European Open Forum 2012

The CCD was an excellent venue for ESOF 2012, the staff were exceptional, all requests were dealt with quickly and with a smile. It was a pleasure as always to work with The CCD.

Elva Hickey, Operations Director, Conference Partners Ltd

Conference Partners was appointed as the PCO for the Euroscience Open Forum in June 2011. Our first task was putting together a detailed implementation plan outlining all roles, responsibilities and completion dates to ensure all elements were delivered on time. It was evident that creating an innovative and interactive conference programme, supported by a unique and dynamic social experience, was going to be key in attracting the conference delegates.

Our remit involved organisation and management of key areas; management of the conference finances (both income and expenditure), management of all logistics, obtaining sponsorship and exhibition, promotion and marketing, management of delegate registration, accommodation and staff onsite. The logistical management we provided included; venue, catering, social programme, display materials, print and design, marketing materials, display materials, signage, exhibition, conference materials, audio visual equipment, transport requirements, safety and security. We worked very closely with the Project Director, Programme Director and the ESOF 2012 team to ensure that every aspect of the organisation of the conference was carried out to the highest quality and that delegates had a return on their investment.

The social programme was both creative and innovative and included a welcome reception, optional Irish nights for delegates, a Media networking event, the Presidents’ Dinner, the ESOF Party and a Science in the City Programme. A unique and exciting event was held for early-stage career delegates called ‘Porridge with the Prof’, this allowed them to meet with professors from the scientific world over an informal breakfast. The participants were given an opportunity to share questions and ideas on the direction of their research, careers and future paths with a leading ‘Prof’ in their field of interest.

A unique aspect of ESOF 2012 was the ‘Science-2-Business Programme’, which focused on developing the outputs of publicly-funded research into successful business innovations. The exhibition area was transformed into a Market Place, encouraging maximum and fruitful interaction. Conference Partners used the Forum to capacity with 990 sq. m of exhibition, consisting of 85 exhibitors from 25 different countries. This was a remarkable achievement given that only six months was allocated to selling the entire exhibition space. The Market Place was laid out with the exhibitors in mind; all the catering options for delegates were located there, which created a consistent footfall for the entire event, facilitating an ideal platform for delegates to network and forge new and existing relationships.

A speakers’ platform was placed in the exhibition area, which was a great success in terms of driving delegates into the exhibition area. This area also provided a nexus for the different elements of business start-up information, including venture capital, advisory services (legal, IP), public development agencies and other such relevant topics. An exciting competition element was introduced in the ‘Invention Convention’ which provided delegates with an opportunity to compete by pitching their innovation in three minutes to a panel of distinguished judges from both the academic and business sectors. Delegates also had the opportunity to visit a number of incubation centres to see, first-hand, the interaction between research and business.

There were a large number of registrations in the last two weeks which may be attributed to the consistent marketing campaign which continued right through to the conference itself. The media partners were also very active in the build-up to the conference which in turn attracted a lot of late interest.

A key element in the success of ESOF 2012 was bringing all core stakeholders from science and business together, from research, to policy makers and from financiers to industry. ESOF 2012 placed the spotlight on the importance of promoting scientific excellence, not just for science but more broadly, for societal and economic reasons. Conference Partners worked closely with the ESOF 2012 team to deliver an innovative and creative environment which met the conference objectives. With over 300 international media present at the conference, it ensured that the lessons learned at the conference were shared more broadly, thus ensuring an impactful legacy for ESOF 2012.