

University of Exeter Case Study

Event Background

Following a tender process with the University of Exeter to assist with HAIRE (Healthy Aging through Innovation in Rural Europe) a partnership project of 14 main partners and 20 observer partners across England, Belgium, France and the Netherlands, the first event was hosted to discuss COVID impact.

The challenge

With partners located in 4 different countries, and speaking 4 different languages, the University had traditionally relied on regular face-to-face communication. With the travel restrictions placed on the UK as a result of Covid-19 the University was seeking an external partner to offer a web-based meeting space with simultaneous translation which would also include a machine-translated chatbox.

There were over 50 speakers expected to join from The United Kingdom and Belgium, the event needed to be interpreted into English and French.

Our solution

The platform chosen by SeproTec and the University of Exeter was VoiceBoxer as it is the only platform on the market that fulfils all requirements – videoconference platform, simultaneous interpretation and automated translation of chat messages. The platform was thoroughly tested with the University and its partners to ensure access, especially from users that had had firewall-related issues in the past with other videoconference platforms.

The RSI partner chosen enabled participation from a large audience number from an easy-access app or web app and included the participation of a moderator and a virtual booth technician. Thus, we not only facilitated meetings with professional interpretation but also provide timely technical support and customer service as well as moderation during the conference.

The University shared information to help towards the preparation of interpreters, such as background information on the event, and the list of speakers was also shared. The presentation to be used throughout the event was also shared and uploaded to the platform.

Although the platform VoiceBoxer requires that each participant signs up and creates an account, it was agreed with the University that for easier registration of participants, our Project Manager would create accounts for all speakers setting up a common, easy to remember password which was also shared with the University.

Results

Two interpreters were assigned to the booth and they had not worked on our partner's platform before, therefore a test session was conducted to walk them through the online console.

On the day of the event, 30 minutes before the event start one of our Project Managers (PM) connected to the session at the same time as the booth interpreters to ensure a smooth start of the interpretation and answer any last-minute questions. The PM was also moderating the event and explaining some basic instructions regarding the use of this platform for a better experience.

A few participants who had created accounts during the test sessions could not login as they did not remember their passwords. They were instructed to reset it via the VoiceBoxer signup page, and they could join the event upon doing so.

There was an interruption in the video feed and the session stopped for one minute. This was due to small interruptions in the internet connection and it led to several presenters were shown as “offline” and they were able to request the floor but the moderator was not able to pass the floor to them due to the offline status. The problem was solved when the moderator asked the offline users to refresh their browser and request the floor again. This was addressed with technical support and the following answer was received:

Regarding the "Offline" status, even if the presenters were present, that status mostly refers to their ability to use the microphone, that is why an "Idle" status means that they haven't approved their device to broadcast (it's pending), while the "offline" could mean that access is blocked or the wrong microphone is selected as the default one. If their microphone is selected during an ongoing meeting they may need to refresh their browser to apply changes.

One of the speakers experienced issues with their device's microphone and her sound was not received at reasonable quality. She did not have access to external microphone and headphones and could not participate with her presentation, which was overtaken by another speaker.

French interpretation was active as most of the presentations were held in English. The interpretation ran smoothly, and the sound quality was optimal.

Feedback

Interpreter feedback on RSI platform

Below is the feedback of one of the interpreters who had not worked on this platform previously.

I think it went reasonably well, I think, apart from one glitch. The technical support provided during the meeting was also very useful for us.

The University considered the event a success and provided positive feedback:

We appreciated your support! Thank you to Javier too, who battled through some issues with us for a seamless meeting at the end.

Lessons learned

The role of moderator could be assigned to the University and our PM can remain as operator to monitor the meeting and solve any questions → **Jen to be assigned as a moderator from**

now on with Kelly as a backup. A test is scheduled on Friday and instructions will be shared by email.

The recommendations for participants should be shared in advance to ensure they have the appropriate equipment before joining a meeting. A checklist could be created with essential items to check (password, mic, speakers) → **Kelly to work on the best approach. Each meeting will have a designated Operator (JC or DM) and their address will be shared with participants for troubleshooting before an event.**

A test run with a few participants is advised and perhaps participants could be asked to login 1 to 3 days in advance to check their credentials → **JC or DM will login with their account info 3 days in advance and inform Jen of participants that do not have Exeter2020 as credentials. This procedure will be phased out as participants familiarise themselves with the platform.**

Jen to advise partners to test their microphones and purchase external headsets with mic for optimal sound quality.