

LESSONS LEARNED

1st General Meeting of the CYPHER COST Action



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1 Introduction

The first General Meeting of the CYPHER COST Action was held to help researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and industry leaders work together on renewable synthetic fuel (RSF) combustion. The event aimed to find new ways to reduce carbon emissions from energy-intensive industries in Europe and beyond.

This document summarizes what went well and what could be improved at the event. It covers the planning, the event itself, and what happened afterward.

2 Event Overview

The first General Meeting of CYPHER was held from April 10th to 12th at the Intercontinental Hotel in Ljubljana. It was a meeting about research and knowledge exchange in the field of Renewable Synthetic Fuel (RSF) Combustion. With about **120 people** there, including 96 members of the CYPHER COST Action, the event was a great place to share ideas for making energy-intensive industries (EII) in Europe and other places more environmentally friendly.

The General Meeting was a place for talking and working together. It included keynote presentations, workshops, poster sessions, and roundtable discussions. Experts gave five keynote lectures on topics like RSF combustion, machine learning, and climate economics. After each keynote, attendees discussed their work with other researchers.

The event included workshops, roundtable discussions, and a software demonstration. These sessions helped people talk about the challenges of reducing carbon emissions in energy-intensive industries. They also gave people a chance to discuss current trends, policies, and new technologies related to reducing carbon emissions.

The first day's workshop focused on decarbonizing energy-intensive industries. This interactive session allowed people to discuss the challenges of decarbonizing hard-to-decarbonize sectors and learn about current trends, policy considerations, and technology.

The workshop was complemented by five keynote presentations, delivered by distinguished experts in their respective fields, covering diverse topics relevant to CYPHER's objectives. From insights into RSF by Fabian Mauss to discussions on high-fidelity simulations by Matthias Ihme, and from the application of machine learning techniques by Paola Cinnella to explorations of digital twins by Miguel Mendez and climate economics by Elena Verdolini, these keynotes enriched the discourse and provided valuable perspectives.

CYPHER's first meeting was an important step towards a better future for energy-intensive industries. People shared ideas and made connections to find better solutions for these industries. The event was a great place and time for sharing ideas and working together, which shows that we need to work on climate change together.

3 Successes

3.1 Engagement and participation

The event attracted a diverse group of approximately 120 participants, including many members of the CYPHER COST Action. This high turnout led to good discussions and valuable networking opportunities.

3.2 Quality of content

Renewable Synthetic Fuels combustion and related fields were explained in the keynote lectures and poster sessions.

The keynote lectures were very well received, with most presentations scoring above 4 out of 5. The content gave valuable insights into key topics relevant to CYPHER goals and helped participants understand RSF combustion, combustion science, machine learning methods, and climate economy.

Workshops and discussions got good ratings, from 4.35 to 4.57. These sessions gave practical insights and chances to work together.

Participants rated the overall experience highly, with an average score of 4.84 out of 5.

3.3 Networking opportunities

The event provided many chances to network and form partnerships. Attendees could connect with peers, exchange ideas, and explore potential collaborations. The beautiful setting of the Intercontinental Hotel in Ljubljana helped foster meaningful connections.

3.4 Positive feedback

The event was a success, with participants praising the quality of the content, the organization of the sessions, and the networking and collaboration opportunities. The CYPHER General Meeting was a valuable platform for sharing knowledge and driving progress towards sustainable solutions for energy-intensive industries.

The event venue and catering were a great success, as was the social dinner held in the castle.

The results of the survey are in the appendices.

4 Challenges

4.1 Registration and payment process

The registration process proved to be challenging. The registration process was complicated by multiple options (student status, CYPHER membership, and abstract submission possibility). Pricing and VAT info were unclear, causing confusion among participants. There were delays in handling the invoices.

4.2 Communication issues

Communication was ineffective, causing confusion about:

- Schedule changes not promptly communicated.
- Criteria for poster selection and presentation.

- Criteria for awards distribution.
- Eligibility or non-eligibility for reimbursement
- Reimbursement procedure and supporting documents required

4.3 Logistical challenges

People wanted to know where to get posters printed.

5 Root Cause Analysis

1. **Planning and Preparation:** timing constraints and lack of experience led to loopholes in the registration procedures that confused essential details. Despite testing, some details were overlooked.
2. **Communication strategies.** Communication was not effective, leading to misunderstandings.
 - a. Registration was not confirmed.
 - b. There were misunderstandings about eligibility criteria.
 - c. Misunderstanding about required documents.
3. **Payment processing system.** The manual handling of registration fee payments increased the time required by the local host to handle payments, delaying the issuing of the invoices, and proof of payment.
4. **Awards selection criteria were unclear.** Despite the attempts to build a diverse panel for poster evaluation, it was not possible to clarify the evaluation criteria.
5. **Last-minute changes:** the replanning of the event schedule without sufficient notice, disrupted some of the participants' planning.

6 Lessons Learned

Despite the challenges encountered, the General Meeting of CYPHER demonstrated strong engagement and participation from a diverse array of stakeholders. The high turnout of approximately 120 participants, including 96 individuals affiliated with the COST Action, underscored the relevance and importance of the event's objectives.

- **Planning and preparation.** Allow enough time for planning activities and checking registration information to avoid confusion and misunderstandings.
- **Communication strategies.** Use effective and not redundant ways to communicate and share updates.
- **Registration and payment processing:** Use automated systems to make transactions easier and reduce errors and manual work.
- **Evaluation criteria:** Establish and communicate the criteria for submissions acceptance, and potential award selection.
- **Adherence to timelines:** Maintain and communicate schedules effectively to prevent disruptions.

7 Recommendations for Improvement

- **Refine the registration process.** The registration process using **Gmail forms should be avoided**, and other platforms allowing for complete event management, including payments, should be considered (if compatible with the local organizer practices).

- **Automate payment processing.** Transition to automated systems to reduce manual errors and delays.
- **Enhance communication.** Develop a detailed communication plan and to use different channels for effective communication and provide updates.
- **Selection and evaluation criteria.** Set and communicate clear criteria for submissions and mandate the key leadership positions in charge of COST excellence targets to create a chart for award selection.
- **Support and guidance.** Provide clear documentation on reimbursement and event procedures and provide proactive support.
- **Updated schedule.** Keep schedules up-to-date and communicate changes promptly.
- **Collect feedback:** implement and analyze post-event surveys to identify areas for improvement.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the 1st CYPHER General Meeting provided valuable insights and lessons learned for future planning and execution of renewable energy and decarbonization events. The event was a success and offered networking opportunities. It also showed where there is room for improvement. This includes registration processes, communication strategies, and logistical arrangements.

Many stakeholders took part in the event, showing how relevant it was. Participants enjoyed great content, workshops, and networking. Participants were happy with the event and thought it was well organized.

Going forward, we need to make improvements like refining registration, improving communication, and using better event platforms such as Eventbrite.

The CYPHER General Meeting showed that event management practices can be improved and adapted. Organizers can build on past events by incorporating feedback, using best practices, and using available resources. This will make future events more successful and rewarding for attendees.

9 Appendix: Survey Feedback Data

The feedback gathered from the CYPHER 1st General Meeting provides valuable insights for future events. This report synthesizes responses from 36 participants, highlighting key strengths and areas for improvement.

1. Survey Overview

A survey was conducted among the 119 participants, yielding a response rate of 31%. Despite being modest, the feedback offers meaningful insights into various aspects of the event.

2. Key Findings

2.1. Overall Satisfaction

- **High satisfaction:** The overall experience received an average rating of 4.84 out of 5, with over 85% of respondents rating it 5 out of 5.

- **Positive event organization:** 30 respondents rated the event organization as "excellent," and 6 rated it as "very good."

2.2. Workshops and Sessions

- **Digitalization Workshop:** Rated 4.39 out of 5, indicating strong satisfaction with the workshop on "Digitalization for the Decarbonization of Energy-intensive Industries."
- **Roundtable Discussions:** The roundtable on "Database and Benchmark Cases" received a rating of 4.57 out of 5, while the roundtable on Wednesday was rated 4.22 out of 5, highlighting the engaging and informative nature of these discussions.
- **Software Demonstrators Workshop:** Rated 4.35 out of 5, showing that the content was well-received.

2.3. Keynote Lectures

- **General ratings:** Keynote lectures received positive evaluations, with average ratings ranging from 3.84 to 4.59 out of 5.
- **Impactful talks:** Participants found the keynote lectures impactful, with several lectures receiving multiple votes for being particularly outstanding.

2.4. Poster Sessions

- **Valued format:** All respondents found the poster sessions valuable for sharing and discussing research findings.
- **Presentation preferences:** 22 participants preferred the poster format, 2 preferred oral presentations, and 12 preferred a combination of both.

3. Areas for Improvement

3.1. Content and Relevance

- **Chemistry focus:** Feedback indicated a desire for more chemistry-related content, as some participants felt the workshop was biased towards CFD topics.
- **Balance of topics:** Suggestions included featuring more diverse topics to cater to a broader audience.

3.2. Refreshments and Meals

- **Balanced distribution:** Participants suggested a more even distribution of refreshments during coffee breaks.
- **Positive feedback:** The quality of meals was rated 4.73 out of 5, and participants praised the catering arrangements, especially the dinner at the Castle.

3.3. Communication

- **Clear communication:** Participants expressed concerns about the clarity and transparency of communication. There were issues with providing clear and timely information regarding schedules, changes, and important details.

3.4. Registration Process

- **Invoice timelines:** Some respondents experienced delays in receiving invoices, suggesting implementing an online payment option to streamline the process.
- **Confirmation and clarity:** There was a strong preference for receiving confirmations for submitted abstracts and registrations. Clearer information and expectations regarding invoice timelines were also highlighted as necessary improvements.
- **Fees:** Participants emphasized the importance of providing clear instructions on participation fees to avoid confusion and multiple email exchanges.

4. Participants Demographics

- **Age range:** Diverse age distribution with participants primarily between 22-60 years.
- **Gender and professional status:** Balanced representation across genders and professional statuses, including PhD students, postdocs, professors, and industrial partners.

5. Additional Feedback

5.1. Suggestions for Future Events

- **Topic and speaker recommendations:** Participants suggested including insights from industry partners, trends in fuel technology applications, and more on turbulent combustion in gas turbines.
- **Poster session improvements:** Clear presentation times and even distribution of posters were recommended to enhance the session's effectiveness.
- **Logistical enhancements:** Suggestions about providing clearer transportation arrangements from the airport or train stations to the venue.

5.2. Registration and Administrative Processes

- **Confirmation and communication:** There was a strong preference for receiving confirmations for submitted abstracts and registrations, with suggestions for clearer information and expectations regarding invoice timelines.
- **Fees:** Participants emphasized the importance of providing clear instructions on participation fees to avoid confusion and multiple email exchanges.

6. Conclusion

The feedback from the CYPHER 1st General Meeting highlights high participant satisfaction and provides valuable insights for future improvements. Emphasizing the positive aspects, such as excellent organization and impactful keynote lectures, while addressing areas for improvement like content relevance and smoothness and clarity of the registration process, will enhance future events. The commitment to detailed feedback underscores the importance of continuous improvement and participant engagement.