



**EACTS**  
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
CARDIO-THORACIC SURGERY

# Creating an inclusive and supportive space at EACTS events: **a guide for moderators and speakers**

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# Introduction



The European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery (EACTS) is dedicated to advancing the field of cardiac and thoracic surgery through education, innovation and collaboration. It is crucial that moderators and speakers taking part in EACTS events understand their roles in fostering an environment that is inclusive and supportive.

This guide outlines expectations, tools, challenges and practical solutions to ensure all participants feel valued and engaged at the events, congresses and courses of EACTS.

# Expectations for moderators and speakers

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## Model inclusive behaviour

Moderators and speakers set the tone for the event. It is essential to actively demonstrate inclusive behaviour by:

- Acknowledging diverse perspectives and experiences.
- Using inclusive language that respects all individuals.
- Engaging with all attendees, regardless of their background or role within the organisation.
- Researching the names of speakers to ensure correct pronunciation when making introductions.



## Create an open atmosphere

Encouraging an open atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas is key. This can be achieved by:

- Welcoming feedback during events, showing that every perspective is valued.
- Encouraging questions and discussions to ensure participation from all attendees.
- Seeking out contributions and perspectives from people from different backgrounds.



## Set clear ground rules

At the beginning of each event, establish ground rules that promote respect and inclusivity. This includes:

- No interrupting while others are speaking.
- A desire to see multiple contributions from a wide group of people.
- Encouraging people to focus on positive and constructive feedback.
- Considering cultural sensitivities when discussing case studies or examples

# Challenges in maintaining an inclusive environment

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Despite best intentions, challenges may arise. Here are a few common hurdles moderators and speakers might face, along with practical strategies to overcome them.



## Unequal participation

Some attendees may dominate discussions while others remain silent.

**Solution:** Set out your intentions in advance – for example when asking for commentary, or questions, highlight upfront that you want to get as wide a sample as possible, that you want to give the opportunity to hear different perspectives or opinions. Subject to the direction given by the moderator, invite questions throughout each event or let your audience know at the beginning of the event that there will be time for questions after your presentation.

Also, use of the EACTS conference app alongside events will allow people to ask questions during the presentation that you can either answer as part of your presentation or at the end in an allotted time slot. This supports people who speak English as a second language, people who struggle with public speaking such as some neurodivergent people, more junior attendees and removes any impact of bias in choosing respondents.



## Navigating sensitive topics, discussions or commentary

People's reactions to information, discussion or commentary may vary. While some people may focus on the person, others will focus solely on the information, with little consideration given for the feelings of the person spoken to. As a speaker or moderator, your goal will be to maintain an atmosphere where people feel able to contribute their thoughts and ideas without fear of judgement or ridicule.

**Solution:** Handle sensitive topics with care:

- Use "I" statements to express personal experiences rather than generalisations.
- Be prepared to redirect discussions if they veer towards unproductive or harmful rhetoric.
- Be ready to call out biases or microaggressions – keep it respectful, focus on the language used rather than any prejudice exposed and return to the point being made: "I don't think we use that language anymore, I think X is a more suitable term, but I hear the point you're making and..."



## Language barriers

EACTS is proud to have members from all over Europe and the globe. Language differences and cultural differences can create barriers to effective communication and inclusivity.

As a speaker or moderator, you should encourage English speakers to be patient and supportive of attendees for whom English is a second language.

Consideration should also be given to differing styles of communication of people from differing cultures – what some people may find direct or abrasive, others might find culturally acceptable.

Your role as a moderator or speaker is to ensure respect is maintained and that if the need to challenge someone's delivery is required, it is done in a respectful way that maintains the dignity of all parties.



# Tools for fostering inclusivity for speakers

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## Use technology thoughtfully

When creating your own content, embrace technology that enhances participation and engagement:

- **Interactive tools:** Utilise the EACTS conference app to facilitate Q&A sessions and polls. This allows attendees to participate anonymously, promoting engagement from those who may feel hesitant to speak up.



## Professional behaviour guide

Familiarise yourself with the [Professional Behaviour at EACTS guide](#).



## Creating visual guides

When creating your own content, develop visual aids that represent and support diversity within the organisation and the industry:

- Use images and examples that depict individuals from a range of backgrounds and experiences.
- Ensure subtitles are visible on videos used, that colours, spacing and volume of content on individual slides is accessible, and that handouts include a blend of diagrams, images and text.

# Conclusion

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As moderators and speakers at the EACTS conference, your role in creating an inclusive and supportive environment is vital to the success of the event. By modelling inclusive behaviour, fostering an open atmosphere, setting clear ground rules and being mindful of the content presented, you have the power to shape a conference experience where every attendee feels valued and engaged.

Utilising the tools and strategies outlined in this guide will further enhance the conference atmosphere.

Anticipating challenges is equally important. Being prepared for resistance, unequal participation, and sensitive topics allows for proactive management of any issues that arise. By fostering patience and understanding, especially across language barriers, you can create a welcoming environment where everyone has a voice.

By embracing these principles and practices, you help to ensure that EACTS events not only advance the field of cardiac and thoracic surgery but also embody the values of diversity and inclusion that EACTS strives to uphold. Together, we can create an event experience that reflects our commitment to supporting everyone involved in the field, ultimately leading to better collaboration, innovation, and patient care outcomes.



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