European Exhibition Industry Alliance

CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

The European Exhibition Industry Alliance (EEIA) operates within a well-organised network of associations and maintains strong relationships with its members, institutions, and international actors. This robust network facilitates smooth communication and collaboration within the industry.

The organisation is recognised for its proactive approach to future challenges, evidenced by initiatives such as the Net Zero Carbon Events and diversity networks like Women in Exhibitions. EEIA's substantial industry data and active training programs support its high-quality operations. Additionally, the industry benefits from a variety of data sources, though these are not always fully integrated or systemic.

The exhibitions sector faces significant challenges, particularly a shortage of skilled professionals and employees. This talent gap can affect the industry's ability to innovate and maintain high standards.

There is also a noticeable lack of awareness about the industry from external perspectives. This gap in public understanding limits opportunities for growth and recognition.

The regulatory issues pose substantial obstacles. The bureaucratic burden is considerable, with complex and costly regulations which are often difficult to navigate. This regulatory environment can be a major hurdle, diverting resources and focus from more productive activities.

ACTIONS

Considering the current context and challenges identified the European Exhibition Industry Alliance developed the following actions:

1. Sustainability:
- Establish a framework for measuring, monitoring, and reporting carbon emissions with the objective of achieving the Net Zero initiative goals.
- Ensure 2030 and 2050 goals are on track and achieved with collaboration from UFI, EMECA and EEIA.

Replicability potential: Moderate (it requires significant technical, human and financial resources to achieve Net Zero goals)

2. Data Collection and Analysis:
- Compile existing data and metrics on the industry's activity, its economic impacts and other relevant data connected to industry sectors trade fairs serve, trade and tourism, and emergency/health & safety responses.
- Develop a data collection platform/dashboard to centralise information about the sector and create a link with the EU dataspace.
- Incorporate basic industry data in official EU and national data and statistics. For more accurate representation of the sector, revise the NACE Code definitions.

Replicability potential: Low (it requires the alignment with national statistics offices and regulatory review to include the sectors' indicators in the official statistics)

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A C T I O N S

3. Strategic planning:
- Distinguish business travel from leisure tourism, coordinate with tourism stakeholders to ensure alignment, and advocate for this distinction at regional, national, EU Levels.
- Continuously advocate to increase representation of the exhibition sector in EU tourism ecosystem forums (tourism development and crisis management).

Replicability potential: Moderate (it requires targeted lobbying and enhanced advocacy efforts to increase the awareness of the sector)

4. Staff Attraction and Retention:
- Analyse market needs for skills and profiles and engage with the industry.
- Analyse available training programs to consolidate training opportunities, matching the demand with existing initiatives.
- Develop strategies for talent acquisition and development (trainings, materials, etc.).

Replicability potential: Moderate (considering the European scope of the actions, it requires enhanced cooperation)

E X P E C T E D   I M P A C T S   &   L E S S O N S   L E A R N E D

With the implementation of the actions mentioned above, the European Exhibition Industry Alliance is expected to address challenges identified and wield positive impacts for the tourism ecosystem. Other organisations, particularly cross-border professional associations in the tourism ecosystem dealing with similar challenges, can also leverage valuable lessons:

Improve Resilience and Crisis Preparedness:
- Implementing a robust carbon emissions framework and achieving Net Zero goals, positions EEIA as a leader in sustainability, enhancing the industry's reputation.
- Analysing market needs and investing in training programs ensures the industry attracts and retains qualified professionals. This strategic approach to talent management supports sustainable growth and innovation within the sector.
- Advocating for the sector's importance within the EU tourism ecosystem and beyond and securing a seat at European tourism forums that discuss tourism development, crisis preparedness, and management ensures that the sector's views are recognised and considered in policy development and implementation.

Facilitate Data Deployment:
- Compiling existing data and creating a comprehensive data collection platform or dashboard improves decision-making and allow for more informed strategic planning.
- Analysing data on emergency and health & safety responses, promotes better preparedness and response strategies, improving the sector's ability to manage and mitigate risks effectively.
- Integrating industry-specific data into official datasets, provides better visibility and recognition of the sector's economic and social contributions. This advocacy efforts strengthen the industry's influence in policymaking and resource allocation.