

HITEC RETREAT MIDDELBURG 29 Nov – 01 Dec 2023

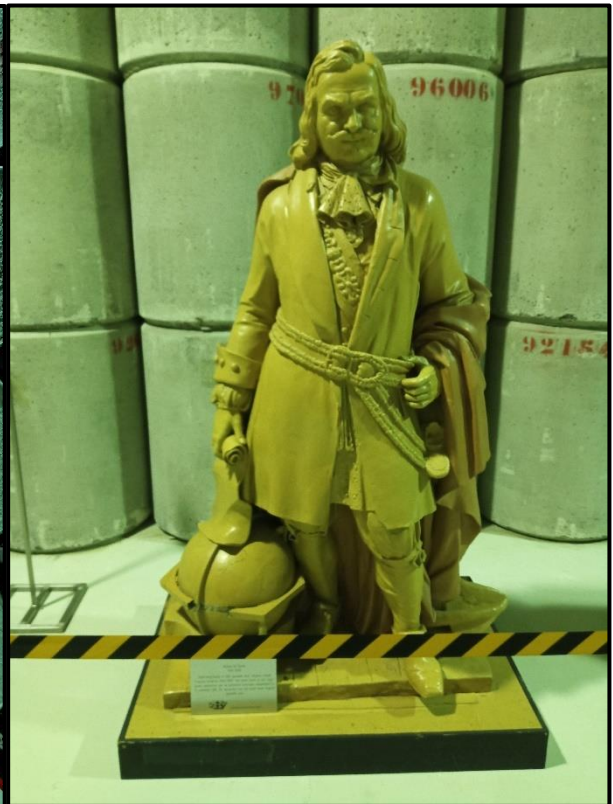
Organizers: Laura Diaz Gomez, Mara Lönartz, Fynn Sauerwein

In this occasion, we were 25 participants from nine institutes meeting in the Zeeland region in the Netherlands in the small city of Middelburg.



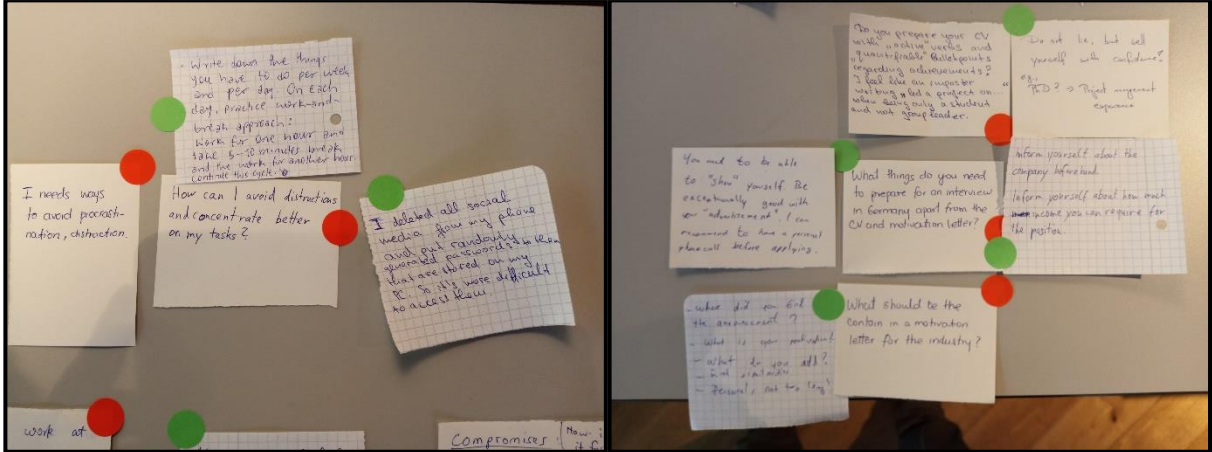
We started our retreat by visiting the Netherlands' Central Organisation for Radioactive Waste (COVRA). We enjoyed a guided visit for 3 hours that let us know about the history of nuclear science and specifically how the nuclear waste from reactors, hospitals and other institutions is collected, processed, and temporarily stored in their facilities. Fun fact: In the COVRA buildings one can also find Dutch artworks, which due to renovation work in their museums have to be temporarily stored at very low air humidity. Afterwards we headed to the hotel to rest and had the evening free for a walk around the city of Middelburg.





The next day we started with the scientific part of our retreat. It started with the presentation of each participant's PhD topic but with a small twist. Divided into groups of 4 or 5, each one was asked to present his or her topic in simple words and supported by any aid or tool everyone was asked to bring with them beforehand. Afterwards each group chose the best presenter. The winners from each group presented their topic again in front of whole audience. Afterwards, we voted for an overall winner who got a little surprise present.

For the next activity, each participant had the opportunity to think about problems and challenges they are currently facing in their PhD and could write it down anonymously. We created some categories beforehand, e.g., research, PhD life, supervisors and superiors, funding, etc. to give a better structure to this. After collecting all the challenges and problems everyone had the chance to read and answer them anonymously.



Afterwards, we had our lunch break together in the hotel and enjoyed a nice conversation. Returning to the meeting room, we started our last activity where different scenarios were given regarding the PhD and future perspectives. The participants had to decide whether they agree or disagree with them by walking to one side of the room and were asked to argue on their decision. Some nice discussions developed from this activity.



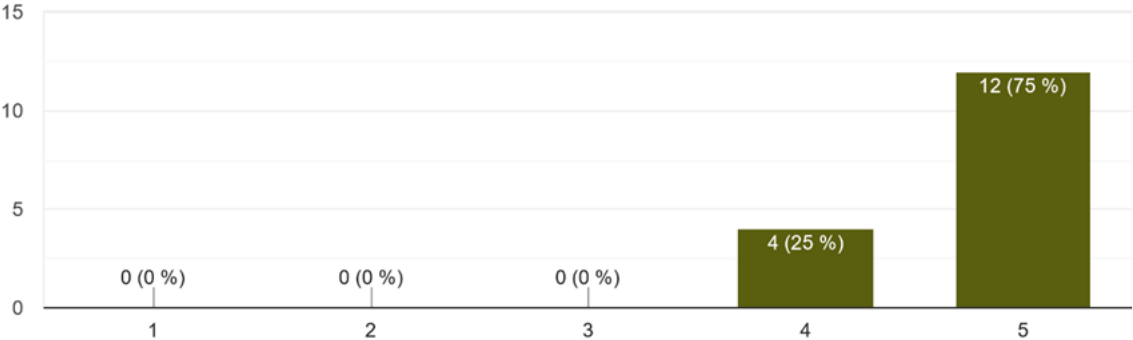
Later, we were excited to continue our day with our social activities. After a short walk of 30 minutes or bus ride, we had some fun playing hyper bowling and black light mini golf. Afterwards, we all met in the local beer café to round off the day in a relaxed atmosphere.



After breakfast the next morning, we made our way back to Jülich again arriving at the Forschungszentrum around noon. On the bus ride back, we asked the participants to give some feedback regarding this retreat. Here are the results:

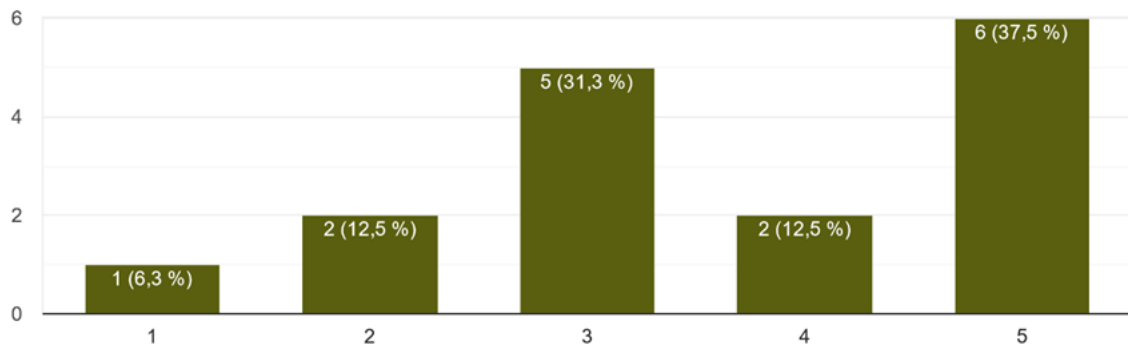
How would you rate this retreat?

16 respuestas



Has the retreat been useful for your academic life?

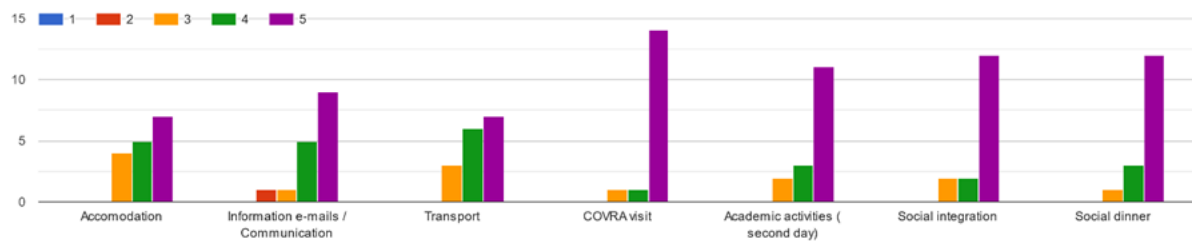
16 respuestas



What is the most important thing you learn in this retreat?

- Helpful sharing
- Social connections
- Es läuft überall gleich schlecht, mein Institut ist da keine Ausnahme.
- Got to know very cool people
- That others share the same problems and that one colleague is going to join the company I also want to work at :)
- I got to know what most of my colleagues are working on
- General things about nuclear waste management
- Connections

How would you rate?

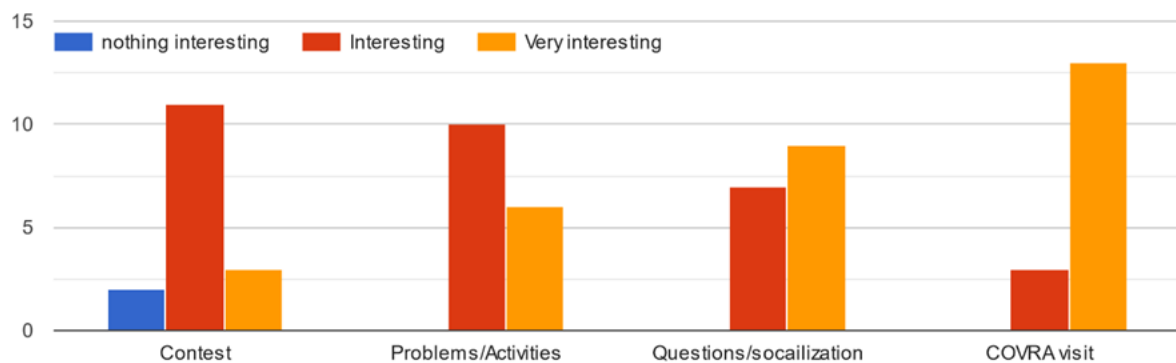


Any more comments about the organization?

- very nice
- The retreat was well organised!
- Maybe a little more communication via whatsapp
- Danke euch für die Orga.
- Two beds would be great and preferred. that's why 3/5.
- Very good organisation from the team!
- very good organisation! A lot of effort was put into this, which I would not take for granted!
- You did a great job!

- I think they did great.
- Perfect
- It was well organized.
- Well, done.
- Very well organized and made easy for participants.
- The bus driver was not very kind but it is also not your fault :)

Which activities you found more interesting/ challenging?



Do you have any suggestion or remarks from the retreat or for the future?

- Keep this format.
- single beds and single rooms. Should be standard. Rest top.
- Maybe a very short introduction of every participant, that will be send in advance to all the other participants. This way I could've already learned something about the colleagues speciality or future plan or whatever. Something like a short "Steckbrief"
- It was a nice retrat with fun activities and awesome people :) Thank you for the organization
- Keep it this way, it was very fun