heineken factory in Comun Nuovo, Bergamo, and I was confronted first hand with the pandemics, as Bergamo was the epicentre of the pandemics in Europe, a sort of Wuhan of Europe, and I was at the factory with the person who was then its director, a Greek colleague of yours, Nikos Paraschopoulos, whom Vassilis knows very well because he worked with him for years. In my experience, Bergamo was practically the most affected city and I found myself as a workers' representative in the factory having to guarantee production but also workers' safety. We found ourselves in a peculiar, I would say rather complicated, situation with the director, also new, coming from Greece. We were fourth-term representatives who had some experience but in fact the virus was unknown to all of us and there was no benchmark. There was no possibility of copying from other countries because, unfortunately, Bergamo was the first country affected. So, indeed, we had to resort to the rule of information and consultation. I would say that was quite appropriate as we had the opportunity to draw up a protocol with the management, but we built it from scratch, i.e. we sat with the management for three hours a day for a month and a half to create rules out of thin air, as government had not yet formalised any rule. So, we worked with common sense and with the tools available at that time to define what could be protocols of action, beginning with the basic rules, distance, sanitisation, masks... Consider that masks came in from the Netherlands but we didn't have masks for everyone, so we also had to prioritise. Then there were all the rules related to common spaces: canteen, break areas, changing room areas: all these areas that could be contact areas, where the virus could spread. At the beginning of February we had a technician from Codogno, the town where the virus was later isolated, who came to assemble a stretch wrap machine in the factory, and in these operations contact with the technicians is very close. This resulted in several workers having direct contact with this technician. We had to implement a preventive isolation procedure and this caused a problem, i.e. the lack of the necessary workforce to run the production lines because the management, in coordination with the united union representative, decided to keep people at home on a preventive basis and therefore lacked the necessary workforce. So, for two months there was this continuous dialogue that led to the creation of a protocol and this protocol was also the basis for what the government then did at a national level because, since we were the first, even Heineken then copied our protocol in the various factories and made it possible to guarantee safety but also continuity of production because this continuity was necessary to be able to pay the wages to the employees. So, in these terms digitisation has helped us because through the use of innovative tools we have changed the way we work. We have in any case maintained the level of contact and communication that is fundamental to our work, because being union representatives is certainly an activity that requires face-to-face interactions, by looking at each other face-to-face. This is the only way to achieve the trust that allows us to obtain results at an agreed table that guarantees production, which is the company's priority, as well as the safety and health of workers.

Alberto Kulberg Taub

Transnational workshop in Rome, 4.7.2022

1.2.2 Technicalities

- Employee representatives and anyone else attending online meetings must have **adequate IT equipment and technical support**.
- Circulate a list of online meeting attendees. It can be decided on a case-by-case basis who should participate in online meetings (e.g., elected members of WCs and EWCs, Select Committee members, enlarged Select Committee, experts on the subject to be discussed etc.).
- As it is the case in all information and consultation meetings, detailed minutes should be taken so that there is a clear record of what is being discussed. After that, these should be distributed for feedback via email. It is well known though that many employers do not want to have minutes. The interesting point with online meetings is that most of video conferencing software offer the facility of recording the meeting.
- Furthermore, in the presence of a considerable number of participants, it will be useful to clarify at the beginning of each meeting: **how it will take place, when and how to ask the questions**.
- As in any meeting (this does not change with the pandemic) **the agenda** of the meeting should be circulated well before each meeting to help prioritize any key issues.

TIP: In the case of information and consultation meetings at national level, but even in the case of EWC meetings (if the company or group management consents to have extraordinary EWC meetings), try to organize shorter but more frequent meetings. They are more appropriate to facilitate meaningful discussions between employers and representatives. Also give yourself some time to pass information on the results of information and consultation meetings to the employees and seek email feedback from interested employees.

TIP: Video conferencing is a good tool to hold more frequent coordination meetings between employees' representatives both in the case of EWCs and national representatives if they are at a distance (e.g., in the case of teleworkers or in the case they work in different locations).

1.2.3 Languages

If necessary, simultaneous interpretation (during online meetings) and translation of materials in writing (before meetings) should be provided. Interpretation can be provided by professional interpreters. The management of the company bears the costs of translation or interpretation.

Two examples follow (ETUC, 2020).

At Alstom, the EWCs (European Works Councils) requested an emergency update on the COVID-19 situation through a conference call with the Management. During the conference call simultaneous translation in all languages was provided.

In Kraft Heinz, the EWC requested an extraordinary meeting and received a presentation translated into all the languages of the EWC.

1.2.4 Confidentiality (Ashraf (June 2, 2020)

It is also important to ensure that confidentiality and information security are always maintained and that data protection principles are respected. The epidemic crisis does not affect the rules set for confidentiality.

- Documents sent by e-mail to representatives should be marked as confidential and should be made visibly clear when not intended for circulation.

Representatives can forward the emails received from the employer directly to the relevant group and any correspondence should be drafted for this purpose.

- The confidentiality of online meetings must be guaranteed, even for pre and post meetings. Due to possibilities technology offers, employees' representatives can record meetings online even without the knowledge of the employer, but even in this case they are bound to keep their obligations for confidentiality and make sure that there is no leak or break in their computer.

When it comes to confidentiality and data protection, the new German law clarifies that the employer is responsible for data protection, even if the works council processes employees' personal data in the performance of its duties. Nevertheless, the works council must support the employer in fulfilling its obligations under data protection law. The employer shall provide the works council with the necessary material resources for this purpose.⁹

1.3 Elections

Elections should also take place during the Covid-19 period. They are needed to elect employees' representatives. For a certain period, the solution used was to postpone elections, at the same time prolonging the mandate of current representatives. However, while trade union elections are now scheduled to take place digitally as well, this brings challenges. There are technological and safety problems, as well as social ones. These concern the transparency of voting, voting secrecy, the danger of third-party interference, the buying of votes, the possibility of system attack or failure, inequalities in Internet access and technological literacy, just to name some. These serious threats posed by e-voting can undermine electoral integrity (European Parliament, 2020).

It is essential to mention here, the example of Germany where for the work councils' elections of 2022, there is the specific option of postal voting for those working permanently from home, those on long-term sick leave, employees on parental leave, etc. Essentially anyone who will not be present from the issuing of the election notice until election day for other reasons (e.g. illness) (sec. 24 (2) Election Regulations), the election notice shall be sent to these employees by post or electronically (e.g. by e-mail) (sec. 3 (4) sent. 4 Election Regulations).

So, here are some tips to follow for organizing online elections (Ashraf, June 3, 2020; Quain, July 27, 2020).

⁹ Data protection and responsibility of the employer, sec. 79 a BetrVG

The case of Greece

In Greece, there have been changes in trade union law, which have introduced new procedures and institutions that have not yet been clarified.

With the epidemic, the unions could not carry out election procedures and postponed them for about 2 years. Law 4808/21 made it possible to hold General Assemblies and remote voting. Previously, the General Assembly had to be held in a specific place with physical presence and the quorum was measured. Presently, the law provides that the General Assembly and elections in trade unions can be done remotely using digital means. But it still needs clarification if in a company-based trade union, where all the workers/employees are gathered in the same place, they should vote by entering an electronic platform or not.

Mandatory digital voting is required for deciding a strike. Since in this case there is in the law an explicit mention of the obligation, it is concluded that in any other cases of voting the use of an electronic platform is not mandatory.

This is where the question comes in: does the use of electronic voting offer the possibility of expanding the number of workers/employees who participate in the trade unions and civic life, or does this falsify the secrecy of the vote, even if the inviolability of participation can be ensured by the use of unbreakable keys? ; How can secrecy be ensured through the use of computers or telephones, since the employer or a representative of the employer may be with the employee when he/she votes? Already, there are some organizations that do not accept digital voting results. We do not know whether we are going towards the expansion and strengthening of participation in trade unions or towards the degeneration of participation.

Hristos Kioulos, Lawyer specialized in labour issues

Final Transnational Conference, 4.11.2022

1.3.1 Recommendations

- Setting the scene: Preparing for election

- An **online voting platform** is perhaps the best solution under the circumstances considering the current social distancing restrictions in place. Asking employees to come to the office to vote is likely to have a negative effect on the fairness of the election, assuming because, due to the pandemic, employees may be afraid to break social distancing or even unable to do so.
- In the case teleworking is used by a big number of the company employees, a good solution might be to use a database of email addresses and / or text numbers to remotely manage the election process using an online software tool, dedicated to this end.
- As the collective consultation is likely to take place remotely, via video conference and / or email, it is crucial that all elected representatives participate in it, in order that, in their turn, can communicate effectively with the relevant employees they represent.

- It is important that all employees that have the right to, can stand for election and have the right to vote. Therefore, it must be ensured that everyone has access to adequate IT facilities and is able to present their candidacies and / or vote. Indeed, inclusivity may be an issue, especially if the campaign shifts primarily online, as not all voters have access to the internet (Commonweath, 2020).
- The election may take longer than usual. **Sufficient time** should be given to assure that employees will have the time to contact and nominate candidates and that candidates are happy to run for election.

TIP: It is preferable that emails used for this purpose are personal emails of employees (not the company ones that they use in everyday transactions in their job). This is to prevent the company management from having access to votes and to keep the management far from employee representation procedures.

- General settings before the vote

- Who will run the elections?

As far as reasonably practicable, **voting must be fair and take place in secret**. To this end a specific software must be used and elected persons would be the only to have access to results.

- Which type of voting system?

The voting system is clearly indicated in the trade union statute or set by national Law in the cases of election of employee representatives for information and consultation both in the cases of EWC representatives and information and consultation at national level.

- How to divide the workforce?

In big companies and groupings, the trade union statute may preview elections also at geographical or industry or professional level. Although remote voting in a way “erases” problems of geographical distancing, representation at a local or industry level, if previewed by the trade union statute, is still very important, because these representatives know better problems (and may propose more suitable solutions) at a local or industry level.

- Nominations

Everybody should be allowed to have equal opportunity to be a candidate.

- Publication of voting methods and notice of election

All employees (in the case the national law previews it for the election of Work Councils or employees' representatives to information and consultation) or all members of trade unions (in the case of elections of trade union bodies) must be notified about the elections a minimum number of days before the actual voting. They should also be informed about the voting methods.

What needs to be clear and publicized among the voters?

(Quain, July 27, 2020)

- Duration of the voting process, the methods of voting and the rules for conducting the ballot
- Method and date of the start of the vote
- Admission rules for registering for the digital ballot
- How valid votes will be counted and how fairness will be maintained
- Treatment of defective ballots and the time and methods of closing the vote
- Persons (both elected ones and appointed according to the law) who will supervise the conduct of the elections

- General rules:

- The pandemic does not change the statutes of trade unions (unless if the Labour Law has changed during the pandemic and previews specific changes in the statutes), although a series of countries have postponed elections prolonging the duration of representation that expired by several months, or they have introduced necessity law, allowing voting procedure to take place remotely, the essence of representation and trade union bodies preview in its statute do not change.
- Even in the case that the number of candidates nominated is equal to or less than the number of representatives required by the statute or previewed by the law, the ballot is necessary.

1.3.2 Transparency of the election process

TIP: Keep your election documents and keep clear records to prove that elections have taken place as previewed by the law.

- After the election

In Greece, following the law 48028/21:

The names of employees 'representatives or trade union bodies' members elected must be filed with the Ministry of Labour. The president of the union must enter the ERGANI program of the Ministry of Labour and enter the names of the management board, the number of members, the statute, etc.

However, there is a preoccupation about personal data relating to participation in election procedures being publicized.

No changes to the statute are required and no transition time mentioned (OBES, 4 December 2021).

Successful example

Lafarge company (OBES, 4 December 2021): “We have had our elections for the managing board of the trade union digitally. Our company has sites all through Greece and due to covid19 restrictions, employees could not travel to meet in one place. For the first time we succeeded in having 100% participation of trade union members”.

Appendix (ETUC, 2020)¹⁰

Joint rules for the exceptional use of online meetings due to the COVID-19 crisis Securing [name of the company] workers’ health and safety and ensuring quality social dialogue to mitigate the impact of the current COVID-19 crisis on the company operations and employment are priorities jointly shared by [name of the company] management and the EWC [or SE-WC].

While both parties recognise that face-to-face meetings are one of the essential factors in ensuring good dialogue, they also appreciate the need to make temporary arrangements to secure both the continued involvement of the EWC [or SE-WC] in the company decision-making process, and the health and safety of EWC [or SE-WC] delegates.

If physical meetings continue to be banned due to the COVID-19 crisis, management and the EWC [or SE-WC] decide to temporarily resort to online meetings, along the following principles:

- Ordinary EWC [or SE-WC] meetings as well as meetings aimed at renegotiating the EWC [or the SE] agreements (if applicable) will not be held online. These meetings will be postponed and reconvened as soon as the containment measures are lifted, and the situation once more allows face-to-face gatherings.
- If extraordinary meetings for information and consultation purposes are requested, they will be held online. Although videoconferences do not have the level of flexibility and interactivity which face-to-face meetings allow, the parties will do their utmost to conduct these in the best viable way.

In particular:

- Management will facilitate these meetings by giving the delegates as much information as possible in writing, in their own language, ahead of the meetings.
- Interpretation will be provided by professional interpreters.
- Decent quality IT equipment (and technical support) will be made available to each meeting participant during joint meetings as well as preparatory and follow-up meetings.
- Preparatory and follow-up meetings will continue to be organised for workers' representatives. The confidentiality of these online pre- and post- meetings will be guaranteed.

¹⁰ ETUC Briefing note, available at: https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/publication/file/2020-04/Covid19%20Briefing%20Workers%27%20Information%20Consultation%20and%20Participation%20-%20final_0.pdf.

- Experts assisting the EWC [or SE-WC], including representatives of European trade union federations, will continue to attend all meetings.
- A list of participants at online meetings will be circulated. Minutes of meetings will be drafted and adopted in accordance with the EWC [or SE-WC] agreement and sent to all EWC [or SE-WC] members as soon as possible after the meeting. The EWC [or SE-WC] may decide, on a case-by-case basis who should participate in these online meetings. Extraordinary meeting participants could either be:
 - All EWC [or SE-WC] members.
 - The Select Committee, on a mandate from the EWC [or SE-WC].
 - The Select Committee enlarged to include EWC [or SE-WC] member(s) not represented in it, on a mandate from the EWC [or SE-WC].

3. Select Committee meetings with the company will go ahead online. Management must allow the Select Committee members to carry out videoconferences among themselves and with other EWC [or SE-WC] members.

These rules govern the operation of the EWC [SE-WC] during the COVID-19 crisis only. They are therefore temporary and will automatically be repealed as soon as face-to-face meetings are permitted again.

Made on (date)

Signatures

For the company

For the employee representative (The EWC/SE-WC members, or the Select Committee/EWC/SE-WC Chairperson on a mandate from the EWC/SE-WC)

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CHAPTER 2.

TELEWORKING AND WORK-RELATED STRESS DURING COVID19

2.1 Introduction

Teleworking is at the forefront today due to the pandemic situation around the world. While recognizing that remote working systems guarantee greater flexibility, allowing you to work even in a pandemic situation, there are some more problematic aspects to take into consideration. In fact, while for the employer teleworking could lead to lower operating costs, for the employee it could mean greater problems in managing working hours and the right balance between work and free time. Other important risks are the psychological consequences of increased workload and isolation. It is therefore especially important that workers' rights are fully respected even in teleworking.

2.2 Definition and legal protection framework

Teleworking has been legally defined as a type of work that takes place outside the employer premises and which, to be carried out, demands the use of information systems. In non-extraordinary conditions, teleworking must be agreed upon by both the employer and the employee. Therefore, it cannot be imposed unilaterally. However, in Greece, from 11.3.2020 the legislator, within the "Law of Necessity", has given the employer the possibility to impose teleworking as a form of work, regardless of the consent of the employee.

In Italy, the legal definition of remote work was different. In fact, a difference has been made between smart working and teleworking. Smart working was introduced in Italy with law 81/2017. The law requires that smart working be decided through an agreement between employer and employee. An agreement that does not provide for time or workplace constraints, with the possibility of using electronic technology to carry out the work activity partly inside the company, partly outside (in any place chosen by the worker). Smart working was thus conceived as a more flexible evolution of teleworking. The principles underlying the law 81/2017, in force since June 2017, are the agreement between the parties, equal pay, the right to disconnect and the safety and protection of the worker. According to the legislator, smart working should help the worker to better reconcile the times of private and working life, while at the same time increasing his/her productivity. Now smart working has been more regulated by the 2020 emergency legislation and has been implemented after the health emergency linked to Covid-19 (D'Avanzo, 2021).

In Germany, in order to facilitate remote working and to ensure a uniform and binding protective framework for employees when working from home, the newly passed German federal law includes a co-determination right on the "organisation of mobile work

performed by means of information and communication technology”.¹¹ The relevant issues that may emerge in designing these arrangements include, for example, employee accessibility, the use of work equipment, reimbursement of expenses, safety issues related to mobile work, and other issues. However, neither the works council nor employees can impose a mobile work arrangement on an employer. The employer alone decides whether to allow mobile working.¹² Additionally, employers and works council may execute works agreements electronically through a digital signature. Balance-of-interest agreements and social plans may also be signed electronically.¹³

What is more, under the same section of the Act¹⁴, it is mentioned that accident insurance cover for home office work is extended to cover journeys made by employees between home and the childcare facility.¹⁵

In Spain, prior to the Legislation regarding teleworking (La Ley de trabajo a distancia-Royal Decree 28/2020)¹⁶, relevant regulations were outdated and insufficient. Teleworking was a rare occurrence in Spanish society and less than 10% of the Spanish workforce were teleworkers before the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷ Teleworking is part of a voluntary agreement between employer and employee. It is possible to opt out of it at any point. An agreement must be signed between employer and employees outlining details on the new arrangement, such as: an inventory of equipment, list of expenses, required working hours, distribution between remote and on-site working, duration of the agreement and the location of remote and on-site work.¹⁸

As far as digitalization of the work is concerned, it should be borne in mind that the EU's Next Generation Recovery Plan and the Recovery and Sustainability Fund have now been approved to get out of the crisis caused by the pandemic. At the heart of the recovery plan and the fund is the importance given to contributing to the improvement of digital skills.

¹¹ sec. 87 (1) no. 14 BetrVG

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Frank Weberndörfer & Claudia Posluschny, “The new German Works Council Modernization Act”, Global Workplace Insider, 21 September 2021

¹⁶ Boletín oficial del estado (2020) ‘Real Decreto-ley 28/2020, de 22 de septiembre, de trabajo a distancia’, Sec. I. Pág. 79929, available at: https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-11043

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¹⁸ Ibid

Good practice SPAIN

The regulation of teleworking in Spain can be considered a case of good practice.

Law 28/2020 updated by the Law 10/2021, 9 July, on remote working, commonly known as the Telework Law.

Remote work during the Covid Pandemic was not considered "teleworking" for the purposes of the new Law, but an "exceptional remote work situation", which was implemented in most cases as a preventive measure to guarantee protection the health of workers and the maintenance of employment.

Once the most critical phase of the Pandemic had passed, the generalization of teleworking made it necessary to develop a regulation that would respond to the various issues raised by this new form of work organization. For this reason, within the framework of the tripartite social dialogue, the Law 28/2020 on Teleworking was approved, which regulates the minimum conditions for the distance work, after updated by the Law 10/2021.

Some of these minimum conditions guaranteed in the Law: to be considered teleworking, at least 30% of the working day must be carried out remotely, based on the voluntary for both the employee and the employer, regulated in a written agreement between workers and employers, reversible by decision of the worker or the company. The company, in addition to providing the necessary tools and equipment for the optimal development of the work, must pay or compensate the expenses derived from remote work, the right to privacy and data protection is recognized, the right to digital disconnection, the right to equal treatment between workers and teleworkers and protection of collective rights, etc.

These minimum conditions included in the Distance Work Law are being developed in sectoral collective bargaining or specific agreements in companies.

Practice presented at the Final Transnational Conference on 4.11.2022

2.3 Protection of the rights of teleworking workers

- It is important to keep in mind that the rights of a teleworker must be identical to those of comparable workers, who work in the facilities made available by the employer.
- If the teleworker works more than the agreed hours, he / she is entitled to remuneration for the extra hours. Keep in mind that a key element of teleworking relies in the teleworker's ability to arrange flexibly the timeframe of his/her work. However, this flexible arrangement should remain within the framework of the law, collective agreements, and labor regulations. In several countries changes in the Labour law established during the pandemic already preview it.
- It is also important that the teleworker can benefit and exercise collective rights such as: to participate in trade union activities, to communicate with employee representatives, to participate in a strike etc.

2.4 Personal data protection

- It is important for the teleworker that his/her privacy and personal data are protected. In fact, working with information systems could generate the possibility of a leak of personal data.
- Employees should be sure that the software they use for working from home doesn't have access to personal data.
- Any system to control the work performance of the teleworker should be adopted only for this purpose, namely, to monitor work activities and should in no way invade the private sphere of the employee/worker. Employers should conduct a risk assessment and inform teleworkers of the potential risks associated with the invasion of their privacy.

2.5 Key takeaways from the first expert workshop

Experts in worker information and consultation processes highlighted the following issues:

- Difficulties in readaptation were observed in employees who returned to work in-person after periods of teleworking. Difficulties have also been encountered in adopting teleworking: the pressure is greater especially for teleworkers who live in small apartments and for those who have children at home, which need to be cared for.
- In Greece, the Ministry of Development has now decided on the amount of monthly expenses that the employer must pay to all company's teleworkers for the use of their own hardware, communication, and internet connection (if not provided by the employer). However, some experts point out that the expenses to be paid are underestimated.
- Many teleworkers tend to work longer hours than when they are physically present at the workplace. Working hours often exceed the agreed fixed hours.
- It should be noted that companies save a lot of money by teleworking. The phenomenon, therefore, may not be a temporary one.
- The Greek General Confederation of Workers, the GSEE has succeeded in including The European Framework Agreement on Teleworking of 2002 as part of the National General Collective Work Agreement of 2007-2008, hence in power. GSEE suggested to its trade union members to sign a special collective agreement to regulate telework; working hours for example should be regulated. In any case, collective bargaining could be useful to positively affect the teleworker's experiences, setting the rules as well as setting the incentives. However, as both trade union officials and some experts point out, trade unionists need first to acquire the necessary knowledge they need to then be able to participate constructively in collective bargaining on this issue. Support can be requested from consultants. However, again not all consultants are subject matter experts on teleworking and can offer substantial assistance.

TIP: Working hours should not be changed. Research found that teleworkers who did this suffered from neurosis and depression.

TIP: Mixed teleworking and work at the workplace would combat employees' feeling of professional and social isolation. It would also allow employees to participate in their own trade union and collective procedures.

What is most important in these new conditions, however, is that each employee understands that his/her "individual" responsibility lays with the collective action and the empowerment of trade unions and EWC.

2.6 Stress related to teleworking

Research suggests that teleworking is associated with work-related stress in some cases. Psychological risks and work-related stress can increase if the use of information technology and teleworking is not regulated and managed.

Many employees have the feeling of being overwhelmed by all the activities they must undertake to work from home, such as indicatively:

- If the employee does not have computer equipment provided by the employer, he/she must take care of his/her personal equipment (which is not by definition reliable or suitable for their work), to work effectively from home. Big concerns can come from having to deal with any technical difficulties or hardware failures.
- To determine working hours considering all responsibilities.
- Also important to avoid stress is clarifying the employee's responsibilities, the employee having a clear picture of the company's expectations from him/her, knowing how his/her performance will be measured and in which way he/she will receive feedback.
- To ensure that the level of communication with the employer / supervisors / colleagues is good enough.
- To find a balance between work and private life in the same place. This is particularly difficult in the presence of family members and children in need of care, which by seeing their parents present at home assume they are available for them.
- To manage all the physical and psychological consequences of isolation. For example, a teleworker might arrange one day a week to work outside his/her home (e.g. at the neighborhood coffee shop, local library or bookstore), so that one is surrounded by other people or he/she might plan to engage in hobbies or meet up with friends after work. In this way he/she will stop working after working hours and will have the valuable social contact he/she needs.

Case 1: Teleworkers with children

1. Assign a task to your children (make “I work from home” a game with rules, let children- where this is possible- do their homework, painting, etc. next to you).
2. Set age-appropriate boundaries (explain to your children that you are working and they need to respect that, promise and stick to it that after you finish your work you will play with them e.g. their favorite board game)
3. When the child is a baby (use constructively the hours the baby sleeps, have his/her milk ready)

Greek webinar, 20.10.2022

Betty Aggeletaki, Psychologist

Case 2: Celebration of Christmas during the lock down period

In a business consulting company in Greece before Christmas 2020, in a zoom meeting the employees expressed their feelings and how they value the past year, each hung an ornament on the electronic Christmas tree and each drank their favorite drink to everyone's health.

Discussion in the bilateral workshop in Berlin on 1.9.2022

Case 3: “Me Cuida Plan” in Spain

The “Me Cuida Plan” is one of the measures approved by the Government in the context of the Pandemic to offer support to working people. Specifically, this Plan was designed to facilitate the conciliation of families in a really complicated moment. It is regulated in Article 6 of Royal Decree-Law 8/2020 of March 17.

It allows workers to make their working day more flexible in order to take care of their couples and family members up to the second degree of consanguinity. We are talking about fathers, mothers and grandparents in the ascending line, and children and grandchildren in the descending line. This flexibilization must be agreed with the company and does not entail loss of salary.

2.7 Tips for protecting the mental health of employees

As teleworking is rapidly increasing the mental health risks of employees, it is important to follow the recommendations below.

- Employees should be allowed sufficient rest time from work

- Employees should be exempted from monitoring corporate emails after the end of working hours
- Employees should take care that their working hours are not excessive and that they sign out after working time, so that they receive no e-mails and nuisances outside working hours.
- The factor of simple social conversation should not be overlooked
- Encouragement, recognition and trust are very important in teleworking
- Positive commentary of work done, reward and feedback play an even bigger role in telecommuting

Teleworking and domestic violence

For many people, who are victims of domestic and/or sexual violence, the workplace is not only an oasis of safety from an abusive partner, but work also provides them with the financial resources that may enable them to leave an abusive relationship. .

Colleagues and employers are the ones who can provide a kind of security to them (I'm here for you).

If there are changes in behaviour that may be signs of something more serious, or a colleague has disclosed he/she is abused, there are ways one can provide virtual support through frequent conference calls and by intervening, if needed.

Greek webinar, 20.10.2022

Betty Aggeletaki, Psychologist

TIP: You may contact your Occupational Doctor, to provide you with advice and suggestions on the measures to be taken to improve your physical and mental health.

Additionally, HSC members can review occupational hazards in the company, identify these risks and propose measures to address them.

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CHAPTER 3.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES HOW TO USE ONLINE MEETING FACILITIES

3.1 Introduction

Online meetings, although they cannot substitute fully the physical in-person ones, they are a good solution in cases like distancing imposed by the pandemic and they even present some advantages as they permit more frequent meetings, recording of meetings (so nobody can contest if something has been said and what the positions held by the employees' representatives and the management were). Yet, trade unionists and employees' representatives have first to learn how they can use a software for online meetings to be able to use it constructively. For this reason, in this Chapter we give some basic instructions how to use Zoom, one of the most frequently used software packages to this end. You may use free Zoom app for frequent short meetings. Brief instructions on how to use Skype and Google Meet follow as well.

We must stress though that there are plenty of software packages (available for free or for pay), offering analogous services and operations. You may pick one to use in your online meetings. You may use for example: Intermedia AnyMeeting (it is free for a limited time, for an unlimited time you must pay), Microsoft Teams (it is free for a limited time and features, or you must pay for an unlimited version, it is included with Microsoft 365 business accounts), Google Meet (free but requires Google Workspace subscription for full feature set).

Case 1: Overcoming challenges at zbb, Germany

The Corona Pandemic had many effects on the work processes of the Zentralstelle für Berufsbildung im Handel e. V. (**zbb**). At the beginning of the pandemic, analogue work processes had to be converted to digital processes in a time-intensive manner in order to remain workable. The classic office situations and office organisations had to be rethought and digital tools could be integrated more and more into the daily work routine. The management provided the appropriate hardware and software for the employees in the form of new laptops and accessories. External access for home office work was also set up. Two-factor authentication with ID tokens was set up as a solution for secure network access. This created uniform data access and document storage. After joint consultation within the team, two communication channels (Zoom/Skype) were selected and the tools discussed and jointly defined. Rules were set for the virtual meetings, such as which tools should be used for communication and how. Zoom is used for external communication with project partners and Skype for internal communication between the staff. The question that the camera should always be switched on was decided by the team. The staff have good digital skills. Therefore, the transition was not difficult. In order to comply with data protection regulations, the STRATO HighDrive cloud storage was created for secure data transfer and storage. Thanks to the guarantee of data protection and the high security standards at STRATO, the data is optimally protected. This allowed examination procedures and certifications to be successfully switched to ONLINE procedures. Furthermore, the **zbb** is serviced by an IT service provider who is responsible for setting up and supporting the IT infrastructure. Overall, the **zbb** has digitised important work processes. The management reacted quickly and agilely to the changes brought about by the Corona Pandemic. Likewise, the **zbb** team faced up to the changed digitised work processes and responded openly to the changes. Together with the management, old structures were rethought and broken up in order to secure the company's success. The management gave the employees more freedom and self-determination. They were able to work in their home offices and thus react more quickly to changes. Digital team calendars inform employees about the current status of work processes or attendance, regardless of where they are working from. Digital communication channels support the exchange between colleagues and management during working hours. There are also clear agreements on working hours, regular team meetings and a positive error culture.

Presentation in the Final Transnational Conference 4.11.2022

Case 2: How have you achieved the required level of representativeness and confidentiality in the virtual meetings you have already organized? How have you achieved the required level of representativeness and confidentiality in the virtual meetings you have already organized?

Representation was achieved through elected representatives who participated universally. Confidentiality is ensured by involving individuals who are representatives and accredited, and this engages them either online or in person. The storage of discussion files is done in the "Cloud" designated by the company itself. Highly confidential documents are stored in local "Servers".

Results of discussion of the Greek group in the bilateral workshop of Berlin on 1.9.2022

Case 3: Information and consultation during the pandemic

During the pandemic various digital communication tools were activated such as teams e.g. in a large multinational company (with facilities in three major cities) and trade unions/workers' associations in each city separately, there were for many years meetings of the Boards of Directors of the unions and they took decisions on how to prioritize their demands and how they were going to manage their achievement. During the pandemic, the meetings were online exclusively and their results were "poorer" and weaker so that the employer tried to isolate each union and break their unity. In cases of teleworking, consultation was carried out under pressure from employees on issues of pay, computer's switch off, contract modification, employee evaluation etc.

Results of discussion of the Greek group in the bilateral workshop of Madrid, 21.7.2022

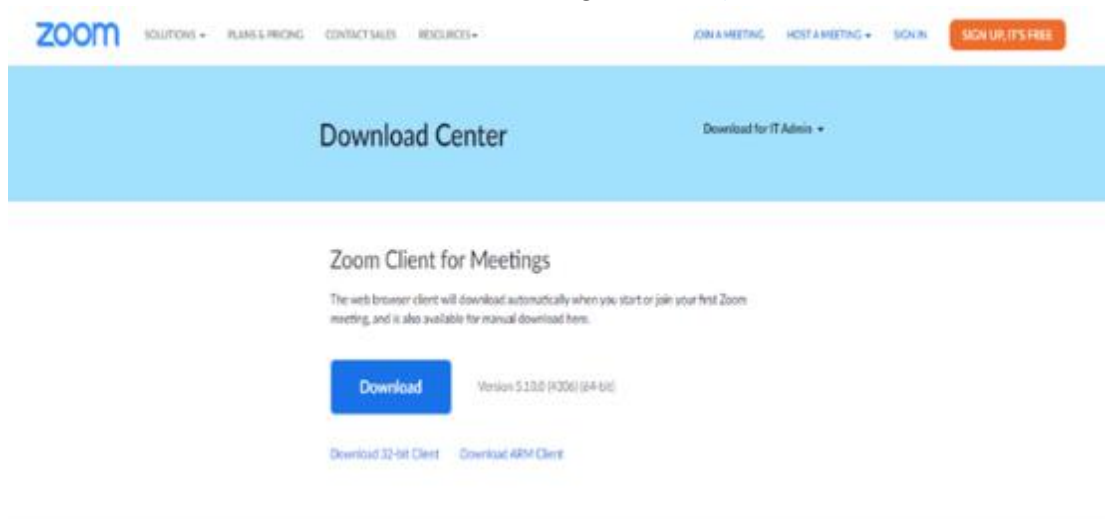
i. How to use Zoom for online meetings

3.2 Zoom Desktop Application

(Laptop or mobile device are available with Zoom)

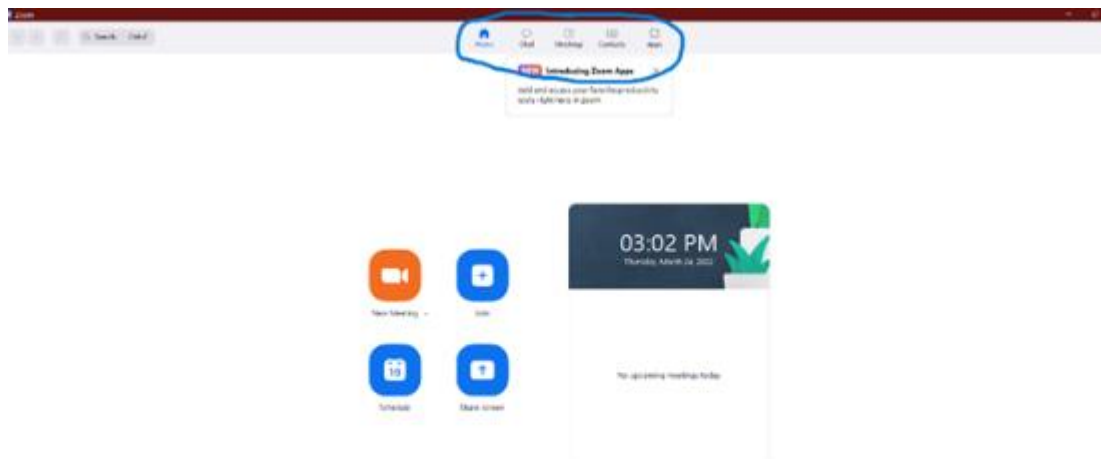
To get Zoom on your laptop or mobile device, follow the steps below:

- Download the Zoom Client for Meetings from: <https://zoom.us/download>



- Create login credentials and then Sign in

At the top you will find, as shown in the image below: Home, Chat, phone, meetings, contacts

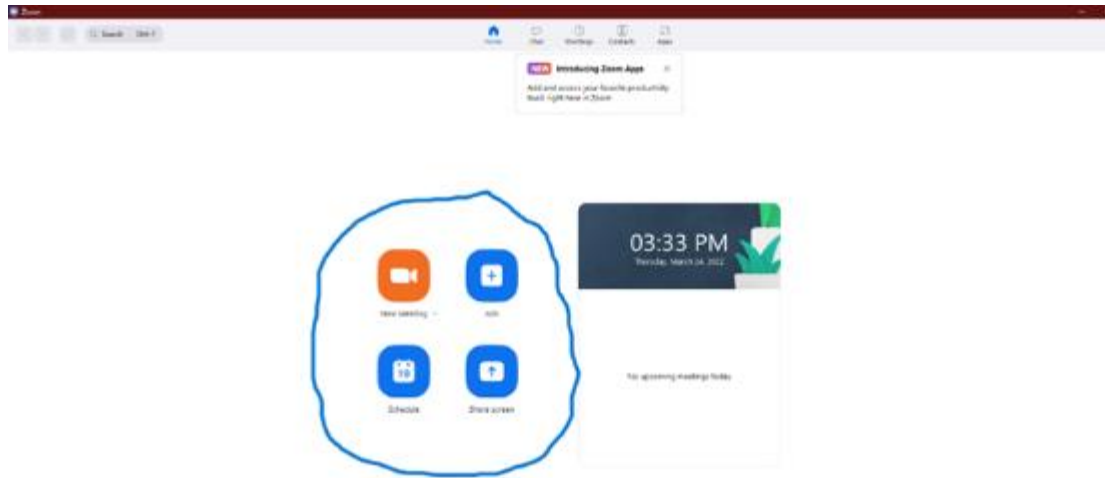


Things you can do:

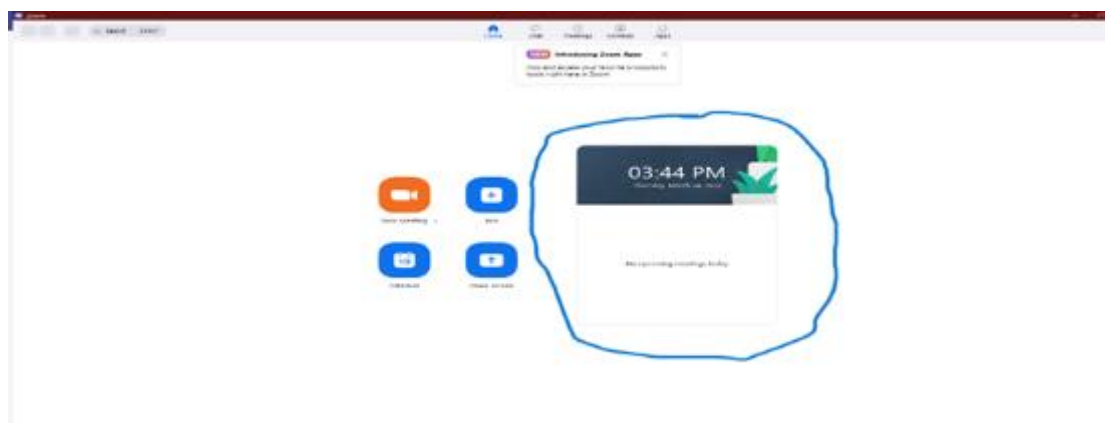
Schedule a new meeting, be sure that when the meeting will be scheduled, you share the link with all the attendees

Share the screen (it means that you can share with others in the online meeting what is on your laptop at that moment; be sure that the document you want to share is open).

The bottom New Meeting, Schedule Meeting, Join (meeting), and Share screen are highlighted below.



On the right you can find: the upcoming meetings. It is highlighted in the following image.



It is important to change the settings according to what you prefer. To do this, go to **Settings**. You will find this button at the top right as circled in the image below.

By clicking on this button, many possible settings will appear. For example, you can decide to set your profile as (available / not to be disturbed).

TIP: check for updates (check with the administrative office for any updates)

- Consider using two monitors (customize your experience in Zoom desktop application settings). **WHY?** It will help you manage the Zoom meeting on one monitor and the files you want to share or work on, on the other. This feature is highlighted in the image below (Use dual monitors).



3.3 Zoom web portal

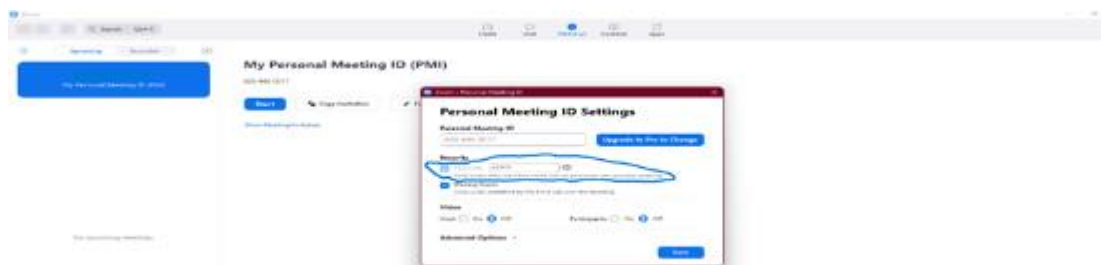
3.3.1 Meeting Settings (to be set before scheduling meetings)

1 - Waiting room

STEPS to create waiting rooms: go to Meetings - Edit – Security -Waiting Room – Save

In the image below you can see what it should look like if you follow these steps. When the Waiting Room button is blue it means it is active.

- **Why is it useful?** As no one can join unless invited, they can only join when you are ready (allow your attendees to join). Besides, you can choose who join the waiting room: everyone, or users not in your account or only users in your account
- You can change the logo and the message (to do this you need to upgrade to the Pro version, the paid one)



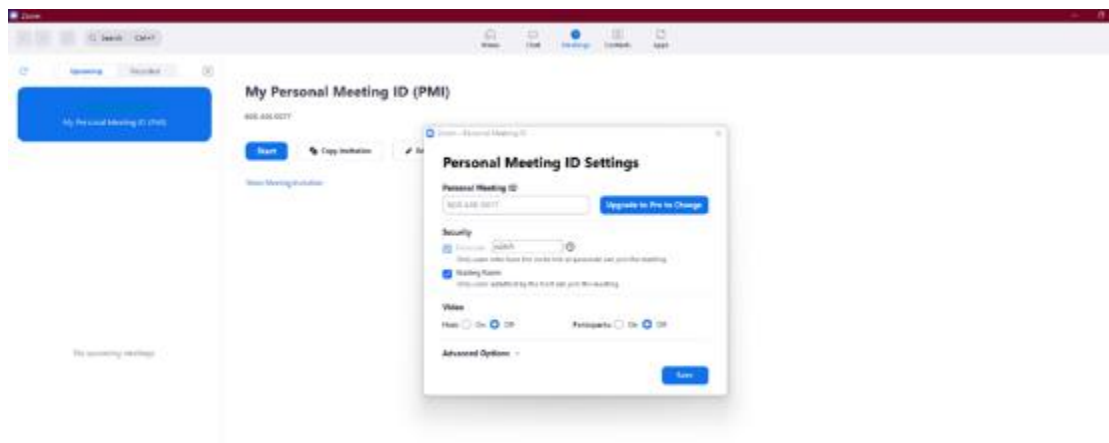
2 - It is also important to know the **Password** option: you can choose whether to activate or deactivate it, when on nobody can enter the meeting if they do not know the password

STEPS: go to Meetings – Edit – Security – Password – Save

If you follow these steps, your screen should look like the one in the image below.

Why is it important? To prevent unwanted people from joining the meeting

- if the administrator decided for you, some features would not be deactivated (so you cannot choose whether to activate or deactivate the password).



3 - Chat: you can choose if you want it or not

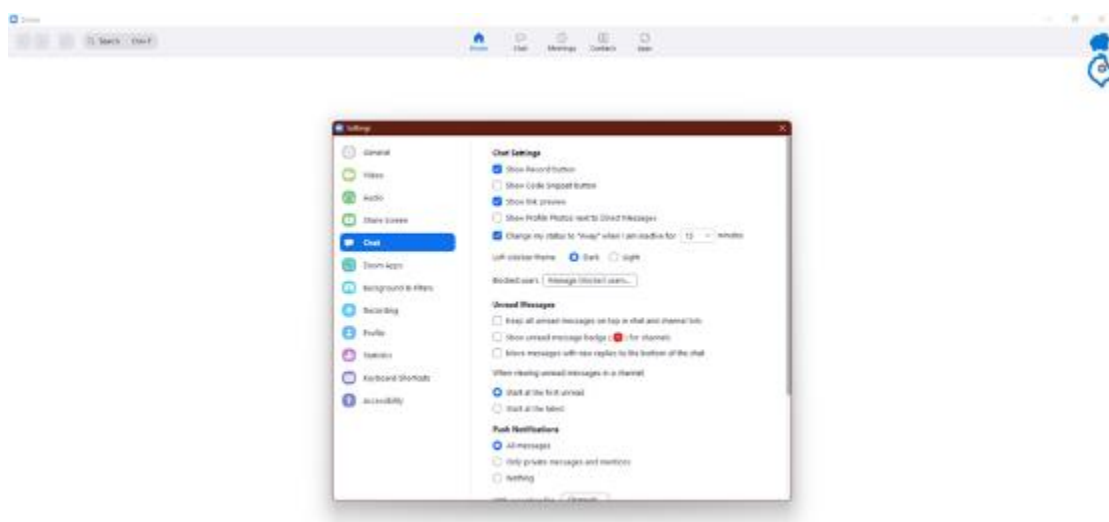
STEPS: go to Settings (top right) – Chat

The screen should be the same as that of the picture. The Settings button at the top right is circled.

Why is it useful? You can send messages to whoever you want, in meetings or outside of meetings.

TIP: remember to check **the chat settings**, you can decide to control it: you can decide for example to open the chat only for specific questions

The same goes for private chats

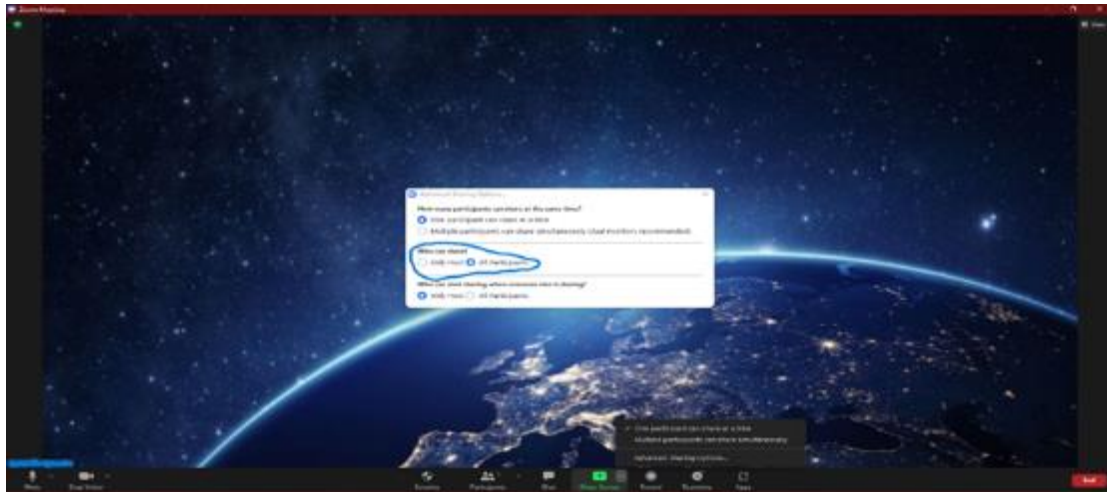


4 - File transfer: you can transfer files.

Why is it useful? Because you can transfer a file during a meeting so that all attendees can see it while you speak.

5 - Screen sharing: make sure it is possible for the participants to share the screen. How? Follow the steps below.

STEPS: New Meeting – Share screen – Advanced Sharing Options ... - Who can share? Click on Only Host or All Participants



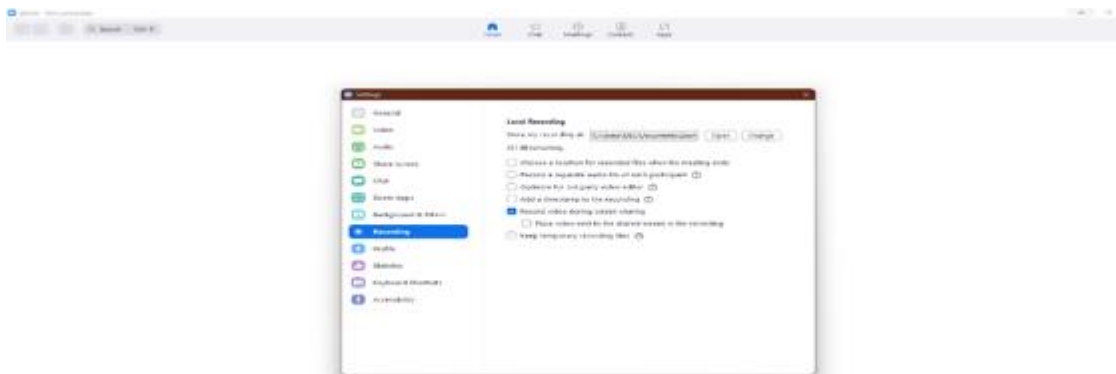
3.3.2 Recording

Local recording: hosts can give participants the permission to record locally

- Zoom always notify the attendees that the meeting is recorded (as default), you can turn it off if you want
- When you start a Meeting, you need to click on the button at the bottom (Record) to start recording

STEPS: Settings (top right) – Recording. You can choose where to store the recordings as shown in the image below. TIP: Store the recording in a safe and accessible place on your laptop

Why is it useful? Recording meetings will allow you and other people you give access to, to watch and listen to or just listen to the meeting again.



3.3.3 Cloud recording

- Cloud recording is **automatically enabled** for all paid subscribers (Pro, Business, or Enterprise account)
- **Why is it useful?** When you record a meeting and choose **Record to the Cloud**, the video, audio, and chat text are recorded in the Zoom cloud.
- The recording files can be downloaded to a computer or streamed from a browser.

***TIP:** Gallery view is the best option to see all attendees at once while recording*

3.4 Scheduling a Meeting with Zoom

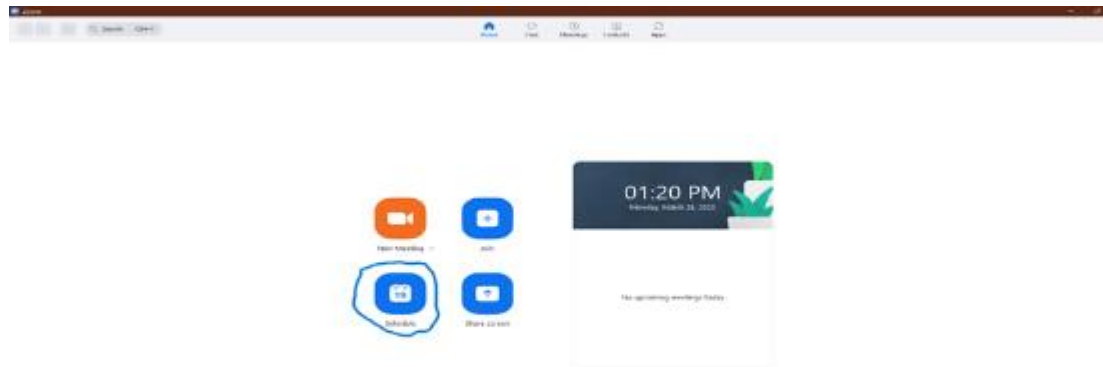
After setting all the above settings, you are ready to schedule a meeting. There are 3 ways to do this. The simpler is the first, the other two are very useful with access to Outlook and / or the Google calendar.

3.4.1 Recommended

Login to Zoom: <https://zoom.us/signin> or open the downloaded app (it is faster).

STEPS: Home – Schedule – Customize options – Save

Why is it useful? It is possible in a short time to schedule a meeting on the desired day and time.



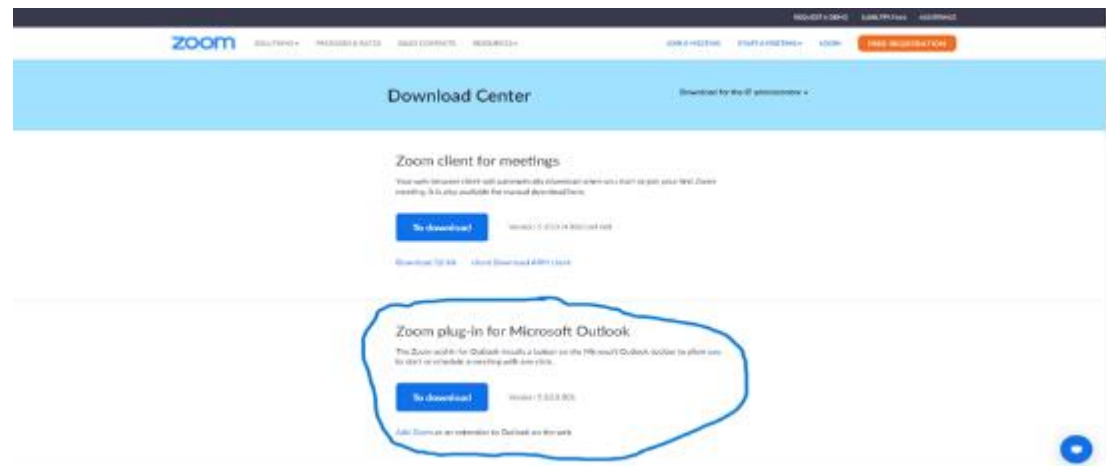
3.4.2 Outlook/Google Plug-in

- Remember to set the settings as described above: waiting room, password, recording
- You can also add an alternative host: if you will not participate in it

Then: you can customize the meeting invitation and **send it to all the participants**. It is important that attendees are invited to join via the link.

STEPS: download the Zoom plug-in for Microsoft Outlook at: <https://zoom.us/download>

Why is this useful? It's convenient if you're using Microsoft Outlook, because you can schedule a meeting from your calendar and you don't have to open the Zoom app.



3.4.3 Schedule a meeting in Google calendar

The participants can simply join the meeting through Google calendar

STEPS: There are two main options to integrate Zoom with Google Calendar: The Zoom for GSuite add-on and Clockwise. Both options are free-to-use.

Why is it useful? If you usually use Google calendar, you can schedule a Zoom meeting just by going to Google Calendar and you don't have to open the Zoom App. Then, attendees can simply join the meeting via Google Calendar. Make sure you integrate Zoom with Google Calendar though.

3.5 Hosting a Zoom Meeting

Once you've scheduled a meeting, you're ready to start the session. So, first, start the session. So, the first thing you need to familiarize yourself with are the security options.

3.5.1 Security options:

How can I remove a participant, how can I activate/disactivate chats?



STEPS: click at the below bottom: Security



***TIP:** be sure you are familiar with the Security bottom before starting the meeting*

***TIP:** to better control the meeting: **Start the session 10 minutes earlier** to be sure that everything works as you want: camera on/off, the microphone (mute/unmute)*

Why is it useful? If an attendee disturbs the progress of the meeting, you can intervene to remove or silence them.

3.5.2 Virtual background

- You can have a virtual background **clicking on the Start Video bottom**; if you click to (+) option you can add other virtual backgrounds, you can also have filters
- Everyone can change the background, also the attendants

Why is it useful? If you don't want to share what's behind and around you with others, you can choose to have a virtual background.

3.5.3 Viewing options

- You can choose **Speaker view**. This feature is recommended for webinars and the like because attendees will see the speaker and the shared content, if any.
- You can switch to **Gallery view**. This function is recommended if you want to see all the participants at the same time, for example when there is a group work.

There is also a **Reactions button** at the bottom.

Why is it useful? Participants can give their immediate reaction to the speaker's speech or content.

STEPS: click the button at the top right for options and click at the bottom for Reactions



3.5.4 When it starts

- When the meeting starts and attendees start to arrive, you can manage the meeting by following the steps below:

You can always see **who is in the waiting room** and you can always admit them/don't admit them

STEPS: Click on the **Participants** button and all the participants who are waiting will appear. You can admit them all together or admit / remove each participant separately.

- You can **share the screen**: make sure the page/document you want to share is open in your computer, you can also share a whiteboard.

(Remember to switch computer's sound on: if you want to share a video)

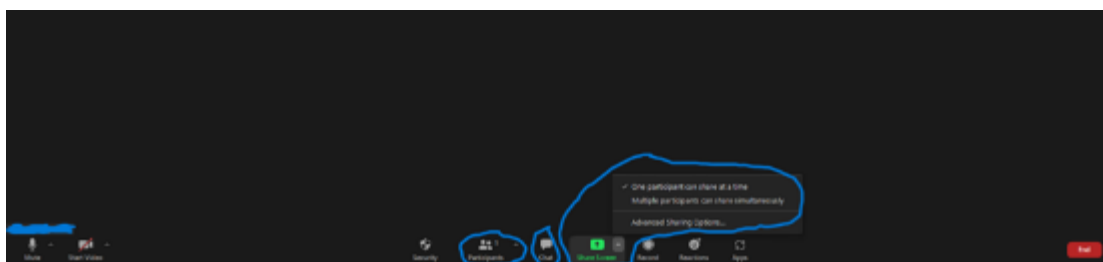
STEPS: Share Screen – Stop Share (when finished)

- If you click on participants: **you can mute/unmute participants**, you can also rename them

STEPS: Participants – Mute/Unmute – Rename

- **Chat:** you can decide whether to activate / deactivate it, whether to share the contents of the chat with everyone or whether to use individual chat.

STEPS: Chat - ... - Select



Finally, keep in mind that there are fewer options if you have the free Zoom app, more options if you pay.

3.6 Zoom support

You can contact the Learning Centre in Zoom to learn more about the Zoom product or if you need support while using Zoom.

You can use the links below if you need further support or if you want to improve your Zoom experience.

Useful links:

<https://supportzoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

<https://explore.zoom.us/en/products/meetings/>

<https://zoom.us/download>

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background>

<https://learn-zoom.us/show-me>

Video Meeting Etiquette: 7 Tips to ensure a great Attendee Experience:

<https://blog.zoom.us/video-meeting-etiquette-tips/>

Zoom Events: <https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/events.html>

Meeting Registration: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/211579443-Setting-up-registration-for-a-meeting>

How-To Videos: <https://learn-zoom.us/show-me>

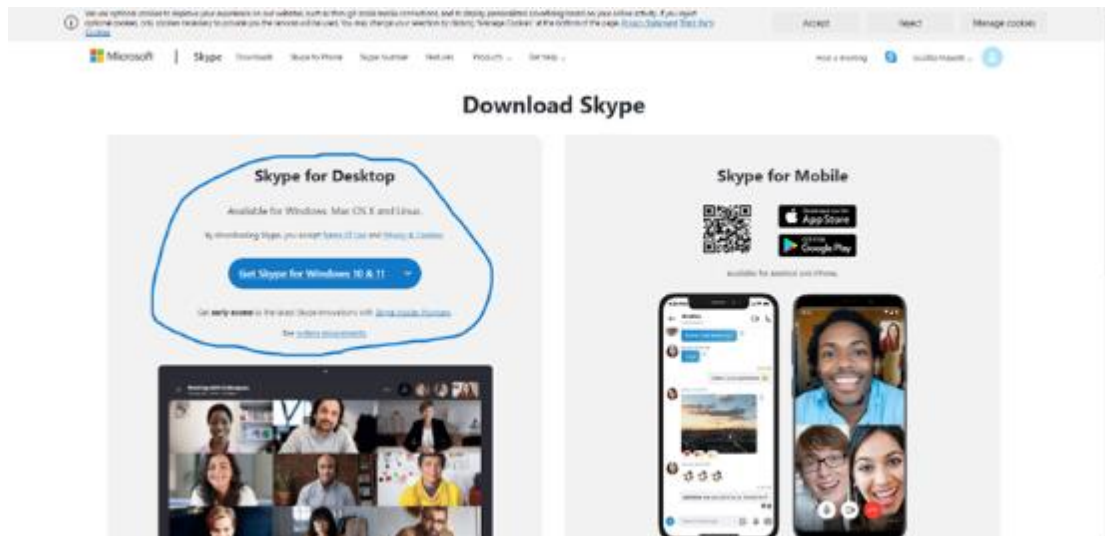
ii. How to use Skype for online meetings

3.7 Download the software

To download using your laptop:

- You can download the Skype application from here:
<https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/>

STEPS: Copy Paste the link – click on Get Skype for Windows 10 & 11 (have a look at the image below)



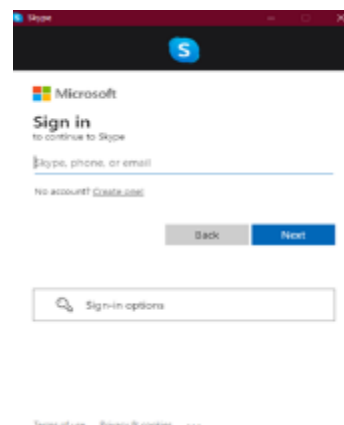
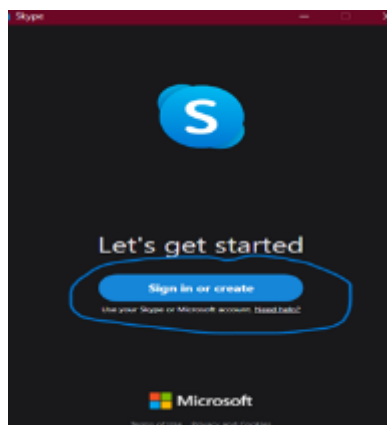
To download from your smartphone and tablets:

- You can download it from here: <https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/skype-for-mobile/> for smartphones
- You can download it from here: <https://www.skype.com/en/features/tablet-skype/> for tablets

3.8 Create an account

- Create an account and choose a surname and a password

STEPS: open the downloaded app – insert your email or telephone number – choose a surname and a password – insert the personal information – add an image as your profile picture



TIP: Choose a password that you will remember. Choose a surname that is not too different from your first and last name

- Remember to share your name so they are ready to take your calls and contact you on their own

3.9 Test the audio

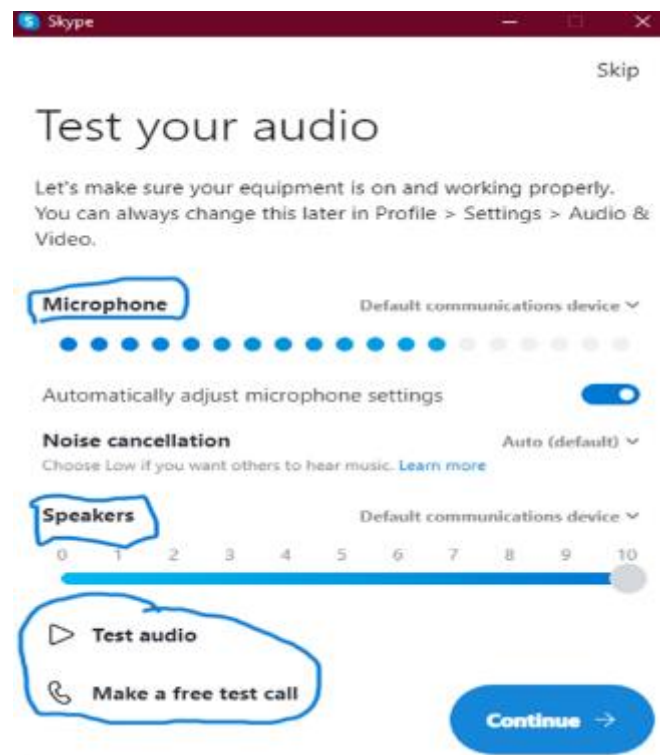
Before starting it is important to check your audio

Why is it useful? You need to make sure that your equipment is on and working properly so that you can be heard and hear during Skype calls

STEPS: The Test Your Audio page will appear when you create your account – Set the microphone level – set the Speaker level

- You can always change the audio later: Profile – Settings – Audio & Video

TIP: *do a Test audio and Make a free test call to check if everything is working properly*



3.10 Choose a background

You can choose a background that will appear during the calls

TIP: *suitable for the type of calls you will be making. The blurry background is good for business calls*

3.11 Set up your contact list

Once all these features are set, you are ready to create your contact list.

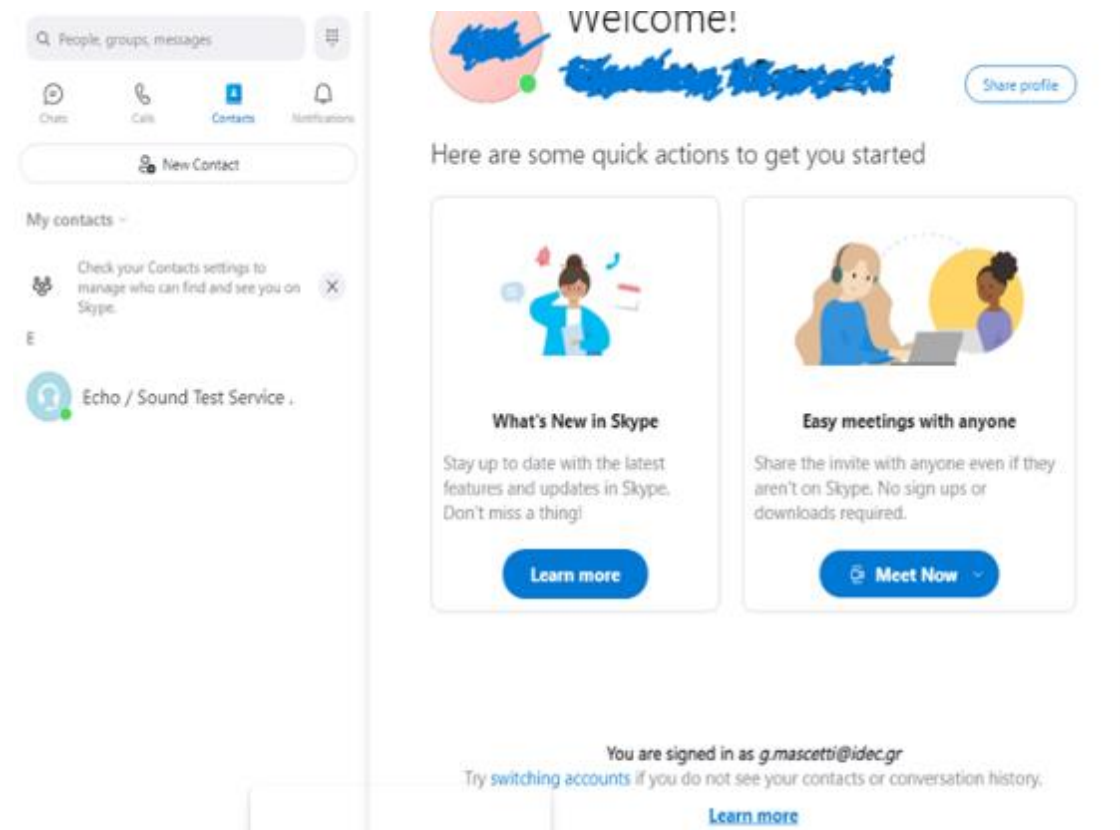
- Ask for the username of the people you want to contact

STEPS: Contacts (On the left side) - Add Contact

Why is it useful? If you create a contact list, when you need to contact someone, you will already have their contact information



TIP: *Synchronize your mobile address book with your Skype contact list if you want to make calls right from your device's contact list.*


[Click here: synced your mobile address](#)

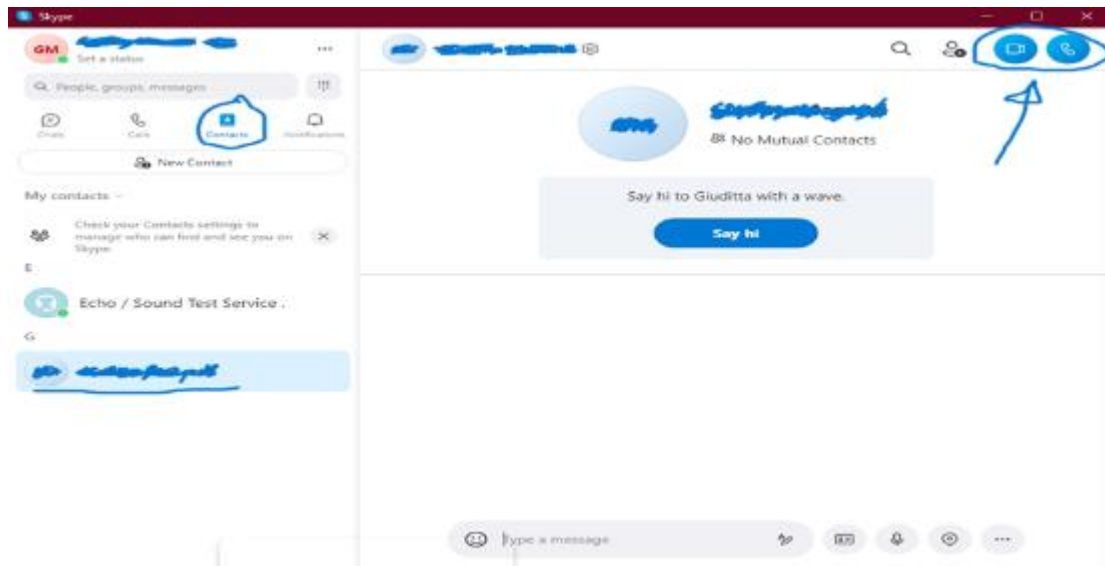


3.12 Call

Once you have created your contact list, you are ready to make your first Skype call.

STEPS: Select a person you want to call - Click the **video**  button if you want to communicate face to face - Click the **audio**  button if you want to make a call without using the webcam.

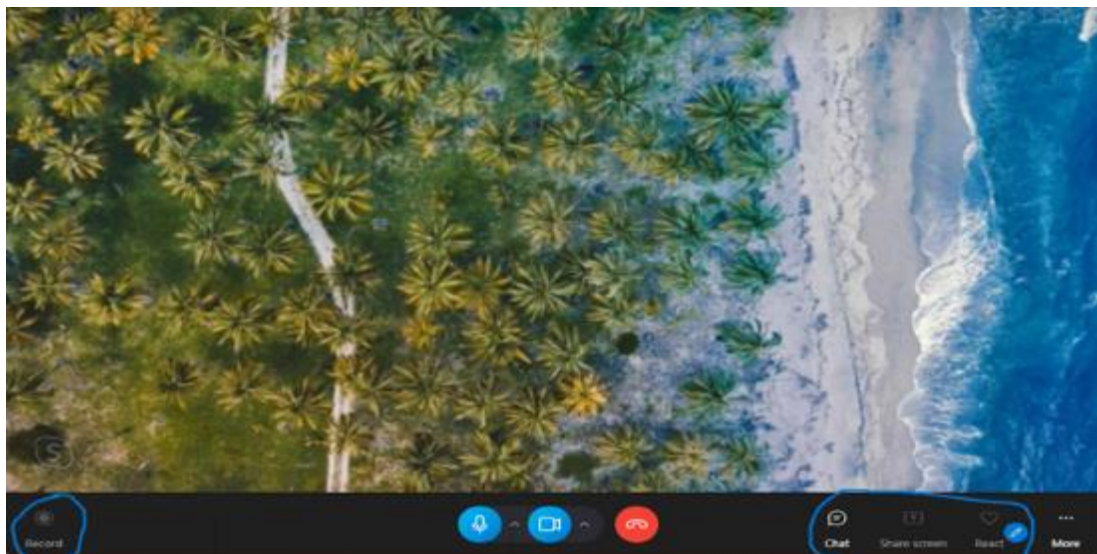
- Click on the + to add other ones to the conversation or select the  **Start call** button in a group chat



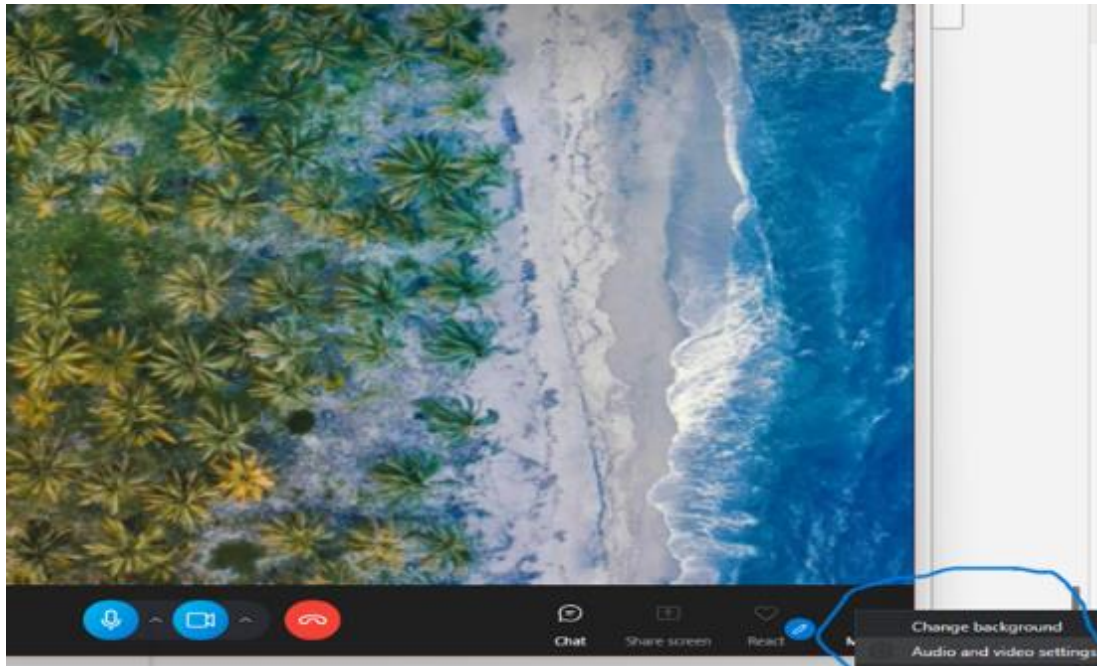
3.13 Make sure you are connected

Once the call is initiated, if you cannot see or hear the other person, there may be a problem with the connection

Things you can do: Record (on the left), Chat, Share Screen, React

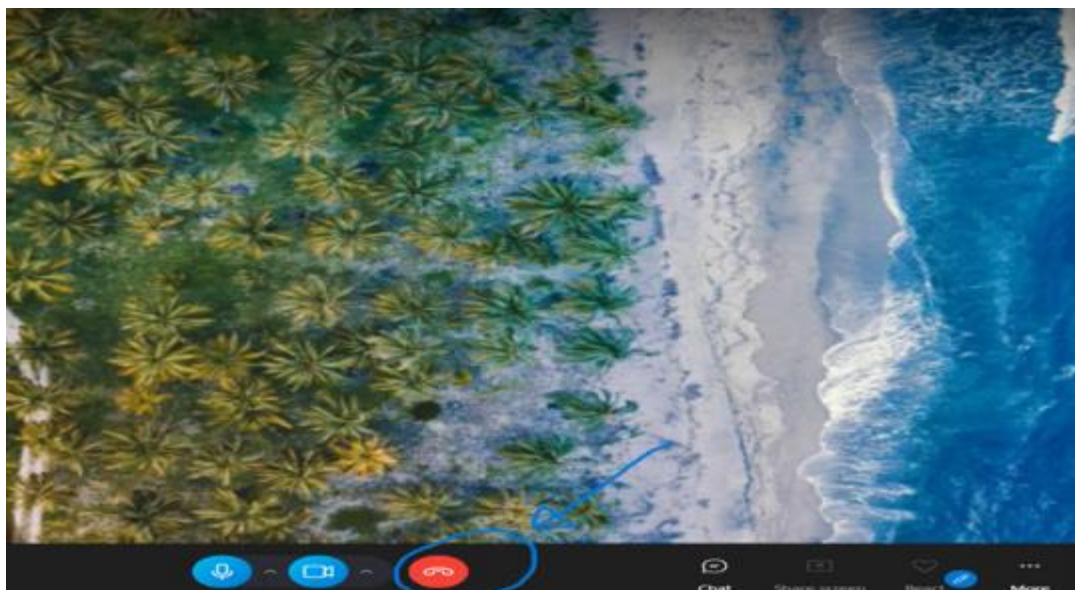


Important: to change the background and to check on the audio and video settings follow the **STEPS**: More – Audio and Video settings



3.14 End the call

When you want to end the call click on the red button



iii. How to use Google Meet for online meetings

Google makes an enterprise-grade video conferencing solution available to everyone.

3.15 General information

- You must have a **Google account** to be able to host online meetings
- **Up to 100 participants** can join an online meeting

- A meeting can last **up to 60 minutes**
- Companies, schools, and other organizations can:
- Can host meetings with **up to 500** internal or external **participants**
- Can live stream with **up to 100,000 viewers** within a domain

3.16 Getting started

- If you already have a Google account, you just need to log in: Log in



- If you don't have a Google account, you can create it: Register without costs



Good to know: You don't need to install additional software on your laptop to start or join a meeting on Meet.

3.17 How to start an online meeting

To create a new online meeting, do the following:

- New meeting – there will be three options so choose one: Create a meeting for later or Start an instant meeting or Schedule in Google Calendar

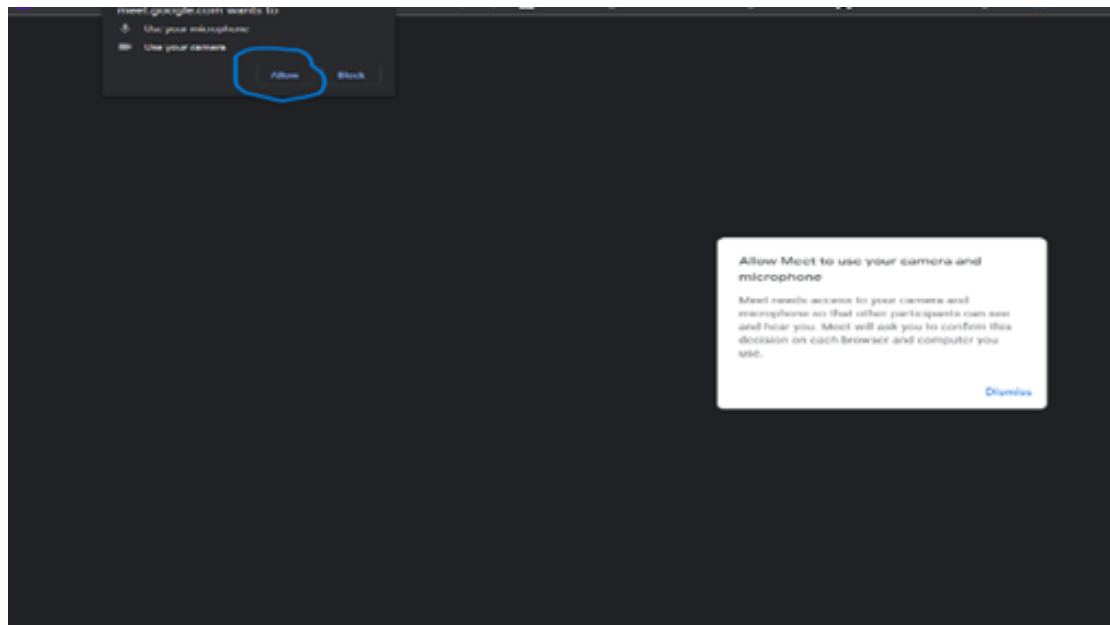
Why is it useful? Click Create a meeting for later if you want to have a link for a future meeting to send to attendees.

TIP: Make sure you save the link so you can use it later. You can send the link to up to 100 participants per meeting.

Click Start an instant meeting if you want to start a meeting now and finally click Schedule in Google Calendar if you want to schedule a meeting via Google Calendar.

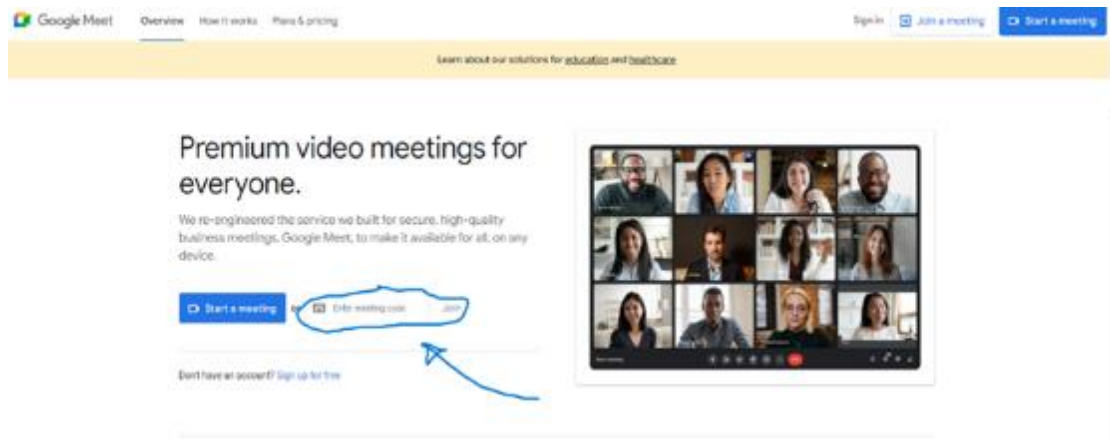


Important: To start a meeting, Google Meet will ask you to grant access to the microphone and camera. If you don't allow these features, the online meeting won't start for you.



- How to join an online meeting when someone sends you the link?

Enter the code here: <https://apps.google.com/meet/> where it is written Enter the meeting code and then click on Join

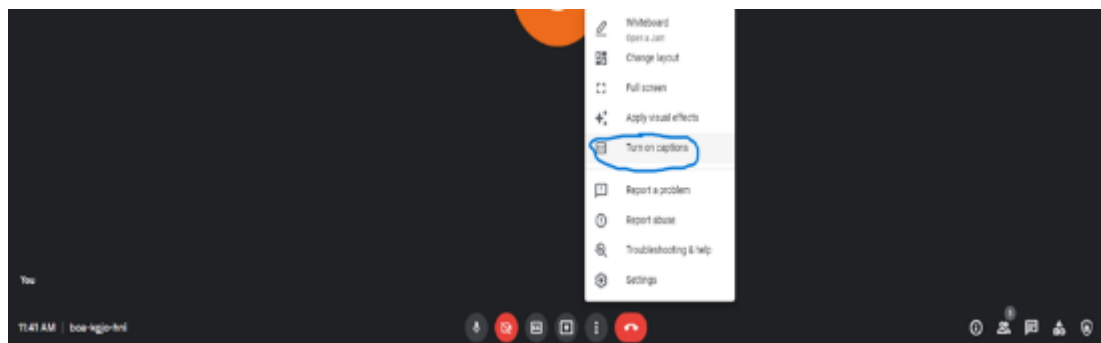


3.18 Useful functions

- Live subtitles during meetings:

You can follow meetings in real time with automatic subtitles on Google's voice recognition technology.

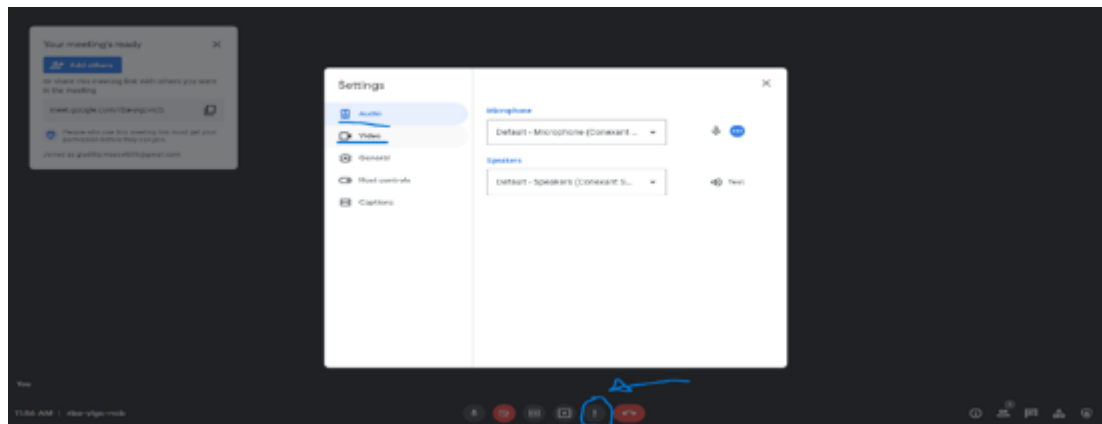
STEPS: click on the three dots at the bottom of the screen that you will see during an online meeting – Turn on/off captions



- Video and audio preview screen

Why is it useful? After entering the code or clicking the link, you can adjust the camera and microphone and check how others will see you before joining the meeting. You'll also see a preview of who is already attending the meeting.

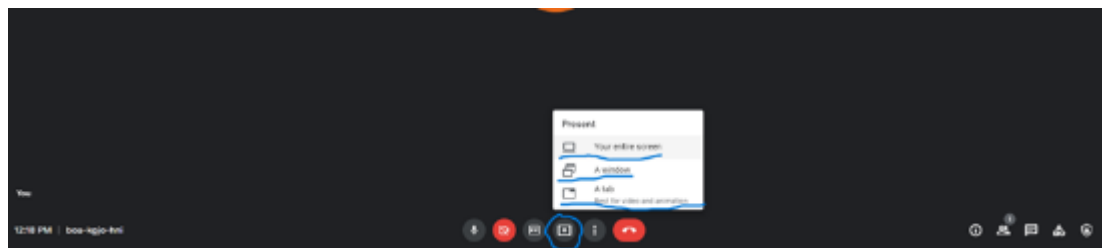
STEPS: click on the three dots at the bottom of the screen that you will see during/before an online meeting – Settings – Audio – Video



- Screen sharing with participants

Why is it useful? If you want to share something with attendees in the form of a presentation or document, you can.

STEPS: Present now – choose to share your entire screen, a window or a tab (the best option for video and animation)



3.19 Security and privacy

- Encryption of data in transit enabled for the default function

Why it's useful? All video meeting data in transit between the customer and Google is encrypted. This means that only you and the other people attending the meeting have access to the shared information

Useful links:

Toolkit for when you work remotely; https://services.google.com/fh/files/misc/google-meet-toolkit_en_us.pdf

10 tips to improve your presentations with Meet:
<https://support.google.com/a/users/answer/9282978>

Practical example 1: Committee meetings, workshops and seminars at ver.di, Germany are digitalised

Before the Corona pandemic, the focus was mainly on human, analogue interaction in committee meetings, workshops and seminars in Germany. Due to the effects of the pandemic situation, new concepts had to be developed. The use of videoconferencing has increased significantly in 2021 and virtual meetings have become almost indispensable for

corporate communication. In order to take even more advantage of virtual meetings, there are various technical aids that are indispensable. Above all, advanced technical functions and possibilities are now used purposefully in committee meetings, workshops and seminars. Some tools are presented here.

Especially for the different types of virtual meetings, such as committee meetings, workshops and seminars, different virtual spaces had to be created. The technical solutions presented here have made it easier for us to organise the meetings.

Here are some examples that are used in practice:

Gather.Town - for starters

Gather.Town is a programme that makes it possible to create virtual spaces in which people can move around and interact with each other (just like at a congress on site). The space was created so that participants can interact with each other. They can receive audio and video (if enabled) from other people by moving close to them.

Advantages: Super as an icebreaker, Operation is intuitive due to familiar video game format.

Contra: Access to camera, audio and microphone necessary, Observe data protection.

Conceptboard - The board for all occasions

Conceptboard is a visual workspace where participants come together, share ideas, work on projects together and at the same time bundle documentation in one place. The board makes it possible to implement the interaction familiar in the present in the virtual in such a way that the participants are and remain engaged. It is also important that phases of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration happen.

Advantages: Has many functions, A virtual room can be created, There are preset templates, Free version is great, Charts can be created, Many formats can be embedded

Contra: The big room has the phenomenon of a wall newspaper, It needs time for explanation and practice at the beginning.

To present content and timelines clearly, the platforms Padlet and Quip are used.

Padlet - for structure and overview

Padlet is a digital pinboard where texts, pictures, videos, links, voice recordings, screen recordings and drawings can be stored. Various templates are offered to start cooperative work.

Advantages: Free version has no functional limitations, Easy sharing with password protection, embedding of songs, GIFs and memes possible, very easy to use, voting and rating possible.

Contra: Colours and backgrounds are limited.

Quip - All-rounder for collaborative work

Quip is a collaboration platform and allows participants to create and edit documents and spreadsheets as a group. With the team chat function, participants can create different chat rooms on different topics and there are discussion threads for each document.

Advantages: Simple operation, Many functions - from chat to Excel, Free of charge.

Contra: Observe data protection.

To take a break from thinking, we play a round of Scribbl.io.

Scribbl.io is basically self-explanatory. Above the drawing area, the other players receive hints about the word length. They have to write their answer in a chat window. If the answer matches the term they are looking for, they receive points.

In our experience, the last two tools are very suitable for feedback and online surveys during committee meetings, workshops and seminars.

Sli.do - for interaction at (digital) conferences

Slido is a real-time Question and Answer (Q&A) and survey platform that can make meetings, events and conferences more interactive. They are used to collect ideas and questions before and during

and during meetings, to gather feedback via live surveys and to
and to make Q&A rounds in workshops or meetings even easier.

Advantages: Many ways to encourage interaction, Access via QR code, Highlight: Participants can write questions during a discussion and rate them according to their relevance - the order of the questions is determined automatically.

Contra: Works better as an app than via a browser, Allow time to get to grips with all the functions.

Mentimeter - for interaction at (digital) conferences

Typical application scenarios for Mentimeter are: Asking about prior knowledge, to start a discussion, to vote on options, to secure knowledge or to ask for opinions. The participants vote anonymously. Each survey, etc. that is created receives its own code, which the participants must enter on the survey page using a smartphone or tablet. Then they can start voting! The results are evaluated and displayed in real time

Advantages: It is colourful and fresh, Similar functions to sli.do, A lot of design freedom.

Practical example 2: Streaming

As a second example, we can recommend streaming. To reach more than just invited guests, we have started streaming our events. Streaming is suitable as an additional source of information and is perfect for achieving a wider reach during the seminar or workshop. In the simplest case, a camera is set up to catch the action on stage and the broadcast is ready to go. Furthermore, from our point of view it is economical and ecological, as travel costs and resources are saved. From the participant's point of view, it can be flexibly integrated into everyday life and offers a good cost-benefit ratio.

How to set up a Livestream:

What do you need:

- A platform to stream to (YouTube, Facebook, etc. or a custom one)
- A software to stream with (this guide describes the process for OBS - Open Broadcaster Software, but there are many other options)
- A camera and a microphone
- A video capture device and an audio capture device (if your camera and microphone don't have USB connection these will convert the signals to USB)

1st Step:

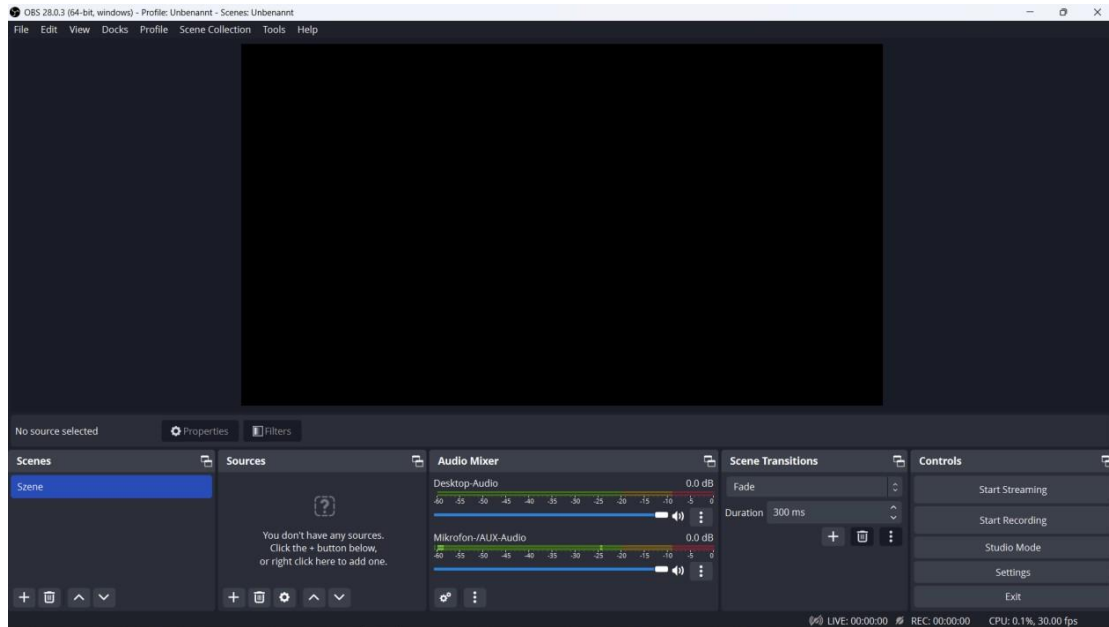
Create a Livestream on the platform of your choice.

How you do that depends on the platform that you want to use.

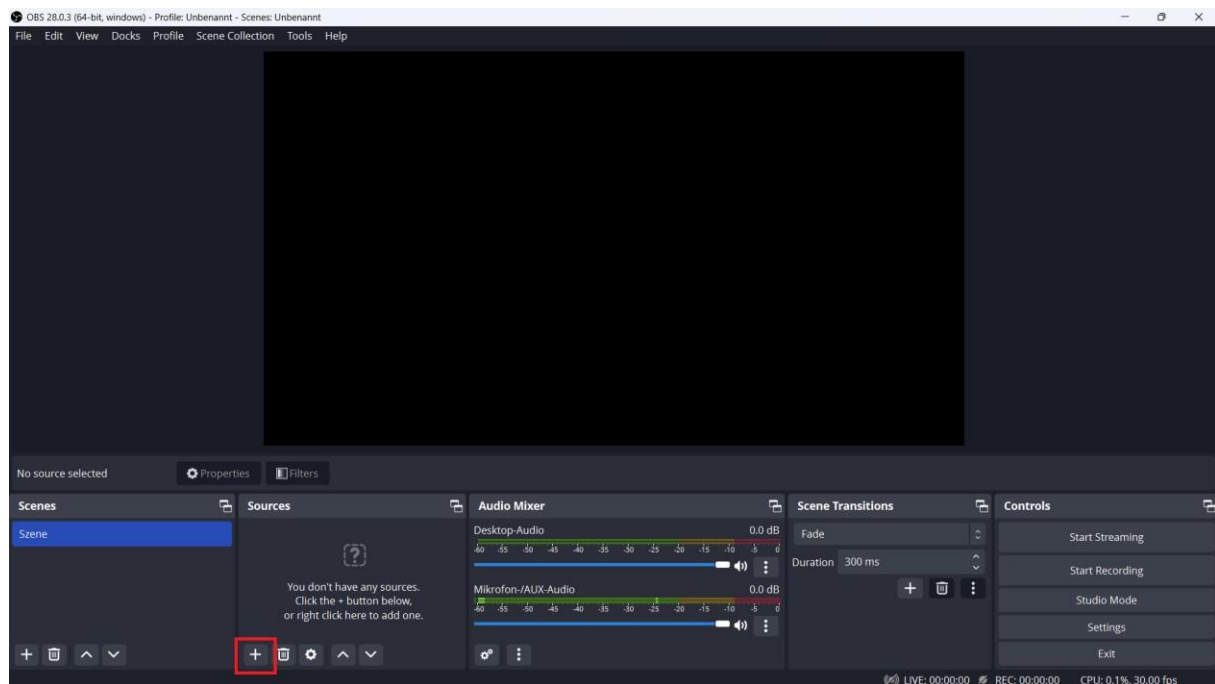
Once you clicked through the setup process you will get to the most important piece of information: The **Stream-Key**. You will need that to tell your software where to send the video to.

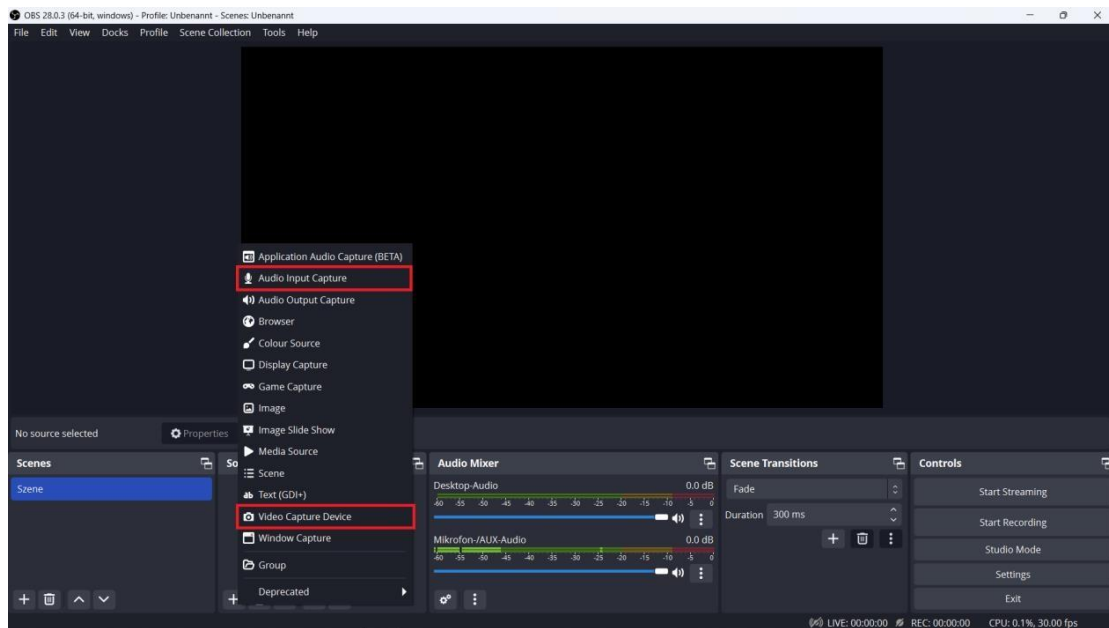
2nd Step:

Set up OBS (You can download it for free). When you open the software, it will look like this:

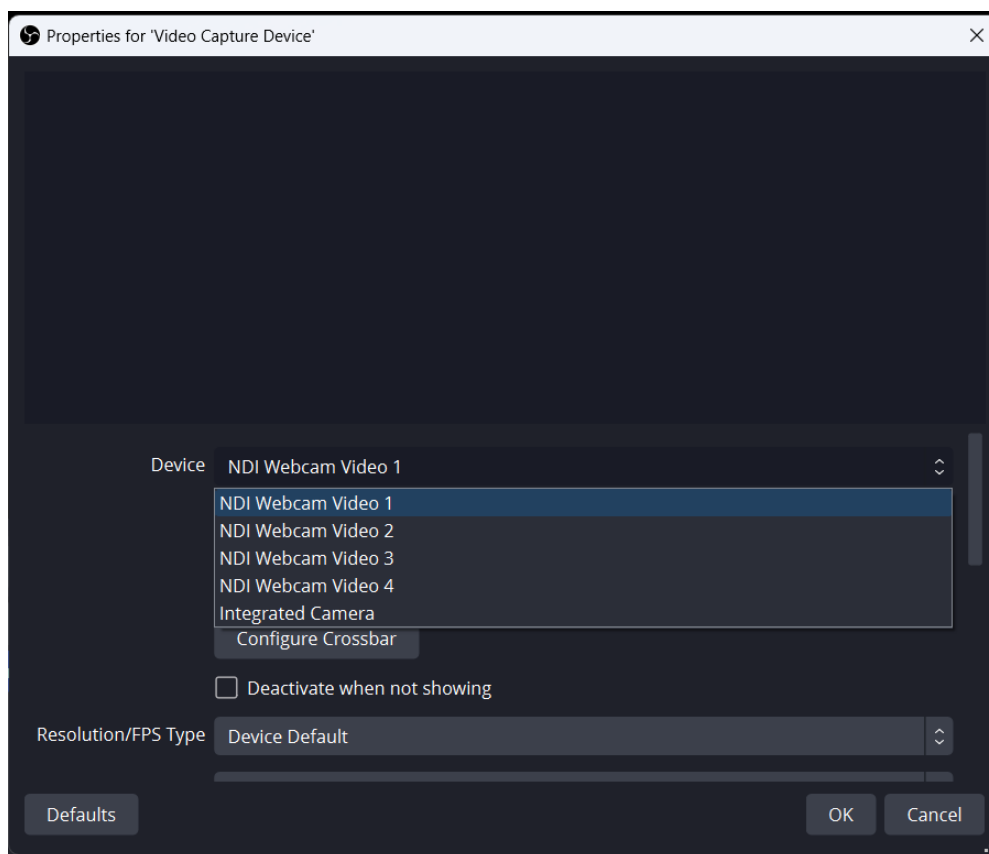


Add your capture devices:





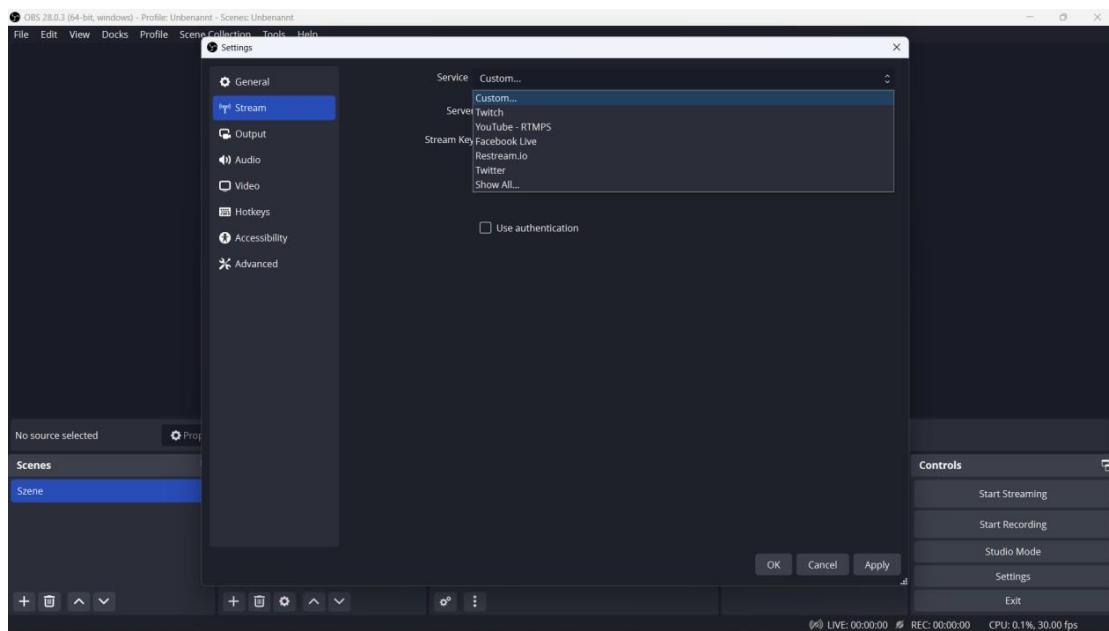
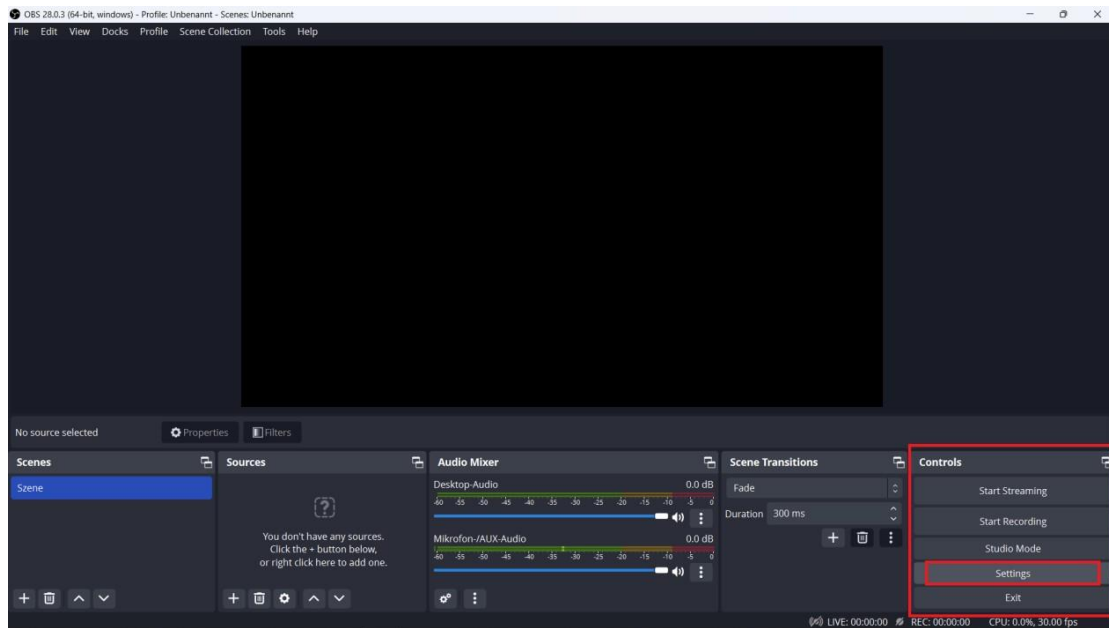
Once connected you will find your devices in that list:

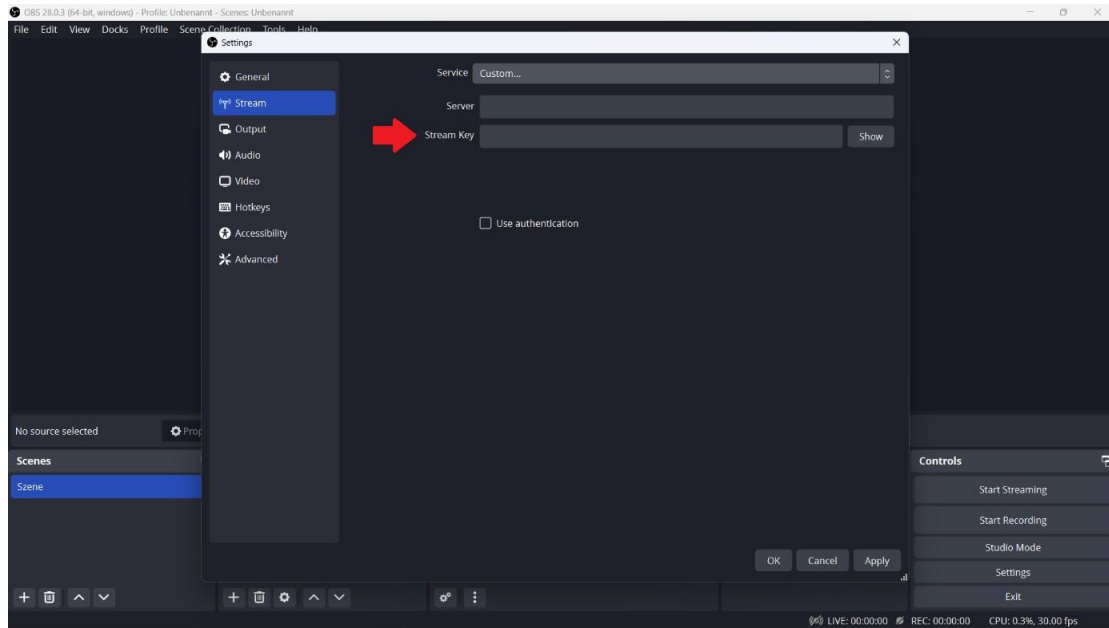


Now you need to tell the software the Stream-Key: Click on Settings in the Controls section.

Click on Stream on the left side. You will find some preconfigured services, or you can choose a custom one.

Here you paste the Stream-Key after copying it from your streaming software:





3rd Step:

Start streaming!

Of course this guide is very basic and there are a lot more options. You should play around with everything before you start your first public stream. The recommendation is testing, testing, testing

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