

Observations and lessons learned from the EUROSAI WGEA e-Seminar on Sustainable Energy (7-8 April 2020)

- ✔ Various platforms and service providers are available for organizing e-meetings. Time needs to be reserved for getting acquainted with their specific features, to run tests and arrive at an informed decision. In our case, Zoom **videoconferencing platform** was largely a default choice due to time-pressure since our office had been using the platform for some time already and we knew its merits and limitations.
- ✔ It is best not to overburden participants with a long and packed **agenda** – it seems more difficult to keep one’s focus at long sessions during the video-event compared to a live one. We had our e-seminar on two days, approximately 3 hours each. This format seemed to work well as almost everybody participated on both days. As a hindsight, the sessions were rather intense and could perhaps have been a bit more spread out to lower the pace.
- ✔ **E-discussions** seem to at times take longer than live ones – be it for technical reasons or just because participants need time to warm up to the e-environment. Guiding participants to continue the exchange of ideas in a written form in chat is a great alternative which could save time and ensure that questions are not left up in the air, unsolved. We were pleased to see several discussions continue in this manner during the seminar.



A screenshot from the e-Seminar

- ✔ We used the **polling function** for involving participants and enabling them to voice their opinion during the meeting. Polls worked also great as a replacement for icebreaking and small talk (e.g. questions like “How many weeks have you been working from home by now?” or “Are you currently working on an energy-related audit?”).



- ✔ Time can sometimes be lost for technical reasons (e.g. setting up slides, navigating the online platform, connection issues) and it is wise to plan some **extra buffers** in between the agenda items. We also found it important to allocate solid time for **coffee breaks**, just as during live meetings.
- ✔ Planning for other **visual components** beyond presentations helps make the e-meeting more engaging. For example, we used the photos and visuals sent by participants before the meeting to prepare a collage presentation and showed it at the event. We also discovered that a group photo can be taken electronically by combining the screenshots of participants' gallery view.



A word-cloud made based on participants' input during the e-Seminar

- ✔ It proved useful to arrange a **technical testing** session for all interested participants one day before the event to practice most important functions (audio/video settings, chat, raising a virtual hand). We also sent technical instructions with key functions and best-practice tips to all participants. Special attention was paid to keynote speakers and SAI presenters via separate **one-on-one test** meetings. Technical **support** was further provided by one Secretariat member during the meeting in chat.
- ✔ Finally, **different local times** should be considered when preparing the e-meeting agenda, as the gap may stretch to as much as 6 hours if one considers the whole EUROSAT WGEA membership. For our particular meeting, we in the end luckily worked within the 3-hour time window, and paid special attention to the starting hours to make everyone feel comfortable.

