



Joint Report Summary

**BUILDING SOCIAL TRUST
TO ACCELERATE THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLEAN
HYDROGEN ECONOMY**

GREEN HYDROGEN TODAY AND TOMORROW



Hydrogen is projected to grow sevenfold to support the global energy transformation, eventually accounting for 10% of total energy by 2050. To achieve this, the emerging green hydrogen industry must balance the challenges of responsible development: seizing opportunities as they arise while steering clear of the pitfalls that have hindered past resource booms.

In the pursuit of advancing the clean hydrogen economy, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) held a roundtable in partnership with EY at COP28 in Dubai in 2023, focusing on the importance of building social trust in the green hydrogen economy. Social trust, as the panel defined it, is “the level of confidence individuals have in other stakeholders and the belief that others will act with integrity.” It will be integral to the future success of green hydrogen.

The success of the 2023 roundtable prompted ADSW to maintain the conversation through two successive events, the second at the Green Hydrogen Summit in Abu Dhabi in April 2024 and the third at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

These sessions convened a diverse group of stakeholders – industry leaders, policymakers, investors and civil society representatives – to examine the pivotal role of social trust in driving a sustainable and equitable transformation to green hydrogen. This updated report consolidates the collective insights from three roundtables over two years, offering key recommendations from experts on transforming the green hydrogen economy from concept to reality.

Key Takeaways



Stakeholder trust and social trust:

Social trust requires transparency, credibility, accountability and alignment with stakeholder expectations. Building it will require continuous active outreach, public engagement and communication.



Creating shared value:

Projects should create shared value by aligning interests and delivering measurable social and economic benefits such as job creation, energy security and broader community development.



Transparency, collaboration and communication:

Clear, regular and radically transparent communication, backed by data, is essential to address skepticism, counter misinformation and manage stakeholder expectations.



Speed of trust and energy transformation:

We can't build technology first, and trust after – building trust needs to progress at the same pace as the energy transformation.



Public awareness and education:

Raising public awareness through tailored education initiatives, certifications and targeted communication helps build understanding and support.

Social trust and an equitable transformation



While discussions around green hydrogen development often hinge on investment and technology, the roundtables emphasized that social trust will be a critical component for the development and acceleration of the green hydrogen economy. Establishing and maintaining trust among all stakeholders – governments, investors, the private sector, policymakers and communities – is crucial for projects to succeed.

Participants emphasized the need for social trust to be placed at the heart of every aspect of the industry's development, from supply chains and demand creation to the integration of green hydrogen into the global energy mix. They highlighted key areas and

actions that would help to build trust in the industry. These included driving greater transparency in supply chains, realistic communication about the prospect of job creation, and public demonstration of technological feasibility.

The group also discussed things that could erode trust, such as overpromising on the benefits of green hydrogen, gatekeeping new development, and the risk of greenwashing hydrogen projects. They highlighted the pressing need for stakeholders across the green hydrogen industry and beyond to operate with transparency and a commitment to social good, as the dialogue surrounding green hydrogen moves from concept to action.

Engaging outside the green hydrogen industry

Speaking to the need to educate and raise awareness about green hydrogen's potential, the roundtables highlighted an important fact that is often overlooked in discussions: most people have only the most basic knowledge about green hydrogen, if they are aware of it at all.

Experts spoke about the need for education, especially around the distinction between grey, blue and green hydrogen as well as the role of green hydrogen as an important addition to a sustainable global energy mix, rather than a panacea. To build the green hydrogen economy, different levels of stakeholder

understanding must be recognized. Tailored education can help address skepticism, manage expectations and build the momentum that we need to realize the green hydrogen economy.

Participants agreed that the industry needs to create a unifying message around green hydrogen that transcends technical language and resonates with the public, with panelists calling for the creation of a global body, such as an intergovernmental organization, to carry this action forward. They concluded that proactive engagement, education and cooperation were all key to building trust in the industry.

Radical transparency

Communication should extend beyond education. Once stakeholders are willing to partner with developers to participate in developing green hydrogen, the industry needs to prove that their faith has not been misplaced. This can only be accomplished through bold, ethical leadership, radical transparency and continuous communication; sharing challenges and roadblocks alongside gains and successes. This kind of openness will ensure that expectations are managed effectively while minimizing the risk of misinformation.

To enable this, developers must commit to rigorous data collection

and analysis with quantifiable insights into the financial, social and environmental impacts of green hydrogen initiatives. By setting ambitious goals and offering transparent progress reports, organizations can reinforce accountability and maintain confidence in the development process.



Developing green hydrogen and communities

Equally important is that green hydrogen projects bring shared value to the countries and communities where they break ground. Initiatives that create jobs, build energy security and support economic development – particularly within local communities – are instrumental in cultivating social trust. For many people, the idea of energy security or sustainability is too abstract to fully appreciate. But the prospect of having jobs in their communities in 10 years, learning opportunities that can equip their children

with valuable skills, economic opportunities that support their local stores and trades – these can garner enthusiasm for projects, and patience during their development.

Collaborative measures such as contractual obligations help ensure that community benefits are built into project frameworks. Additionally, sharing best practices, investing in capacity building and promoting skills development can make green hydrogen projects exponentially more enticing.



Building trust to unlock development



Trust underpins the successful adoption and integration of clean energy technologies. Technology and infrastructure alone cannot drive the energy transformation; stakeholder confidence, public acceptance, and collaborative partnerships are equally critical.

Embedding trust at every stage ensures that concerns such as social equity, environmental integrity, and economic inclusion are addressed alongside technical advancements. By developing trust at the same pace as the technology, potential barriers – such as misinformation, public skepticism or resistance from local communities – can be mitigated, paving the way for

smoother implementation. Trust also fosters long-term commitment from stakeholders, ensuring that investments, policies and community support align with the shared goal of achieving a sustainable green hydrogen economy.

Running through all of these roundtables was the assertion that the industry should move from a state of competitiveness to one of cooperation, with the shared goal of creating a more sustainable future for everyone. The industry must ask itself where green hydrogen fits into the story of the net-zero transformation and ensure that its position rests on inclusiveness and transparency.

