Best Practice Guide:
How to Organise an HPC Event

(Key Ideas from the CASTIEL Training Best Practices Seminar on 20 January 2022)

The scope of this document is the organisation of events such as hackathons, (international) conferences or summer-/winter-schools. As the main reasons for organising such events we can mention:
- the opportunity to attract new attendees to training courses or users of your HPC centre,
- to demonstrate awareness and benefits of your HPC centre or HPC in general,
- and to initiate new (international) contacts, for instance with SMEs.

This document wants to give hints on best practices for a successful organisation of HPC events.

PLANNING THE EVENT

Four main points should be considered and decided upon:
1. Intention of the event
2. Target audience of the event
3. Format of the event
4. Date of the event

Note that the first three are interlinked. For instance, different formats will attract different audiences. If the intention is to create awareness, you might be interested in attracting a specific audience, which will require a certain format.

INTENTION OF THE EVENT

The intention for organising the event might be
- to create awareness,
- to offer training or talks on a specific subject,
- to build new connections or
- to work on a specific topic (e.g. a hackathon where users improve their own code).

This heavily influences the format you should choose. An online (or hybrid) format facilitates participation and thus could be a good choice to attract a new audience. However, if the main goal is to create awareness, seeing an actual HPC system at an on-site event might also be interesting.

TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE EVENT

When considering the target audience, think about groups such as:
- academic participants,
- participants from industry (and it might be appropriate to distinguish between big industry and SMEs as well as between management, such as a CEO, and staff-level),
- participants from the public administration,
- researchers,
- public,
- other types of participants, such as schools.

It is important to clearly communicate required prior knowledge for participation to not disappoint or overstrain future attendees.

Finding (suitable) attendees might be an issue (in particular for a hackathon or a conference). Think about what can/will motivate (suitable) attendees to actually attend the event:
- training courses,
- talks on a specific subject,

- making connections with other participants,
- access to HPC resources,
- a challenging task (either define one or let participants propose a challenge individually),
- but also working on own code or a specific problem could motivate the attendees.

Point out those reasons when advertising.

If there is a challenge, carefully think about appropriate referees (neutral, relevant expertise, …) and keep in mind that there might be some legal issues if you want to award outstanding results, see also the legal issues listed below.

Also, the number of participants has to be fixed. It depends on the online or on-site format, but also on the available personnel for assistance, teaching, organising and costs; do not underestimate the work that has to be done.

FORMAT OF THE EVENT

For the event's format, think about
- the duration of the event,
- splitting it into (possibly) parallel sessions,
- the length of each session and the connection among the sessions,
- an online, on-site, or hybrid event format.

Practical tips:
- Carefully plan the length of your entire event and of each session. The time during which participants are able to concentrate is limited, so do not make the sessions too long. For virtual lectures, even 25 minutes might already be a long time.
- In particular SMEs, or industry in general, might prefer more concise events.
- Sufficiently many and long breaks between sessions are necessary, e.g. to let participants make new contacts. However, (longer) breaks are more difficult to handle in online and, especially, in hybrid events since there is no common room where all participants can meet: online participants might feel disconnected from people on-site.
- If your event is a hackathon, plan sufficiently many slots for progress checks and discussions about problems.

DATE OF THE EVENT

Finding a good date can be pretty challenging. If many international participants should attend, conflicts with other bigger events should be avoided. Also (public) holidays and typical holiday seasons are difficult times to organise an event so check them in advance.

ORGANISATION OF THE EVENT

Once the start and end date and time are fixed, make a tentative schedule and advertise the event.

Communicate the schedule to all relevant persons (participants, trainers, speakers, assistants, other staff on-site). If there are updates, inform them as well.

Do not forget to think about existing legal issues such as
- data protection (GDPR) especially with respect to photos, recordings, but also lists with names of attendees, trainers, speakers etc.
- taxation or regulations concerning awards, which might differ between different countries/universities etc.
- IP rights on material created or used in the event.

Publish the rules on those points prior to the event.

Last but not least, consider introducing a code of conduct.

If you are unsure about some of the points listed before, you could do a shorter survey with some stakeholders or publicly. However, be concise in that.

EuroCC [resources](#) and NCCs might be helpful to find attendees, speakers, trainers or do advertisement. Other NCCs who have already held such an event might be a good source of useful answers about concrete questions for a certain type of event.

Have also a look at the [Best Practice Guide](#) on How to Find New Attendees for Training Courses on how to advertise events.

AT THE END OF THE EVENT

Think about having some kind of wrap-up:
- results could be presented (in a hackathon),
- a summary given,
- a questions-and-answers session added,
- in a conference, a panel discussion could also be a good way to wrap-up.

Choose what fits best.

In any case, it would be beneficial to get some feedback from all participants of the event. For instance, do a feedback survey – online either at that moment or after the event. Evaluate the given feedback and note some 'lessons learned' as a base for improvements if you repeat the event.
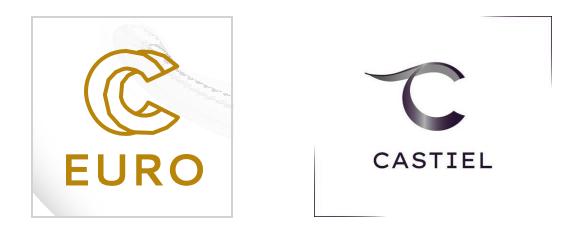
ANNEX - CASTIEL WP3: Training Best Practice Seminar - Agenda
How to organize an event such as an HPC hackathon or a winter-school and how to attract (new) attendees

20 January 2022, 14:00h - 17:30h CET

Time	Session	Speaker(s)
14:00 - 14:05	Welcome from CASTIEL WP3	Lorenzo Zanon, Tobias Haas (HLRS, University of Stuttgart, CASTIEL)
14:05 - 14:35 (30 min)	**Experiences from organising a hackathon** *Experiences from organisation of an online hackathon to create an app for tracking user jobs on HPC systems.*	Lucia Demovičová (Slovak Academy of Sciences, NCC Slovakia)
14:35 - 15:15 (40 min)	**How to organise a winter school** *Experiences from organising an HPC winter school*	Sevil Sarıkurt Malcıoğlu, Hande Toffoli (Middle East Technical University Ankara, NCC Turkey)
15:15 - 15:45 (30 min)	**How to organise an international conference** *Experiences from organising an international conference*	Tomo Popovic (University of Donja Gorica Podgorica, NCC Montenegro)
15:45 - 16:00	Break	
16:00 - 16:30 (30 min)	**Development of a training program targeting the industry workforce** *Hartree Centre is currently developing a training program targeting the industry workforce which started in September. A series of Design Thinking Workshops were used to engage with the users and created 4 stream program. The process and program will be presented.*	Evguenia Alexandrova (Hartree Centre, NCC UK)
16:30 - 17:15 (45 min)	**Communicating training – basic strategies, mechanisms and tools** *Who is my target group? Where do I reach them? How do I create tailored messages that appeal to my target group?* *Every organizer of trainings needs to be able to answer certain questions to either collaborate effectively with a communication department or to successfully disseminate training offers. In this talk, we'll cover the communication basics necessary to get the right participants for your trainings, including common strategies, mechanisms you should know about and tools that can help you with your communication.*	Miriam Koch (HLRS, NCC Germany)
17:15 - 17:30	Open discussion and wrap-up	Lorenzo Zanon, Tobias Haas (HLRS, University of Stuttgart, CASTIEL)