

EHRIN

## **EHRIN Meeting Hannover Post-Implementation of EHRIN-Conference 28<sup>th</sup> / 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

### **Agenda (Topics, Balance, Breaks)**

#### **Get to Know Your Own Stakeholders:**

In order to understand our own stakeholders' point of view we have interviewed them in the months prior to the conference. If possible all hosts of the event should be present during the interviews in order to become familiar with the guests. This will cause a recognition factor during the conference and in the general work of the network. We have opted for face-to-face meetings for the interviews instead of organizing the appointments online. In that way the conference meeting will not be the first personal meeting and create a more familiar atmosphere. However, we have realized that sometimes it was easier for our stakeholders to hold the interview online due to their density of appointments or travel time. If so we made that possible too – an online meeting beforehand is better than none at all.

#### **Welcome Dinner:**

For the foreign stakeholders we have organized a welcome dinner before the conference with the hosts. That way the hosts were able to meet them beforehand and connect them with their own stakeholders later during the conference. We have realized that a strong base is important to connect people: It's only an introduction if you are acquainted to both parties in advance. The Idea was to create an informal frame for a formal process and make everyone comfortable with meeting new people.

#### **Lots of Coffee Breaks:**

Individual connections are easily built over common ground – and that starts with something as easy as coffee. During the conference observed that the coffee breaks were a value item of the agenda because it gave our guests the opportunity to talk casually and compare notes on their projects.

#### **Introduction of the Foreign Stakeholders:**

As you already know your own stakeholders, it's easier for everyone else to connect when they know who is coming from where and what might be common interests. We observed that a quick introduction at the beginning of your agenda of the international stakeholders might act as a teaser and raise your stakeholders' interest to meet the foreign guests.

#### **Content – Find Common ground and Don't Shy Away from Differences:**

In order to reach an effective cooperation and ultimately the goal to learn from each other, we have realized with our partners that it is important to understand where we come from.

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Hence why we have asked each other: What are our tasks in our jobs? What are our positions in our countries of origin? What is our sphere of influence? We tried to find similarities and differences in the administrative structures of the partner countries. It resulted in a chart that compared the different administrative which was presented at the conference. In that way it was easier for the guests to understand why the countries the partners originated from have such a different approach to green hydrogen – and are at immensely different levels of progress. In order to create an all over atmosphere of “coalition of the willing” and to contrast that rather theoretical topic, we started the conference with a poetry slammer that gave a speech about European coalition, green energy transition and environmental protection.

### **Give Them Something to Remember:**

For the second day it was our priority to give our guests the possibility to recall the first day. Hence why we have organized a workshop for them on the first day. Their input was written down on green and red cards by the guests themselves. These results were incorporated on the second days’ presentation as green and red notes in the power point presentation. This was not only memorable for the stakeholders – but it also proved that their opinions and needs were taken into account by the hosts.

### **Time Frame:**

We originally planned two full days for the conference. However, most attendees were only able to stay until lunch on the second day. We acted quickly on that note and compressed the second days’ agenda into a half day that ended with lunch. The advantage was firstly the possibility for all guests to participate until the very end and did not feel like they were missing anything. Secondly finishing the day with lunch created an open end that everyone was able to use as a final opportunity to network. Nevertheless, we realized that the outcome is higher the more people are able to attend the whole conference and make the most of their time.

### **Outreach (Communication)**

#### **Individual Invitation:**

The stakeholders of our municipalities have received a personal invitation. The interview partners have been informed about the meeting directly during the appointment. Most attendees were contacted personally via phone call. That created a personal atmosphere between the hosts and guests. We realized that a formal invitation to an international meeting (especially because it was hold in a foreign language) tended to intimidate some stakeholders. Especially small municipalities with small human resources shied away from attending the conference. During a phone call or any other personal dialogue, we were able to encourage the stakeholders to attend the conference as well as remove any concerns.

#### **Corporate Visual Identity:**

We observed that a cohesive Corporate Visual Identity as a logo, design of heading, power point presentations, a stand up display or banner is helpful to create a professional

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appearance as well as a recognition value. At this point you might also consider taking steps for the future and hire a media team for a professional promo video or photos. The outcome can be used for any future conference or networking event and will give the invitees an impression of what can be expected. It might also be noted that networking works differently in different countries: While LinkedIn is common in some countries, it might not be in others. In the future it might be helpful to put some effort into researching how networking is done in the different partner countries beforehand and to prepare yourself and your stakeholders accordingly.

### Logistics

#### **Transportation:**

Networking is easier done when people are carefree – that is why we organized transportation for our guests. That resulted in either booking restaurants and hotels in walking distance or booking a shuttle bus that would transport the guests from A to B.

### Set-up

#### **Location and Facilities:**

For the location we decided to book a conference hall in the capital because it gave people a range of travel possibilities as train stations, highways and airports were nearby. Furthermore, due to its infrastructure it was also the easiest for our local stakeholders to travel, too. For the venue we needed a space that was able to host a lunch with finger food and create a relaxed atmosphere with coffee tables and bar tables. This was possible in the foyer of the building. The conference hall of our choice also provided a bigger lecture hall that fit all the guests as well as smaller rooms with seating accommodation for workshops in smaller groups. We also made sure that the multimedia tools needed for the speakers are available.

### Methods Used for Dialogue

#### **Workshops - Make them Work Together:**

In order to give people another possibility to get to know each other we have organized a workshop in two smaller groups. In that way it was easier to provoke discussion as well as to overcome language barriers. The method we used was the headstand technique for problem solving. Instead of finding solutions to a problem we reversed the meaning of the original key question to collect ideas through brainstorming. For the attendees it was a fun approach to engage and as we reversed the key question back to its original form the answers were much easier found. It was a simple and effective approach to a difficult question.

#### **Presentations:**

It's in the mix! We created a line of presentations that focused on theoretical approaches as well as best practice examples and projects that are already successful. Try to initiate discussions by asking questions, if no one else does. You might consider preparing questions beforehand, just in case.

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### **Project Speed Dating:**

Another idea that we ultimately did not use because of the time limit was a “Project Speed Dating”. Half of the guests would have been assigned to a table and meet the other half of the group. Given only a short amount of time they could have presented their own projects to each other – and maybe deepen the conversation later on during the break if it was a “match”.

## **Dynamics & Connections**

### **Language Barrier:**

As in any international conference the language barrier might be an issue. Make sure to have a balanced guests list and hosts around that feel comfortable speaking every language represented. Multilingual people can act as a mechanism to overcome language barrier and make everyone else feel understood.

### **Hosts & Partner:**

The connection between the hosts and their partners should not be underestimated. They set the tone for the whole conference. If the atmosphere between you and your international partners is positive, it will spread to all the stakeholders and pass over to them like a domino effect.

### **No Seating Arrangement:**

For the official project dinner at the end of the first day we realized that it was a good call not to plan a seating arrangement in advance. This gave the guests the possibility to sit next to the conversation partners they benefited most from – and maybe already talked to during the conference. In this way new connections were reinforced. After all: If you can't force thing you might as well let them evolve naturally.

### **Make it Fun:**

Many small things cause a great effect, take care of these small things. Sometimes it's in the details: Networking is easier if you have fun. So create a good atmosphere. This can be done by dividing the guests into different groups by handing them candies in different colors. Or by creating a fun afternoon program with a smaller part. We opted for a bus tour that fit the topic (e-oldtimer-bus) and gave them the chance to get to know the city better. You might also consider a small exercise outside after lunch – to keep everyone on the go.

## **Diversity & Inclusion**

### **Food:**

As food is part of culture, too, it might not be forgotten: Check for guests' allergies beforehand, offer vegetarian and vegan options as well as meals that fit religious dietary restrictions. All in all, it is about creating a carefree environment that invites people to network. If your guests spend time asking for alternative food options, it is time that could have been used to network. In fact, we received positive comments on our predominantly vegetarian lunch!



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### **Inclusion:**

Inclusion is not only about creating a space where people can just “be” at the event. It is about creating a space where people can participate just as anyone else. Make sure that your event location is completely accessible for anyone.

### **Diversity:**

We have asked speakers of any background to give a presentation – and it was positively noted by the guests. Especially female guests commented on the fact that they felt represented at the conference which made it easier for them to network.