



BOARDROOM

THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

# STRATEGIES IN UNCHARTED TERRITORIES

VOLUME 1 | VOLUME 2 | **2020 VOLUME 3** | VOLUME 4

ASSOCIATIONS AS  
DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

COMMS & ADVOCACY IN  
TIMES OF CONFUSION

HOW TO RESPOND  
TO DISRUPTION

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# Innovation Made Simple

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Innovation has always been – or should have been – a key factor for any organisation's strategic development. This is not only something your members expect from you to aid with their own development – it is, after all, one of the main reasons they joined your association in the first place – it's an aspect that determines whether an organisation sinks or swims during a crisis like the pandemic.

An article on the *Visual Capitalist* website makes it clear that innovation is not just a concept that pertains to the engineering world or belongs in management theory books. It's something associations can – and should – translate from a technical point of view and turn into a strategic one.

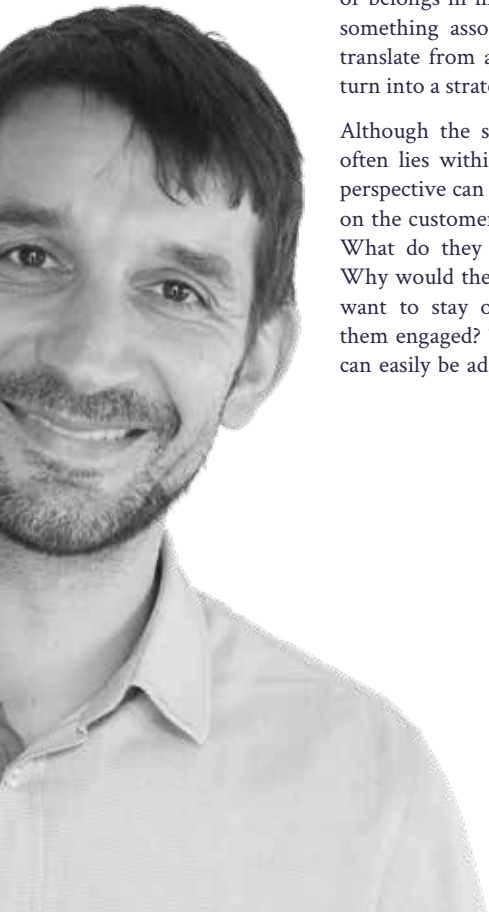
Although the starting point for innovation often lies within the organisation itself, the perspective can shift and the focus can be put on the customers – or members, in this case. What do they expect from an association? Why would they join, and what makes them want to stay or leave? How do you keep them engaged? The article lists 10 items that can easily be adapted to your organisation to

help your members get through this new and strange world we've found ourselves in.

Associations should strive to build an economic, social, societal or scientific moat that gives them a sustainable competitive advantage over time. While these protective moats can arise from a number of different sources, in today's information economy, they most often arise from the power of innovation.

Here are just two of the structural elements *Visual Capitalist* advises that you can easily apply: align your talents and assets, and connect with others to create value, support and enhancement around your offerings; this is how you'll bring a distinction to your association.

While some of these elements can quickly be acted on, others will need some consideration before being put into place. But the end result is the same: you will gain confidence and reliability from your members, and, at the very least, the elements will serve as a useful thought experiment for you to remain adaptable and agile in the most uncertain of times.



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**BOARDROOM**  
THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

Boardroom \ The Best Resource for Associations

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## Responsible Publisher

KODE Publishing & Services

## Subscription

90€ for 4 issues

To subscribe: info@boardroom.global



Boardroom is a quarterly publication \ P922075.  
Circulation: 7500 copies.

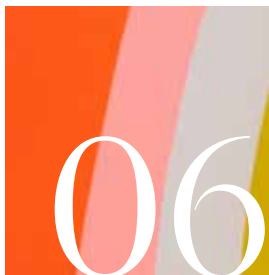
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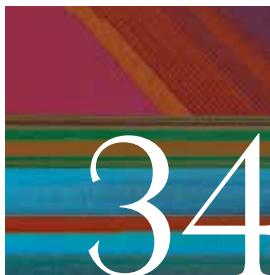
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# The Voice of AC Forum

## Diversity & Inclusion in Associations

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How many associations have a diversity and inclusion policy? Is it one that looks in as well as out? Is it a policy that sends the right signals and says the right things but leads to little action, or is it a policy that is driving action and change? These were some of the questions explored by AC Forum members at their annual meeting in January 2020.

*Words Tracy Bury*

Since then the Black Lives Matter movement has sparked challenging conversations and a drive for action and change with a spotlight on the long standing and systemic racist attitudes and discrimination experienced by black people and other people of colour. This has dominated many high-income countries with historically predominantly white populations. However, such challenges and discrimination linked to race and ethnicity are faced by other groups of people in different parts of the world.

### FROM WITHIN

For associations to make real progress on diversity and inclusion it is important to acknowledge how complex diversity and inclusion are. Diversity encompasses ability, age, culture, ethnicity, gender, indigeneity, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and other factors such as educational background, health status, occupation and personality traits. Some of these may be

protected in law, others not. Inclusion embraces these differences and ensures equality of access and opportunities without discrimination or intolerance.

What does this mean for associations? You can only make progress if you first have an awareness of the issues and a level of understanding and commitment that will advance change. You can then assess how you are doing, what needs to change and what data will help answer those questions now and into the future. To develop this you need to ask questions of yourselves and from within your community, and potentially more widely.

It means being intentional and seeking out a wide range of views and experiences that will challenge any privileges and unconscious biases that exist. You may need to start by exploring with your leadership and staff team what privileges and unconscious biases are and what

they mean for how people lead and govern.

Think about it from different perspectives covering governance, operations and activities, including, but not limited to, your events. If you can see where improvement is needed, take time to reflect on where change can be made. Usually the change required isn't solely at the point where a problem is seen, but goes deeper into the systems that underpin your association. It means looking for patterns of behaviour and trends over time, looking at the different parts of your association, and how they are related. And diving deeper, what values, assumptions and beliefs shape your association. According to Meadows, "*structure is the key to understanding not just what is happening, but why*".<sup>1</sup> This is the approach taken by the European Society of Organ Transplantation (ESOT) who are leading a project to advance diversity and inclusion across the whole association.

<sup>1</sup> Meadows DH. (2008) *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. Vermont, USA: Chelsea Green Publishing.

## COMPASSION & COMMITMENT

Leading with compassion and commitment means growing from self-awareness to build more diverse and inclusive associations. Many associations are quite traditional, and how people come to volunteer and lead often follows traditional pathways. Some are on boards and committees as an acknowledgement of their contributions to the profession and association, potentially a “reward”.

While this is an important route to leadership for many associations, it may not be the way to assure diversity in your leadership nor, necessarily, the requisite skills to lead in a diverse and inclusive way. Opportunities that present themselves along the way to identify leaders may have resulted from inherent privileges, whilst others continue to battle adversity or marginalisation. Associations need to create opportunities and take intentional steps towards diversity and inclusion.

How well do you know your association's membership? What data do you collect that can give you insights into understanding different aspects of diversity? Do you audit how that is reflected in who you are and what you do? How many associations feel comfortable when they ask themselves what percentage of membership are women or transgender? How is that reflected in the association's structures and committees? Is the membership make up reflective of the profession as a whole? If there is a disparity, is it within the profession as well as the association? What about age, ethnicity, geography, and other socioeconomic factors? Consider an audit to establish your baseline and identify where change is needed that you can then implement and audit over time. Think about what successful outcomes will be, and meaningful change can affect the fabric of your association.

In that context, IAS - the international AIDS Society - has underpinned its commitment to diversity and inclusion within its five core values, which include “human

rights-focused” and “inclusive.” This is translated in to all of its activities and very obvious at its international conferences.

When it comes to association conferences taking a diversity and inclusion approach starts with event objectives and the request for proposals. Site selection, for some, might appear straightforward with limited options depending on their geographical areas, but when scaled up for international associations it is complex and challenging. You need to take into account a wide range of factors that impact your event's ability to be welcoming and accessible to all. The site selection criteria considered by World Physiotherapy demonstrate, for instance, how many factors are relevant to diversity and inclusion. No one city or country can tick all boxes so that there will always be compromises.

When it comes to your conference programme, it is the responsibility of event organisers, committees and speakers to prevent “manels” (all male panels), ensure diversity in prize or bursary recipients, and that keynote or “meet the expert” moments are not dominated by one category of person. For many events this means, historically, white, senior, physically-able, straight males from a handful of countries in the northern hemisphere. Other steps to take are addressed by groups such as Gender Avenger (see [www.genderavenger.com](http://www.genderavenger.com)).

Let's make diversity and inclusion inherent within our associations. For now, it may require hard and challenging conversations with very intentional activity, but looking to the future it should be an in-built responsibility owned by all.

Tracy Bury is President of the AC Forum and Deputy CEO of the World Physiotherapy. For an example of a diversity and inclusion policy see at [world.physio/policy/ps-diversity](http://world.physio/policy/ps-diversity). The site selection criteria considered by World Physiotherapy can be reviewed at [world.physio/congress-selection-criteria](http://world.physio/congress-selection-criteria)

# Failure to Continue Thinking Globally is a Recipe for Failure

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International Advisor of the Global Association Hubs **Martin Sirk** argues that association-friendly destination eco-systems are key determinants of multi-regional success.



COVID-19 has slammed the brakes on many associations' global development plans. Up until 2020, international conferences played the most significant role in delivering international objectives: growing membership worldwide, expanding the reach of accreditation and certification programmes, offering members effective global business platforms, and boosting market share of attention and intellectual impact. That option is no longer available.

## MASSIVE UNCERTAINTY

With the timing of the full-scale return of international gatherings facing massive uncertainty, the temptation is to focus on the most local markets, on protecting home territory. Global initiatives are put on hold, ambitions are being scaled back,

investments hacked back, and day-to-day survival is taking up all the intellectual air in the room.

The problem is, competition is about to get significantly tougher. The cancellation of face-to-face international meetings has not resulted in less choice for members' educational or business opportunities, but dramatically more. Rival associations (global, regional, national - not necessarily even in your precise specialisation), ad-hoc networks of experts in your profession or discipline, opportunistic entrepreneurs, for-profit event organisers, even your previously-sponsoring companies: all of these are now significant potential threats, with reduced barriers and cost of entry into every traditional association sphere of interest, intellectual and business alike, and not just related to events and education. To compete successfully against this



much larger set of rivals, effective local impact in key markets is going to be just as important as digital reinvention.

It's impractical to have a presence in every country or major city, of course, but without a regional presence covering your key current and potential growth markets, it's going to become increasingly difficult to stand out in an ever-more crowded marketplace. Such a presence can take many forms, from a formal regional office to a local representative or agency, an empowered Chapter or member company, or AMC-delivered bespoke services. But absolutely critical is to locate this regional presence in a destination with an association-friendly eco-system.

So, what are the components of such an eco-system?

There are some obvious "hygiene factors" that should disqualify cities that don't possess them: great transport and communications infrastructure, to facilitate digital and physical connectivity throughout the target region; economic and political stability (relative to other regional candidates), and legal protection for the status of associations. Opening the Dubai Association Centre and changing local laws to allow associations to register there was a game-changer for any association wanting to establish itself in the high-potential Middle East and South Asian markets: before this change, no city in the region was legally welcoming to associations.

If advocacy for favourable international standards or trade policies is a strategic priority, then Washington DC for North America and Brussels for Europe are no-brainer selections. Not just because of the legislative institutions and decision-makers to be found nearby, but also because of the lobbying, legal and technical advisory companies that are concentrated in these cities, and the breadth of fellow associations, organisations and companies that share the same regulatory concerns – teamwork, consensus positions, and weight of collective impact are critical factors for influencing policy.

For associations that aim to lead the way in their technological, scientific or healthcare fields, it's vital to select a city with top quality research universities and institutes, and ideally a vibrant start-up culture. Young, skilled people gravitate to such cities, providing the association with a skilled workforce, as well as a ready local supply of young members working in local companies and institutions. Where national or local governments are supporting these sectors as top long-term economic development priorities, this creates an environment for high-tech and cutting-edge science associations to thrive and grow. A great example is Singapore, which actively collaborates with such associations to develop programmes and events aimed at young professionals.

## A BIT OF A CHECK-LIST

When drawing up a check-list for potential locations, here are a few other items to look out for:

- + Are there strong AMCs located here (great if you are planning to start off with programme delivery and ad-hoc events, and will move to representation only later, since they have highly flexible service models)?
- + Is there a local government or public/private agency that specialises in the association sector: not just a DMO that bids for international meetings, but one that can advise on local expertise, potential representatives, setting up an office, etc.?
- + Is there already an active association community in the city, with clubs, meetings, social events, advisory services, educational programmes (and of course, a rich pool of association-savvy, experienced talent!).
- + Just how international is this city: are expats welcomed and catered for, is multiculturalism encouraged and celebrated? The strongest international association hubs are inevitably cities that are outward looking, places where fresh ideas and innovations evolve and are exchanged, and not only because of their strong diary of international meetings.

The more of these components are found in a city, the more strongly they interact and reinforce one another, making this association eco-system a complex, living and breathing environment. In such a location, it's easy to find experts and business partners, simple to build audiences and engagement, to recruit staff, learn new ways to work or to re-engineer your business model. It's also the mark of a city where an international association executive feels less alone.

Delivering regional services from multiple hubs is a smart differentiator in a world that has been forced to go totally digital by COVID-19, and where a hundred competitive voices are shouting for attention in every intellectual and business marketplace. Members value the knowledge that a real person is available in their time-zone, that their association is taking the trouble to invest in their part of the world, that their local needs and culture are respected, and that they are part of a real community rather than being a target for a sales drive. Building a presence on the ground need not be an expensive undertaking, and as long as there is a strong association-supportive eco-system available, nor does it need to be difficult to set up and run. But what it does need is the confidence to continue thinking globally!

This piece is part of the exclusive partnership between Boardroom and the Global Association Hubs, which comes as an innovative response to the increasing decentralisation of international associations as they look to develop their activities globally. [www.associationhubs.org](http://www.associationhubs.org)

# Building Resilience Through Collaboration

## Lessons for the Future

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#MEET4IMPACT founder **Geneviève Leclerc** makes the case for the outstanding community outreach work that was done by certain organizations during these unprecedented circumstances... and how associations can benefit from it.



While a mini-revolution occurred in our world in the wake of the sanitary crisis that we are barely starting to understand, some unexpected silver linings have arisen as communities banded together to face the storm. When association events came to a screeching halt around the globe, several actors in the hospitality industry quickly identified opportunities to leverage their unused resources to respond to new needs.

In doing so, many of them have unlocked the huge potential of generating social value for their community. We want to recognize the outstanding community outreach work that was done by these organizations. We also make the prediction that through their efforts, they have experienced a profound shift and set in motion a chain of positive outcomes that will support associations wanting to create positive social impacts in the near future.

### PIVOTING FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

The past few months have been anything but business as usual and, like dominoes, events and gatherings were widely cancelled. However, COVID-19 offered us a glimpse into the potential for catalyzing positive impact that destination management organizations (DMOs) and venues possess, as they heard and responded to critical community needs. For one, many convention bureaus started tracking the impacts of the crisis on local businesses and transformed their web presence into online resource directories - becoming trustworthy go-to sources for the community.

Several convention centres around the world were converted into field hospitals, alternate facility care sites and homeless shelters. Venues leveraged their supplier networks and their procurement and logistics expertise to coordinate the

sourcing, storage and transport of personal protective equipment for health authorities, and organized community food-drives. While for most this was an important deviation from their normal activities, some others had in fact built community service into their organizational culture - the crisis simply activated a huge potential.

### CATALYZING CHANGE THROUGH NEW COLLABORATIONS

If crisis management plans might have appeared overnight during the crisis, they were built on the knowledge that there was a wide web of stakeholders, information, tools and manpower to engage in the response efforts. The key for them was recognizing that cooperation was the foundation for creating shared value that benefited their community, and that resources and assets that lie dormant can

be exploited in innovative ways when an initiative is need-driven.

Looking forward, everyone is starting to realize that outreach activities will never look the same. The way associations enter into partnerships with destinations to host single-site events will evolve, and so will the expectations that association teams will harbor from DMOs. For associations looking at maximizing the value that they deliver to participants and the community that hosts events, considering destinations and venues that have embedded the ability to listen and respond to community needs into their ethos will yield valuable outcomes for their ecosystem.

#### ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE & TAPPING INTO NETWORKS

Partnering with community-focused venues means accessing their knowledge in different ways. They possess critical expertise in crisis management; security planning; sourcing, logistics and distribution. They collect and analyze data and own data analytics systems which far surpass most associations' ability to collect and manage that kind of information. The best of them have tested processes for innovation and experimentation, and are collaborating with the local innovation ecosystem. They are deploying very sophisticated sanitary plans and health management technologies according to strict regulations, and many of them are state-owned and thus accountable to the highest level.

Moreover, the aftermaths of the crisis reveals that they have strengthened a vast network of engaged stakeholders in

their city already involved in providing service to the community. DMOs and venues that pivoted during the crisis built or activated very close collaborations with non-traditional stakeholders such as health authorities and facilities, community and non-profit organizations, citizen groups, academic institutions, other venues and attractions in the city. They built a web of organizations that now know each other, have worked together, and understand the potential of generating shared value through collaboration. They have essentially established a legacy ecosystem, a new "Common", which will be a definite asset for the community they are entrenched in as well as for all organizations wishing to come and invest or meet in the city.

This legacy ecosystem is beneficial for both your association and your partner destinations as you work together to create value for local and international participants and stakeholders. Transforming a formally transactional relationship into a new collaboration model means understanding that together, you are more resilient, learn faster and adapt more quickly to potential challenges. Becoming adept at identifying which destinations can support you in developing a comprehensive legacy narrative will heighten your ability to systematically build impact into your future event strategy and ensure that your local partners are equally engaged in delivering it.

#### RESEARCH UNDERWAY

We're taking it one step further. We anticipate that the transformed relationships that organizations around the business

events industry are forging with other players in their city can in time become factors that generate a maximum of positive outcomes for their urban ecosystems.

MEET4IMPACT is launching a broad-spectrum research project exploring the role that the business events industry can play in the destination's resilience and regeneration strategy through studying some of the industry's pivoting initiatives towards community during this ongoing pandemic. We intend to understand how pre-identified factors may have facilitated the implementation of such initiatives, and how they may be determinants in building resilience. An organizational culture that proactively integrates community-based activities; relationships with community organizations and authorities; tested processes for crisis management as well as for integrating innovation; and a history of delivering purposeful legacies through events are all factors that come into play.

Ultimately, we hope to make the argument that DMOs and venues should develop a more purposeful pathway towards social impact, and that associations will greatly benefit from aligning their vision to destinations reflecting their own values for positive societal impact.

Do you have a story to share that could feature in #MEET4IMPACT's research?

Write to [genevieve@meet4impact.global](mailto:genevieve@meet4impact.global) and participate in building scientific knowledge around the impact of events.



Associations need  
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FEATURE

# Strategies in Uncharted Territories

As the world is shifting, associations are forced to rethink their strategy. The global COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the process: now might be the best time for your organisation to review what lies ahead, despite all the uncertainty the future holds. In these troubled times, our contributors are exploring the ways associations respond to disruption. How, indeed, to manage business continuity, communication and collaboration through change? In moments of existential threat, how do associations defend themselves?

# Drivers of Success in Times of Disruption

## Perspective from a European Association

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For ESAE, **Lucas Boudet**, Director General of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), explains how associations, despite what many people may think, might be in the best place to embrace change and be future ready.

It is commonplace in management textbooks to state that, in the age of disruption, businesses live and die by their ability to adapt. I would like to take a step back from theories of changes and take a stance in the context of European associations. Unlike companies, which can reinvent their business to safeguard their profit-making, associations cannot change their purpose at a flick of a switch. They are bound by their *raison d'être*; it is the cement, the *affectio societatis*, bonding all their members together. Any substantial change to it may jeopardise their sheer existence.

That being said, it does not mean inertia: how to go about as an association leader? What are the specific assets and challenges trade and professional associations have when facing disruption, which can be understood both as a mere bump on the road or as a radical change in the direction of travel? Amidst the crisis, it is hard to decipher what will be short-lived from what will shape the “new normal”. Reflecting on the latter is important but, without any clear-cut answer, it is key to address both long-term and short-term consequences.

### ADDRESSING SHORT-TERM SITUATIONS

Associations need to be properly equipped in terms of financial, IT and

human resources to ensure business continuity and seize opportunities in challenging times.

It is paramount that associations, despite their “non-profit” status, have financial reserves ab initio or build them through yearly surpluses. It is often a harder sale for associations than for companies as members may sometimes consider that funds are better in their own pocket than sitting in the association’s bank account. However, current times may come handy when demonstrating the importance of such a reserve. It is not a nice-to-have but a must in terms of good governance and sustainability.

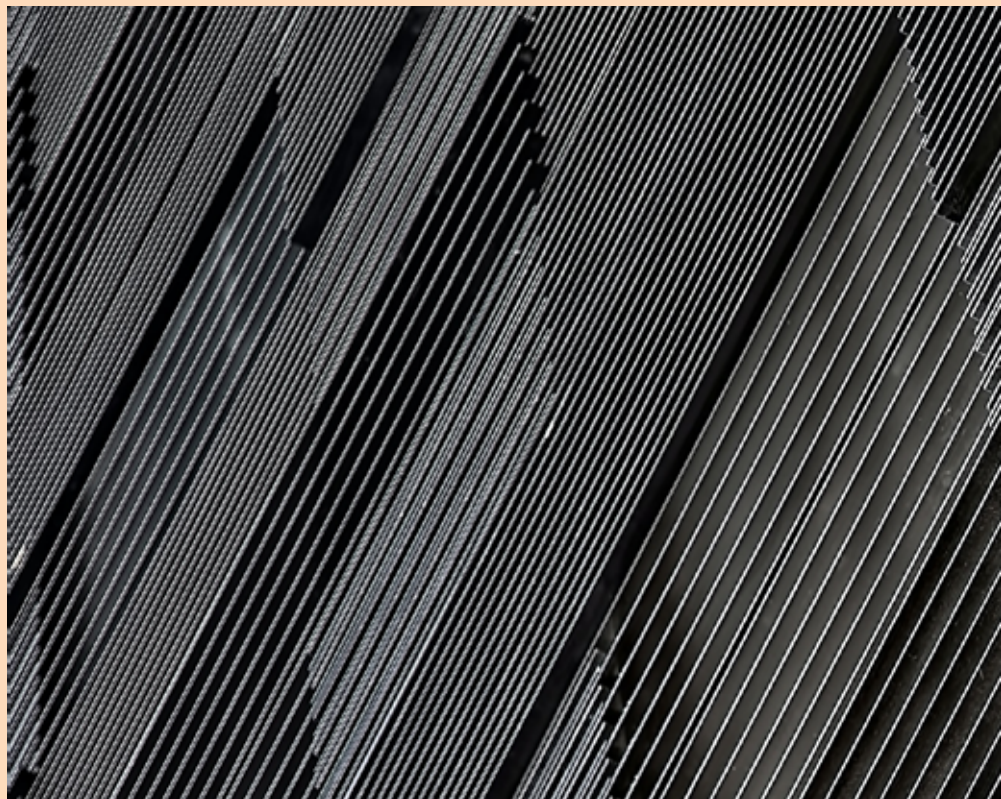


Regarding IT resources, Brussels-based associations are often particularly well placed. Catering for members across Europe, they are very often already prepared to hold video conferences and work remotely when on business travel. In our specific case, our association was proactive: we inserted provisions for holding remote general assemblies and board meetings when reviewing our articles of association to make them compliant with Belgium's new legislation on associations.

The third pillar is human resources, ensuring a dedicated and vibrant team despite the lockdown. First, change is better accepted when its necessity is understood. Given the omnipresence of COVID-19 in the media, it was easy to explain why it was essential to adapt the way we work. We acted as a facilitator providing real-time updates on governmental measures for the non-French or Dutch speaking team members.

Another challenge was to keep the bond within the team despite working remotely. Before the lockdown, together with members of staff, we defined what was the appropriate frequency and means to keep contact. On top of our regular meetings and bilateral exchanges, which we made virtual, we added a weekly informal session to allow anyone to address non work-related issues, share his or her feelings and how he or she is coping with the lockdown. The aim was to replace office small talk; it may seem trivial, but it is key to developing a sense of belonging.

These were the foundations to ensure business continuity, with statutory meetings being held virtually and seminars replaced by enticing webinar series. These were also a basis allowing us to go further. We strove to understand the needs of members in these peculiar times though dedicated



information exchange sessions where members could freely share their thoughts and concerns. COVID-19 put unethical practices in the limelight, which was an opportunity to reaffirm our mission ensuring legal, decent, honest and truthful advertising. We released statements, took part in global webinars and collaborated with authorities working on issues of COVID-19 related online scam.

#### **EMBRACING LONG-TERM CHANGE**

To remain relevant and adapt to longer-term deep-rooted changes you need to properly identify them, have an adequate strategy and the proper mindset.

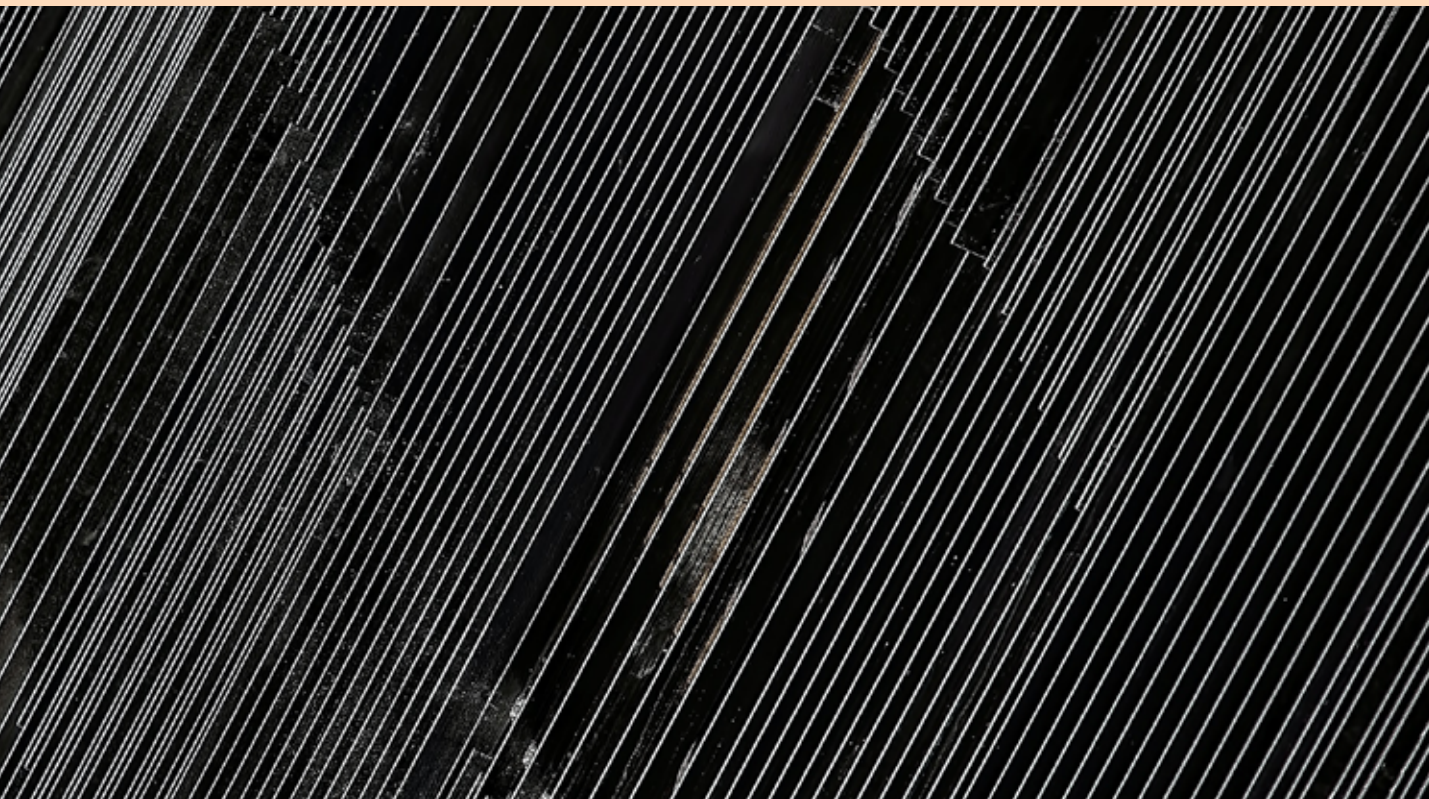
Understanding what is going on is the first key challenge, especially as long-term change is very often insidious.

However, compared to similar sized traditional businesses, associations are in a relatively good position to gather intelligence and identify weak signals of change. They can rely on their extensive network, ranging from policy makers to their membership which features diverse perspectives coming from different countries and industries.

Secondly, how to act on the change is usually addressed via strategy sessions with key stakeholders and the establishment of action plans. This is a key component of well-managed associations.

The third factor is a committed team which understands and embraces change. Again, it is essential that change is justified for it to be understood. We should not change for the sake of changing. Sometimes, new





managers want to overhaul everything based on previous experience or the will to make a difference without carefully assessing the underlying reasons for the change. In that regard, associations have an advantage. A link can be drawn between the need for change and the purpose and values of the association which, very often, are drivers for staff members. In this respect, including members of the team when defining the future is definitely worth considering.

Furthermore, associations cannot change their goal overnight; change is often more related to the way they achieve it, considering the broader context. This prevents situations where one's expertise can be disregarded as no longer relevant in light of the rapid change of orientation. Furthermore, this allows for time and for change to

be presented as a continuity rather than as a rupture. Gradual evolution should be part of the team's culture. Besides hiring people with the proper mindset, it is important to provide all with the opportunity to adapt through relevant training, nudging, and example setting. The transition must be driven with care and respect.

#### ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Due to lack of clarity on the true long-term impact of exceptional circumstances, it is crucial to be both prepared to navigate on troubled waters and change course if needed. Despite being unable to make quick U-turns, associations are relatively well equipped to handle such situations.

Most of the elements presented above may seem obvious to well managed

business associations but one element is never emphasised enough: people, whether the people who make up your team or those who represent your members. It is of uttermost importance to demonstrate an acute sense of care. Being responsible and inclusive will surely help make the change meaningful and ensure that all embrace it. Organisations often cannot drastically change their purpose; people do not fundamentally change, but people can change organisations.

Lucas Boudet is Director General of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), and a Member of the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE). For more information about ESAE, with which Boardoom has an exclusive partnership, visit [www.esae.eu](http://www.esae.eu)

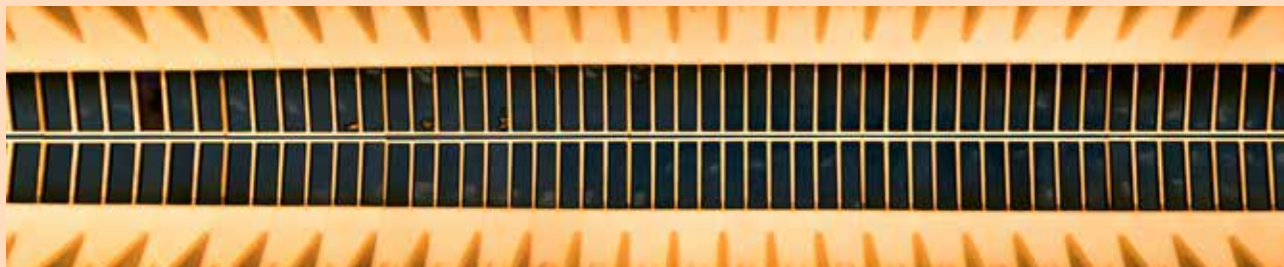


# Overnight Strategic Change Comms & Advocacy in Times of Confusion

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The COVID-19 pandemic has thoroughly shaken up business life and society. Association management is no exception to that. Proven techniques, habits, tools and strategies, which had been valid for years or even decades, had to be reviewed virtually overnight. What was the impact of this unexpected disruption on the way we communicate internally and externally? How to advocate now towards EU and national policy-makers on behalf of membership? And do we expect a negative or positive effect on legislative or regulatory processes?

*Words Gert Meylemans*



While in 2019 there were some first signs of a potential slow-down of the global economy, the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly accelerated the process. Association revenues were already under pressure as member companies were also facing internal budget reviews and upcoming cost cuts. In the past, associations were to some extent able to compensate for the threat of declining membership fees through increasing the revenue stream from non-dues such as events, sponsorship, advertising or market intelligence. As such, these were exactly the channels that were directly impacted from February this year.

The digital “route” is, in fact, the one that associations should further embrace. A digital relationship with members already existed in the past but, driven by COVID-19, it has really taken off and we can truly speak of a “digital transformation”. Associations should reflect on which direction to take, but examples include

eLearning platforms, the provision of market intelligence, content creation and other value-added services. Whether these additional services can be monetised is, of course, another question and will have to be reviewed case by case. If not, it could certainly help with keeping members on board and even strengthen the credibility of the association towards external stakeholders.

## ONLINE TOOLS AND CHANNELS TO THE RESCUE

When the majority of Europe went into lockdown in March and many businesses had to shut down, the impact was immediate. Communications – both internal and external – were no exception to that.

Many association secretariats immediately went into “crisis-mode,” gathering facts and figures on their industries and

setting up surveys in order to assess how their members had been affected by the pandemic. Where relevant, and in order to reduce the severe financial consequences for their members, statements were prepared on the “criticality” of the industry – e.g. for energy and food industries – and why facilities should remain active during the lockdown. These tools and assets were also key when reaching out, for example, to EU policy-makers. In other industries, such as aviation and hospitality, associations reached out for emergency policy measures, financial aid and support in furloughing of workers at their members’ companies.

In many cases, “COVID-19” centres and hubs were published on association websites, assisting members and conveying messages to key external stakeholders. In addition, physical meetings for members, workshops and General Assemblies were immediately impacted, being cancelled or turned into virtual events at best. Associations that had previously invested in a robust IT infrastructure, including video conferencing, chat and remote working functionalities could immediately “hit the ground running.” But the homeworking situation, in combination with an overload of video calls, was sometimes challenging for both technical infrastructure and employees.

It is the same story from an external communications perspective. Offline channels disappeared from the marketing-communications channel mix, with “events” being the biggest victim. Social media, newsletters, webinars, websites, eLearning and other online applications received an immense boost. Associations and their members needed to adapt to this new situation and messaging, tone of voice, length and calls to action had to be adjusted, reflecting these new formats.

The biggest advantage of this switch is that these channels are often more cost-effective and provide valuable analytical insights. As downsides, there is a lack of human interaction and a negative impact on associations’ revenue streams. Some of these changes are expected to remain.

#### ADVOCACY PROS & CONS

Associations with an advocacy remit faced hectic times during the lockdown and this has continued in the ongoing recovery phase. In March, they were under pressure from their members to try to convince policy-makers their businesses should remain operational, or required for example emergency financial support, while they now have to make sure member industries will benefit from the various recovery plans. Moreover, EU and national authorities were shut down and it was not easy to keep communication lines open.

However, policy-makers resumed their activities quickly, switching to online channels.

On the positive side, going virtual allows several meetings on the same day. It is also easier to involve representatives from different departments, political groups or countries in the same virtual meeting. Moreover, senior representatives from the members across Europe or globally were easier to tap into lending their authoritative voice to the association without having to travel and at the same time being available on short notice.

High profile stakeholders from the European Commission, for example, can also be more easily convinced to join a virtual meeting than a face-to-face one. Even big stakeholder meetings can work well and modern video conferencing platforms offer the appropriate tools to ensure engagement and feedback. Because of their format, virtual meetings tend to be shorter and more efficient.

There are, however, also a number of disadvantages. Due to the absence of physical contact, it is more difficult to build and strengthen new personal relationships, gain fast credibility and establish trust with officials involved in the legislative or regulatory process. Finding useful information or getting additional insights during more informal chats, such as which Member of the European Parliament (MEP) will be “rapporteur” on a specific file or which Directorate-General will be in the lead, becomes less obvious. Several examples illustrated how policy-makers were restricted in their use of video platforms or sometimes had to rely on old infrastructure, causing technical issues. Finally, inviting MEPs, for example, to visit member facilities, had to be postponed and a “virtual visit” is often not a suitable option.

Overall and across many industries and professions, COVID-19 has not had a major impact on the policy-making process in terms of deliverables and timelines. As this situation is not expected to change soon, trade associations will remain in demand and will continue to provide value for their members.

#### HYBRID MODEL IS THE WAY FORWARD

As with any disruption, threats and opportunities go hand in hand. COVID-19 is no exception to this rule. This principle also applies to associations and they will have to re-invent themselves to an extent: looking for new membership models, income streams or operational and digital models. The importance of digital will undoubtedly grow further, for both communication and advocacy activities. That will allow associations to test new solutions, check return on investments and offer better value to members.

This article was provided by Jean Christophe Kremer, Associations Director at Kellen, a global association management and communications company born to help build stronger not-for-profit organisations so they can make the greatest impact possible. ([kellencompany.com](http://kellencompany.com))



# How to Respond to Disruption

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For IAPCO, **Alain Pittet**, from Ega worldwide congresses & events, Italy and Switzerland, reflects on how to manage business continuity, communication and collaboration, HR through change.

It seems most of us were completely unprepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. Few of us have ever expected that, in stages, one continent after the other will stand still for months, that we will no longer be allowed to leave our homes for weeks, that factories will fall silent, and that we will see our boss, our work colleagues, customers and members only through video conferencing.

And we do not know – at least at the time of writing this article – when it will end, whether a second wave will come or not.

One very important lesson to be learnt is that we have to be prepared for all possible and impossible future scenarios. Many of us had already prepared and practiced emergency plans for congresses and events for terrorist attacks, fires, strikes, accidents and earthquakes. All of these potential risks usually occur locally, if at all, and detailed process scenarios had been written for them all, and perhaps in some case even insured. At a company level, we certainly did an annual business risk assessment, but

let's face it, who of us ever considered a global pandemic as such a risk?

We therefore certainly need to review our processes and documents and we all need a business continuity plan. It will ensure that we can continue to function with as little disruption as possible when an unexpected situation occurs.

## BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

During my research for this piece, I found an interesting document from ILO- the International Labour Organisation, called *The six-step COVID-19 business continuity plan for SMEs*.

The tool consisted of a risk assessment facility to be able to establish the risk profile of an association or company and the level of vulnerability to COVID-19 in term of its impact on People (your employees), Processes (your operations), Profits (your revenue generation) and Partnerships – the “4Ps”. The tool is mostly targeted at smaller and medium sized manufacturing companies with limited resources, but it can

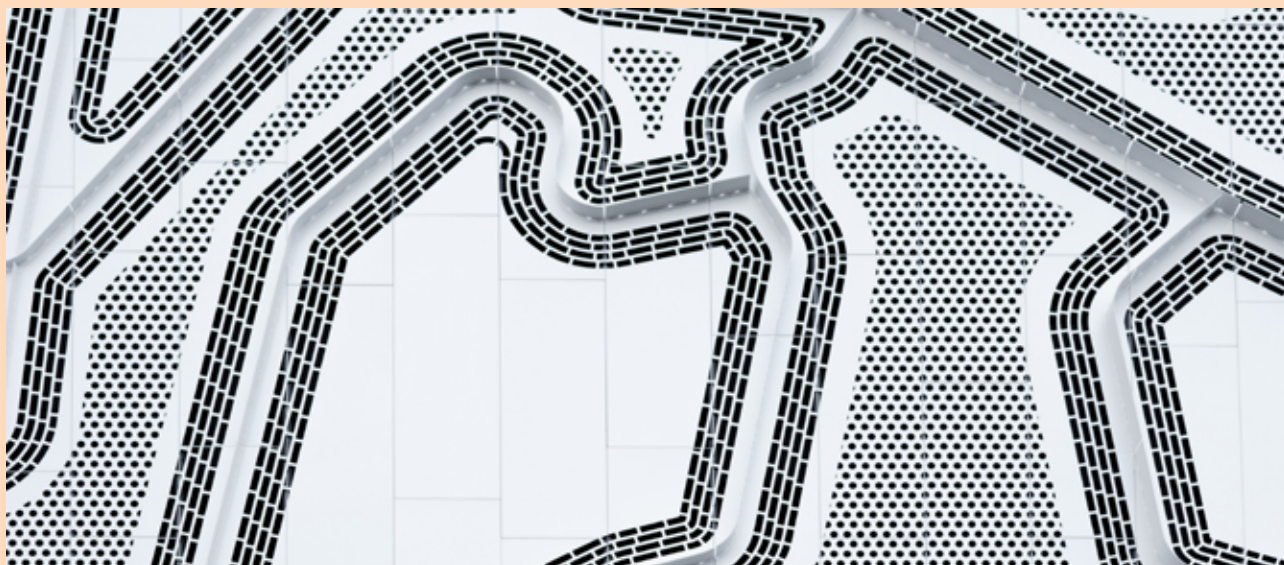
give service companies and associations some good tips. It is structured in two parts:

1. The first part is a risk assessment that can be quickly done. It establishes the level of risk/vulnerability to our enterprises.
2. The second part of the tool is a six-step process – using an illustrative example of a fictitious SME to assist developing a Business Continuity Plan.

Upon reading this document, one can wonder: what does our industry's future look like and what do we have to do to emerge stronger from such a crisis? Which strategy do we have to develop as a PCO or an association? Can we consider that the current crisis as an opportunity?

Beyond that, additional questions arise, especially if one looks within one's own company: How are my income and my liquidity affected? Can I pay my employees and meet my contractual obligations? What new services do I have to provide that, even with financial difficulties, my clients, sponsors, partners





or members will be ready to pay for? What are the main needs of my clients, sponsors, partners and members during such a crisis?

It is with no doubt that such a business continuity strategy will reflect the fact that our services have to become more digital, sustainable and agile. Accordingly, various initiatives in critical areas have to be identified, not only related to our products and services, but also, very importantly, related to our employees.

In a world driven by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambivalence, COVID-19 acts as a digitization accelerator. In companies and associations new competencies and employee profiles are in demand. This needs intensive training in the area of digitization to enable our older, highly qualified employees to cope with a rapidly changing industry and to attract well-trained young innovative specialists.

#### THIS CRISIS IS A TEST

The crisis will also test this generation of executives as never before. Those

who can think clearly and laterally, prioritize rapidly, and have the leadership skills for the management of agile companies and associations are most likely to pass that test. The leadership qualities for the future therefore include flexibility, confidence, courage, enthusiasm and the feeling of being able to change together. People do not have to endure this change, but can help shape it, and it motivates, makes them more aware and releases energy for transformation.

Two other important skills are mindfulness and resilience. Mindfulness is much more than a meditation practice or breathing exercise. Mindfulness is a way of life. It teaches us to ask ourselves: Where do I actually want to go? What have I learned from this experience about myself and what constitutes a good life for me? What do I want to keep in my life? What do I want to change and where do I have influence, where not? Mindfulness also includes treating people with appreciation, patience and compassion and accepting things as they are.

Stress-resistant executives impress with their inner strength, stability and strong resilience. They act decisively in turbulent times and crises and understand how to deal in a more relaxed way with pressure and setbacks. This enables them to save, and use, their energy for solutions.

We do not yet know what the post-pandemic era will be like, but we do know that there will be no going back to normal, COVID-19 is shaping our future. We are all in the process of continuously creating new ideas for unprecedented challenges. Getting people excited about change, empowering them and providing them with valuable support in the transformation process is essential.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Alain Pittet, IAPCO Council member and Executive Director, Ega worldwide congresses & events, Italy and Switzerland, a PCO with over 50 years of experience in the field of international association conferences, institutional and governmental meetings and corporate as well as public events [www.ega.it](http://www.ega.it) IAPCO represents today 140 companies comprised of over 9,900 professionals from 40 countries. [info@iapco.org](mailto:info@iapco.org) \ [www.iapco.org](http://www.iapco.org)



# Beyond 2020

## How Associations Need to Seize Opportunities

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The disruption created by COVID-19 is both profound and widespread. Economies worldwide came to an abrupt standstill in the first quarter of 2020 and are only now on a slow path to recovery. A path, which will certainly lead to a new reality and one that offers associations the opportunity to rethink their entire organization and become future ready.

*Words Sven Bossu & Julianne Jammers*



The world of associations, similar to the corporate one, is very diverse when it comes to innovation and business models. Some embrace continuous improvement and others more conservative when it comes to change. Their common objective, however, is to create value by understanding the needs of members/customers and providing products and services to best meet those needs.

Fundamentally, the needs of association members have not changed. Basically, members come together to grow their knowledge, to grow their businesses and grow the community. COVID-19 has not only affected the coming together part, but will almost certainly change the definition of these core elements.

### SUBJECT TO CHANGE

When looking at the specific case of AIPC – the global association for event venues – all of these are subject to change. Growth in the world of event venues has been primarily volume driven: more events mean more people on site. The hot topic of sustainability has already challenged this paradigm and venues have responded by expanding their value proposal to address the negative impact events can have on the overall ecosystem. Through partnering with event organizers and local or regional stakeholders, sustainability concerns can be effectively addressed and value can be created at different levels of the society.

An increasing number of regions go one step further and seek to dovetail events and local policies by attracting those events which can have a lasting impact on specific areas like, for example, healthcare. The current crisis will continue to accelerate this movement, especially with safety and security measures drastically affecting the capacity of venues and hence the traditional source of revenue for venues.

Similarly, associations will also need to change their business model, and increase reach using virtual channels, for example, by providing education to target groups who cannot travel for budget or security reasons but can pay a limited amount for a virtual course.

Much has been learned over the last months to enhance quality and user experience and allow associations to become less dependant financially on their physical events. Subscription models similar to Netflix whereby membership can offer different levels of access to content are within reach. Virtual and physical will run in parallel, each with specific objectives and target groups.

No doubt, though, physical meetings will remain by far the best way to network, have meaningful discussions and forge plans for the future. Event venues are the best place for doing

so – the space and infrastructure are available, detailed protocols are defined and tested and, most importantly, highly qualified and motivated staff is just waiting to welcome delegates, whether a congress, an exhibition or a trade fair. At this moment, the key challenge is to convince authorities on how and why events need to take place.

### WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER

This is not a challenge that event venues can take on alone. They will need to work closely together with a wide range of stakeholders. First steps were taken in the last months, for example with UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, ICCA, the International Congress and Convention Association, and AIPC working closely to provide joint guidelines for the entire event industry, based on input from members of the three organizations.

Going forward and given the critical importance events have on relaunching economic activities, new partnerships will be necessary between venues, event organizers and local authorities to forge a shared vision on how events can take place in a safe and secure way.

Putting these partnerships in place will also change the way a community is defined and structured. Ecosystems will become more interconnected. Channeling the right content to the right audiences at the right time while ensuring consistency and putting in place the analytical tools to measure the impact of actions taken will become even more important.

The impact of these changes on association communities cannot be underestimated and are affecting the people involved at all levels. Value offered to members is no longer stable but continuously changing which means that business plans must also be subject to continuous review. Teams need to be created which can anticipate if lucky, and react quickly if not, to continuously changing circumstances. Associations that seize the opportunity of these uncertain times to position themselves in this way will become truly future ready, and evolve – from survive to thrive.

This article was contributed by Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC, and Julianne Jammers, Managing Director of the SwissTech Convention Center. AIPC, with which Boardroom has a special partnership, represents a global network of over 190 leading centres in 64 countries with the active involvement of more than 1000 management-level professionals worldwide. [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org)

MEDIA PARTNER





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# The Power of Networks

**With a seemingly unstoppable globalization and the fierce competition from all corners of the planet, France is facing increasingly rapid economic changes, to which it has efficiently adapted. Despite the current situation which nobody could have anticipated, France's many competitiveness clusters are testament to the country's commitment to research and innovation. Meanwhile, the Ambassador Programs that many French destinations set up demonstrate the kind of support there is for association conferences.**

FEATURE REMI DEVE

With 55 innovation clusters or centres of excellence and backed by its strong industrial tradition and internationally renowned expertise, France is a key player in a number of key economic sectors, multiplying its innovation hubs. Life sciences, biotechnology, healthcare, information technology, environment, automotive, aerospace, mechanical industries, logistics, chemicals, energy and clean tech companies, agri-food... the list of sectors in which France is leading the way could go on and on.

As such, France's designated clusters bring together - in one geographical location - major businesses, universities and research institutions that will work hand in hand on cutting-edge research and design projects. Examples are legion, and include, among many others, France-Biotech, the association of French companies in the healthcare sector, Eurasanté, the development agency dedicated to tech transfer and business development in life sciences in Northern France, VEGEPOLYS, the international plant cluster located in the Loire Valley region near Angers, Route des Lasers, a competitive cluster for photonics and laser technology companies based in Bordeaux, or Images et réseaux, which has made Brittany's ICT sector known the world over.

With such dynamism and expertise available, it's only normal France has been attracting European and international associations for the organization of their events. An added value is the presence of a strong network of French Ambassadors who are instrumental in getting conferences to France and in showing the world what the country is made of.

Since 2006, La Cité Nantes Congress Centre, for instance, has forged close links with the sectors of excellence in the region

and developed partnerships with research and teaching institutes. 16 charters have been signed with a single objective: to host any type of professional or scientific meetings in Nantes and La Cité, supported by professors, researchers, practitioners and scientific personalities. The end goal: to contribute to the national and international influence of Nantes' sectors of excellence, and more particularly Nantes' excellence in research.

In the same way, Destination Nancy set up an ambassador program bringing together nearly 300 local project leaders who are leading the way in their field and who support bids the convention bureau endeavors to win to host conferences in the city. Similar programs also exist in Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse...

In this context, it's safe to say most French congress cities have understood the importance of working hand in hand with the associations organizing their event in the country. One last example speaks for itself: Rennes, which has chosen to merge its convention centre, the Couvent des Jacobins, and its Convention Bureau. The objective is simple: to allow professionals interested in the organization of an event in the territory to have one single point of contact to book all the services they need, making their life as easy as possible.

#### More information

[www.meetingfrance.fr](http://www.meetingfrance.fr) \ [gisele.jamin@atout-france.fr](mailto:gisele.jamin@atout-france.fr)

# Nancy Ready to Relaunch

Considered by some to be the most Italian town of Eastern France, Nancy, the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine, has a few assets up its sleeve, especially in these unprecedented circumstances. Known as the cradle of Art Nouveau, classified by UNESCO for its 18<sup>th</sup> century centre, Nancy, in the last few months, has been working hard at promoting itself as a safe destination – which it is, definitely.

All over the world, Nancy is known for its famous Place Stanislas, one of the most beautiful royal squares in Europe, with its famous gilded wrought-iron gates. But beyond the old town and its many museums, Nancy quietly cultivates a *certain art de vivre*, but also a city-wide approach that has been instrumental in getting it ready to operate again, when meetings are allowed to take place, from 1 September on.

DESTINATION NANCY, the destination marketing organization of the city, wears four different hats: they host and organize events at the Prouvé Convention Center and Nancy Exhibition Centre; but they also act as a convention bureau and dedicated tourist office for the whole metropolitan area. As such, they strongly believe in face-to-face meetings, and have, as early as March 2020 when the pandemic was spreading quickly, adopted strict health protocols according to the formats of the events they would host, adapting them to each meeting venue and supporting customers because, after all, each conference is different.

*"We have been able to overcome other crises, such as the terrorist attacks in 2015. The French government supports our sector because economic recovery requires the relaunch, among other activities of course, of the meetings industry. While digital solutions, with the emergence of webinars and such, have made the transition easier, they are insufficient. Meeting physically is essential. A medical congress must allow interactions, sometimes live case studies, real-life networking. Co-construction does not happen without people –only physically can you do that",* argues Béatrice Cuif-Mathieu, General Director of DESTINATION NANCY.

So, it's the whole city that has been working hard at making sure they provide a safe environment for organisers and delegates alike. In France, the Greater East region has been greatly affected by COVID-19, so a 'reassurance' campaign was launched to make sure associations, among others, know they can be welcome in the city in the safest way possible.

This goes hand in hand with the ISO 20121 certification – it offers guidance and best practice to help you manage your event sustainably – that Nancy got in 2018. A pioneer in the sector, Nancy's CSR approach is more and more a differentiator for association planners. The city now aims to become an international green destination like a handful of its French counterparts, working within the confines of a programme launched by France Congrès et Événements, with the support of Green Événements and the G7 General Secretariat (only 9 destinations in France are now engaged in this approach).



PROUVÉ CONVENTION CENTER

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# Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

## Carriers of Human Values



Destinations like Cannes, Marseille, Mandelieu-la-Napoule, Nice and Toulon have strong values at their core that association planners can count on for the organization of events.

Destinations in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region have long understood the need of association planners to rely on them for the organization of their events, whether by facilitating access to local stakeholders or renowned speakers, or by engaging with associations in sustainable approaches, as we wrote in our May edition.

When you think about it, it has everything to do with the people in the South, who have an authentic way of relating to one another with an infectious sociability - open, generous, and united are adjectives that are often used to describe them. These values come from a strong Mediterranean heritage where intercultural and trade exchanges prevail and human values are of paramount importance.

During these unprecedented circumstances, stakeholders in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur have demonstrated core human values, and showed their ability to cope with current challenges while listening to their clients.

Convention centres have proved to be flexible whether by supporting event planners

to reschedule their events, offering deposit deferrals or ensuring financial support to events despite their postponement. In this regard, Marseille Chanot Exhibition and Convention Centre exceptionally made financial efforts to support organizers in booking additional spaces, thus enabling them to comply with social distancing.

All in all, venues have been very responsive to a situation no one could have anticipated. As early as March 2020, most of them made their facilities available to welcome different kinds of activities supporting local communities. A sign of their ability to meet the needs and requirements of associations, they were able to provide staff, materials, and logistics in short time frame and in accordance with sanitary specifications.

Examples of this are legion. The Nice Acropolis staff volunteered to solidarity actions and delivered masks to the home of the most deprived persons, while the centre itself was turned into a "drive-in" for mask distribution to healthcare professionals. Similarly, the Palais des Festivals de Cannes turned into a shelter for homeless people, while the Convention Center Neptune Toulon supported healthcare institutions in organizing blood donations. As for Marseille Chanot Exhibition and Convention Centre,

they made one of their exhibition halls available for four months to host a mask factory.

With the sanitary requirements they have had to fulfill, destinations as well as venues had to innovate and invent new ways of hosting events. The convention centre in Mandelieu-la-Napoule, in this regard, created a social media studio to broadcast e-events, while the Palais des Festivals de Cannes opened its doors to shoot an award ceremony on the scene of its famous Debussy auditorium.

These awe-inspiring commitments have contributed to placing convention centres as true partners and key players in the city, a main condition to best serve the goal of event planners when a new normal is in place.

If at first the pandemic generated frustrations and limitations, it now looks like it also created new opportunities for venues and convention centres to act as central players supporting people and communities in the long run.

### Contact

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The quality of our hotels.  
Our memorable *venues*.

We could conjure up *fabulous* experiences.  
Highlight our swift adaptability.  
Our ease of access.

*We could.*

But we would be doing the same as we have always done.  
Talking about achievements, numbers, square meters.

The world is changing, business events are changing.  
*You are changing.*

It's time to find the *right balance* between excellence and simplicity,  
city and nature, history and innovation,  
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This *balance* has always been our *art de vivre*.  
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# Change & Inclusion in Nice

An active modern capital with a rich cultural and historical heritage, Nice is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest city in France. Nested between the mountains around Baie des Anges and the sea, it has become an expert host of association events of all kinds.

With a beautiful backdrop that has proved a great inspiration for artists, Nice has been enjoying a genuine economic and architectural revolution in recent years. Boasting cutting-edge infrastructure (with Nice Acropolis Congress & Exhibition Center leading the way right in the city centre), from its international airport to its 200 hotels and 10,000 rooms, and the ability to facilitate the planning of events like Autism-Europe's 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress back in September 2019.

Attended by 2,200 people from 80 different countries representing the whole autism spectrum, from parents to professionals, carers and other interested parties, that particular event, which aims to share advances in practical and scientific knowledge about autism to as wide an audience as possible, was a sheer success. *"The 2019 congress' motto was 'A new Dynamic for Change and Inclusion', in keeping with our aspiration that international scientific research on autism should be translated into concrete changes and foster social inclusion for autistic people of all ages and needs,"* explains Zsuzsanna Szilvsy, President of Autism-Europe. *"Our congresses strive to be a place where all interested stakeholders can meet to exchange and reflect on how to shape better lives for autistic people."*

And Nice and Congress Center Nice Acropolis were the perfect places to do that, especially since Autism France, which was instrumental in getting the congress to

the city, is headquartered in the region. In this regard, Nice is a knowledge hub and has been attracting the attention of associations for this specific reason. With internationally recognized healthcare facilities including 9 hospitals, 26 clinics, and seven specialist centres, it's a leading centre of scientific and medical research.

This allowed the organizers of the Congress to provide a hands-on approach to their delegates, in the sense that technical visits could be arranged. *"We visited the Centre for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Levens, near Nice,"* explains one participant. *"The name is FAM for Foyer d'Accueil Mdicalis, and is managed by the organization Association Autisme Apprendre Autrement. We spent two days following different activities and participated in the meetings with director Anne Guennoun and the CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) specialist Olivier Bourgueil. This experience was positive in all aspects."*

After the Congress, a visit to Avencod in Nice was also arranged - they have developed a method to enhance the employability of persons on the autism spectrum in the IT sector. Founded in 2016 with the support from Provence Promotion, Avencod have been working on IT projects for CMA CGM, a French container transportation and shipping company, and Airbus Helicopters. As a direct result of this visit, similar initiatives are now being discussed in other European countries.

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# Nantes, France

## Adapting to a New Reality

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In these trying times, when it's hard – if not impossible – to anticipate what the world will look like in a few months, or even weeks, taking care of your business and your clients is of the utmost importance. In this context, Boardroom caught up with Olivier Le Floch, Head of Sales, Business Development and Partnerships at La Cité Nantes Congress Centre, at the beginning of the summer: Olivier Le Floch expressed his optimism regarding the future of the meetings industry and his long-lasting faith in face-to-face events.

*Words Rémi Dévé*



A sustainable business is one that has minimal negative impact, or potentially a positive effect, on the global or local environment, community, society, or economy. It's also one that can efficiently manoeuvre around a dramatically evolving business landscape and adjust to sudden shifts without breaking the chains that hold an organization together. In short, it's one that can prove it's agile and flexible. When the COVID-19 pandemic jolted the world into the unknown, many had to adapt to a new reality, which is precisely what La Cité Nantes Congress Centre is doing at this very moment.

If it has of course not been the only sector suffering, the tourism industry has been one of the hardest hit with impacts on both travel supply and demand. At La Cité, like pretty much anywhere, events and meetings have had to be either postponed or cancelled in an effort to curb the spread of this pandemic leading to revenue losses. *"If our 2020 turn over look pretty bleak, we have also reasons to be optimistic,"* says Olivier Le Floch. *"As an organization, we are capable and agile enough to bend and curve where needed. And with positive collaboration and the right partnerships – something that has always been deeply embedded into our DNA – we are paving the way for greater impact and recovery."*

Nantes has indeed always proved to be a fertile ground for economic dynamism, powered by a number of centres of excellence, with great potential for future growth and job creation. The competitive clusters are fine examples of this: the EMC2 cluster, dedicated to advanced production technologies, Atlanpole Biotherapies for healthcare/biotechnology, Images & Réseaux for information and telecom technologies, IdforCAR for smart vehicles and mobility, and of course the Brittany Atlantic Ocean Cluster for the maritime economy... just to name a few.

The metropolis is also home to more than 2,000 researchers and 200 laboratories, spread across companies, universities and specialist schools, in a region with a particularly strong academic community, including over 50,000 students. *"It's this pool of very diverse talent that makes us truly unique,"* says Olivier Le Floch. *"And with the reinforcement of the Charter we signed with the Nantes Atlantique Design School and the I-SITE NExt project – a label that aims to accelerate research, training and innovation in Health and the Industry of the Future – we have a strong differentiating card to play."*

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Needless to say that providing a safe environment to delegates is also high on the agenda of La Cité. From September on, health protocols will be put in place for everyone's safety.

The management of public flows, coffee breaks, registration, the organization of locker rooms will be designed so that everyone can experience events at La Cité fully and safely. The auditoriums and breakout rooms will also be re-organized to offer capacities that are adapted to social distancing and the well-being of visitors and delegates alike.

*"The Hospitality Charter that we developed with Nantes Convention Bureau will even be strengthened,"* says Olivier Le Floch. *"It will ensure coordination of all the relevant stakeholders in the event management sector and the deployment of services to offer association delegates the best possible – and safest – experience."*

Additionally, new ways of meeting are being explored. The teams working at La Cité have always feel pressed to audit their organization's sense of innovation and technological capabilities, and it looks like the pandemic has certainly had a positive effect – in the sense that it accelerated the venue's digital transformation. *"I'm confident F2F meetings will never disappear,"* argues Olivier Le Floch. *"We're all human and there's only so much we can exchange and do through a computer screen. But at this stage I believe the future lies in hybrid meetings. And we're busy setting up new digital solutions that, in this context, we'll be able to offer our association clients."*

These new initiatives will certainly go hand in hand with La Cité's commitment to CSR and sustainable development. Driven by a green conscience profoundly embedded in its culture, the venue is getting ready for tomorrow: the organization of eco-responsible events and the reduction of the ecological footprint of events through the support of customers in a virtuous approach are deeply encouraged.

All these elements come together so that association planners can make the most of what La Cité has to offer. But it's a unified, common effort. *"I'm a strong believer in value co-creation,"* concludes Olivier Le Floch. *"It's only by understanding what it is associations need and want to achieve that we can help them organize successful events – whether physical, digital or hybrid. And at La Cité, we have the hardware and the software to do just that."*

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# Balancing Act

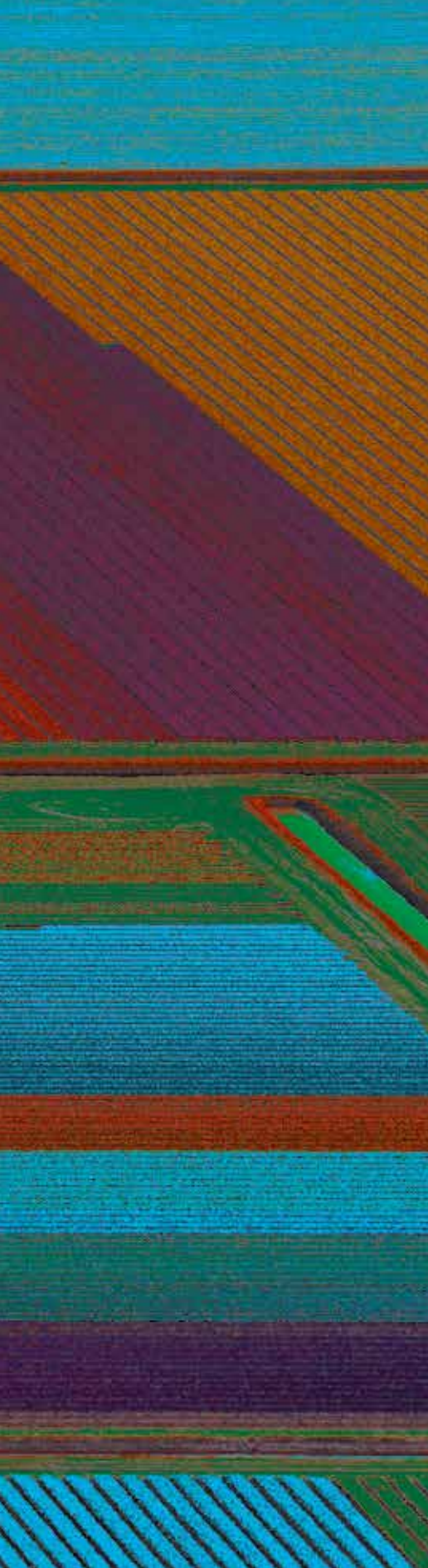
## When—and how—to Take Events Hybrid

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In mid-June, the Netherlands started welcoming international travellers back to its borders. While there are no limitations on the maximum number of attendees at meetings and events, associations are wary of organising anything too soon, without a potential vaccine for COVID-19 in place. While countries like the U.S., India and Australia are still unable to travel, organisers are considering the best strategy for events this fall, and what the future of a face-to-face looks like in a post-pandemic world.

*Words Lane Nieset*





### VIRTUAL APPROACH

In the height of the pandemic, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), based in The Hague, was preparing to host the FIP Regional Conference for the SEAR & Asian Pacific Region in Bali in April, followed by the Pharmaceutical Sciences World Congress (PSWC) 2020 in Montreal in May. The organisation decided to postpone the conference in Bali, and take PSWC 2020 completely virtual in October, since the keynote speakers wouldn't be able to travel to Canada.

FIP also decided to postpone the 80<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Spain's 22<sup>nd</sup> National Pharmaceutical Congress a full year, to September 2021, in order to keep the sessions and programme the same. *"If you ask me, we don't see a hybrid version of events happening this year because of the limitations,"* says Carola van der Hoeff, COO & Congress Director at the International Pharmaceutical Federation and chairperson for the Dutch Pre-Finance and Guarantee Fund for international congresses. *"People aren't so willing to travel, that's my feeling at the moment, and while it may get better in Europe in September, pharmacists and those in the hospital play a key role that it's quite difficult to leave for a conference."*

Van der Hoeff says that it's key associations change their mindset and add a virtual aspect to their offerings. *"It's only positive; we are first to do it now, and the reach for us will be much bigger, since the cost of*

*travel and accommodations can be high, and it's easier for people around the globe to connect virtually,"* she says. *"PCOs are having a difficult time because everything is either postponed or going virtual, and that's a big change for everybody, but I do hear and see that associations who have already decided to go virtual had more attendees than they normally would at a face-to-face event."*

Van der Hoeff is interested in seeing how the turnout will be for FIP's first virtual event in September, which normally attracts around 2,500 delegates to the live version. During the pandemic, FIP started offering between two to four virtual events per week, and it now offers one webinar a month that attracts around 600 to 700 viewers. It's a lot of work, since it's something new for the team and they need to learn a different skill set, but Van der Hoeff says it has a huge impact for the organisation. *"Sponsors want to do something because they can't reach out face-to-face to doctors or health suppliers, so they are eager to work with us, and it goes quite well,"* she says. *"We have to change our attitude and have more online offerings, education and maybe even specific, smaller digital events. Now, because of the pandemic, people are used to doing more online, and people are thinking, 'Should we be travelling by plane?'"*

The majority of associations have membership income, but congresses are quite important for a lot of organisations. But Van der Hoeff, president-elect at AC Forum, a not-for-profit association whose goal is to assist with advancing



ARNHEM STATION

association leadership and management, is finding that people are still hesitant to travel without a vaccine, and many are waiting to see what the situation looks like later this year. *"If there's a vaccine, I'm 100-percent sure face-to-face will come back again; people want to travel, they want to see each other, they want to network,"* she says. *"But even if there is a vaccine, it will take time for it to be distributed, and those in the field say it may take a couple of months before people feel safe to travel freely again."*

### FUNDING THE FUTURE

As conferences are being postponed, associations are offering delegates incentives to attend at a later date by transferring registration fees, assisting with hotel reservations and waiving the change name fee, since positions and delegations may change in the uncertain time ahead.

Over 25 years ago, the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC) set up an incentive fund designed specifically for these cases. The Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF) was designed to entice scientists who were considering hosting a conference in Holland by offering a pre-financing scheme through an interest-free loan of up to €90,000 to cover initial costs, as well as a guarantee scheme capped at €90,000 to assist with any loss on budget due to conference attendance. As Paul Gruijthuijsen, project leader at VGF, puts it: *"We think we offer a unique proposition to the international convention market. As far as we know, no other country offers a similar combination that provides a loan free of charge as well as a financial surety if the conference suffers a loss due to disappointing attendee numbers."*

The initiative has been successful in the past, offering financial backing for events like the 25<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Vexillology (ICV) in Rotterdam in 2013 and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> International



Symposium on the Diabetic Foot in The Hague in 2015 and 2019.

*"The VGF gives many organisers that little bit of extra support required to persuade them to go ahead with the organisation of the conference in the Netherlands,"* testified Nicolette van Erven, managing director of Congress by design, the PCO behind the Eleventh Congress of the European Society for Research in Mathematics Education (CERME11), which was held in 2019 in Utrecht.

Niels Klinkhamer, owner of Klinkhamer Conference Management, the PCO for the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Rett Syndrome Conference in Maastricht (2013), agreed: *"The VGF affords me, the organiser, and my client, more scope during the preparation stage to make the conference an even bigger success."*

Considering the unpredictability swirling around the situation caused by COVID-19, there have not been many new applications for the VGF. *"I love face-to-face events, but this is the new world,"* explained Van der Hoeft, adding that several members of universities already know they can't travel until at least the end of the year, and some scientists are concerned that they may not even be able to travel come January. *"Associations have to look at new business opportunities and rethink their business models."*

#### CASE STUDY: A NEW ALIGNMENT FOR PCOS & ASSOCIATIONS

Since the start of the pandemic, Netherlands-based PCO Congress by design (Cbd) started working remotely and taking meetings virtually over Zoom and Teams. As Operations Director Niels Fundter, explains: *"We needed to shift to an adaptive PCO with clients asking for out-of-the-box advice and new strategies in order to achieve their goals. This is not only for their upcoming events, but also for their long-term future, which includes uncertainties in relation to the pandemic, changing*

*demands of association members and the world economic situation."*

As the strategic partner and supplier for NHG, Dutch General Practitioners, Congress by design was working with NHG's events team and stakeholders on the annual meeting, slated for December 2020. But as its members stood in the frontlines during the first wave of the pandemic watching their patients suffering and offering aid and rehabilitation, they faced another issue: how to proceed with the annual meeting. After consulting with members, NHG found that a face-to-face congress didn't make sense considering the regulations at the time, and members were already working around-the-clock shifts due to COVID-19. An event could result in the potential spread of infections amongst general practitioners. *"We discussed the options to go forward, going fully virtual or try to go for a multi-hub hybrid option, but to continue as planned with a physical conference was no longer an option,"* Fundter explains.

To keep members updated and offer continuous education, as well as attract new members, NHG will launch a series of accredited webinars leading up to the next annual congress in December 2021. In addition to assisting with the organisation of the congress, Cbd is working closely with the team to provide the platform for the webinars. It took three months for this concept to come to fruition and find a platform, marketing and the financial paragraph. Both organisations were open to entering this new territory and the idea has been well received by members who were consulted. As Fundter puts it: *"This is a great example of resilience and close cooperation between PCO and association, a new world demands flexibility and new techniques to be implemented."*

## Holland's new health & safety measures (as of August 2020)

- Face masks required on public transport
- Required capacity per person per event: tradeshow, 10 sqm; meetings and conferences, 5 sqm
- No maximum number of attendees unless event isn't organised (in which case it would be 100 per venue)
- Hotels have adopted cleanliness protocols and measures, and many hotel chains have developed their own cleanliness programme to deal with the reopening situation
- Associations can add special COVID-19 health- and safety-related requirements for venues and hotel in their RFP
- Events must adhere to the 1.5-meter distance rule and adjust the number of attendees per event or meeting room
- Planners advised to incorporate hybrid solutions to avoid overcrowded meetings

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# Seoul's Vision for a Digital Future

As Seoul is preparing for the “New Norm,” a post-COVID future for the meetings industry, where the main keywords are “hygiene” and “safety,” a handful of conferences have already taken the leap into the digital realm. Pioneers like BIO KOREA 2020 took its in-person event fully virtual in the spring, with everything from 3D scanning of products to 360-degree VR for the event, showing how global challenges like a pandemic can lead to innovation and success.

*Words Lane Nieset*

## A WORLD FIRST

In May, BIO KOREA 2020 became the first international conference in Korea to hold five programmes simultaneously. The conference was initially slated to be held at COEX in Downtown Seoul in March, when the pandemic started seriously spreading and many events were cancelled or postponed. Korea was gaining more attention in the medical and biochemistry field, and Deok-cheol Kwon, president of the Korea Health Industry Development Institute (KHIDI), explained that “Korea’s efforts to contain

*the novel coronavirus outbreak grabbed the attention of the foreign countries throughout the world, played a key role in deciding to move BIO KOREA 2020 online,”* according to a release from Seoul Convention Bureau..

The event partnered with 393 firms and featured 90 speakers from around the globe who discussed 23 topics throughout 24 sessions. Through the use of VR videos, participants could take a look inside hospitals and view the manufacturing processes of bio-products,

and 3D scanning programmes and 3D animation videos clips helped give insight and more detail on items being presented.

A few of the stand-out leaders in Seoul’s digital future included MW Networks, a PCO who forecasted the trend and brought meeting technology into its organizational strategy; Event-Us, a start-up company in the meetings industry that assists with hosting webinars; and Salin, a social VR-specialized company that has expanded into large-scaled MICE events. “Before COVID-19, I heard the rate



*of technology being applied to the meetings industry worldwide was around 40 percent,” said Younghak An, CEO at Event-U.S. “It is obvious that this rate went up. In fact, we see more than doubled usage of paid IT solution request for the events utilizing our service since the outbreak.”*

#### DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, e-conferences were starting to grow in popularity, but they were generally viewed as an aid to offline events, and provided limited services (internet broadcasting of the conference, video conferencing, online product exhibits) to attendees who were unable to attend in person. *“I see that the meetings industry will look for ways to advance the digital sector to expand its positive impact to minimize the loss caused by postponement and cancellation of physical events,”* said Seje Lee, COO of Salin. *“It is difficult to predict how long the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will continue in the future, but at this point, e-conference is not used as an auxiliary means for offline events, but as a main means of events.”*

MW Networks, which introduced hologram technology to the events sphere, agrees that the trend in video conferencing is rising, but that comes at a price. How can the industry generate profitability in a digital world when online video conferencing has significantly reduced the budget and items involved in an event?

*“Except for a handful of IT solution-focused companies, the meetings industry is*

*largely based on the various costs incurred during face-to-face on-site meetings and the management fees incurred through the integrated management of those items,”* said MW Networks CEO Min-Wook Seong. *“We believe that COVID-19 has quickly embraced a wide variety of online video conferencing platforms, which broke the psychological resistance to technology use for many. In preparing for the long-term future, organizing a solution that can enhance non-face-to-face meetings and personal experiences in regards as well as strengthening the networks between people all in is a natural attitude for survival as a professional congress organizer in this field.”*

#### TRENDING TECHNOLOGY

Given the current situation, most events can't be held in person, so associations need to consider live-streaming technology to take meetings online. *“We need to focus more on the fact that web-based streaming technologies are evolving faster than general streaming,”* said Younghak at Event-U.S, adding that in spite of removing space and time restrictions, current live streaming methods could create delays sending and receiving signals, which could negatively impact digital events. *“It seems to be very important to transmit with high quality while reducing the delay as much as possible.”*

As a digital city, Seoul offers the type of infrastructure that caters to the digitalization of associations and events. *“I believe that virtual space utilization and hosting of virtual events connected to this infrastructure will be accelerated and explosive synergy through the combination*

*and utilization of vast urban data,”* said Min-Wook at MW Networks. *“Ultimately, I think that spaces and events beyond the imagination of urban utilization combined with digital twins will be possible.”*

On 17-18 September, Seoul Convention Bureau (SCB) will host the annual Asia-Pacific Union of International Associations (UIA), but this year, the event will be held virtually. Attendees will virtually visit landmark sites like the N Seoul Tower, Changdeokgung Palace, Seoul Botanic Garden, Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), and Floating Island Convention, where they can take part in networking activities. In an effort to have the event resemble the live version—which features quite a lot of engagement from delegates—the round table will incorporate technology like 360-degree VR videos at a virtual theater and discussions and live chats via virtual platforms.

*“It is clear that the demand for meeting technology went up due to the influence of the COVID pandemic, which will also accelerate the introduction of new technologies in near future,”* said Seje at Salin. *“For the meetings industry and related IT startups, the key is to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of online events to the potential event planners or organizers. Depending on whether to provide the proof of its usefulness in the second half of 2020 or not will project the prospective of online meetings industry in 2021.”*

#### More information

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# Four questions on the future of meetings in Seoul

**Q+A with Professor Eunjoo Yoon, Department of Convention & Event Management/Director of Institute of Convention & Exhibition Management (ICEM) Hallym University of Graduate Studies**

## **How are e-conferences changing the meeting landscape both in Seoul and around the globe?**

Although accurate statistics have not been released yet, looking at the convention centres in Seoul alone, it is expected that they lost 20 billion KRW worth of business this year. There are many government-sponsored events in Korea that had been postponed or cancelled due to the safety measures released by the central government. Since the beginning of May, professional exhibition organizers (PEOs) have resumed exhibitions, but in the case of conferences, most of are held in a hybrid form with limited face-to-face meetings, or are fully virtual on a digital platform.

## **What are some of the benefits that advanced technology offers for meeting planners, organizers and start-ups?**

As meetings are held in a hybrid or online environment, various meeting technologies have to be applied, and this led the companies with these technologies—such as hologram, beacon, app developers, and video conferencing system companies—to be successful enough to start a new business, even in the unusual situation caused by the outbreak of COVID-19.

Various approaches to online or hybrid events differentiate the competitiveness of different companies. This may present attractive opportunities for new companies, and may also open the gate to entice more participants. More thoughts need to be put into the incorporation of sponsorships into new online events, especially as the number of participants is thanks to limitless environment these platforms have.

## **What technology do you predict will become popular for events going forward in Seoul?**

It is not easy to pick a specific technology because new technologies are constantly appearing. I notice that holograms appear in various forms. The newly introduced method is similar to what was in Star Trek TV dramas, where the projectors are mounted on the ceiling or on the floor. In countries where the situation is mostly under control and a group can hold a face-to-face meeting, we're seeing more interest in hybrid events that are inviting speakers in from overseas through holograms.

In the case of exhibitions, it's impressive to see the real-time interpretation video conferencing system to promote smoother communication. Having the real-time subtitles on the screen is another technology in this field that takes away language barriers during video conference meetings and helps enrich the content for the exhibitions and those attending.

## **Do you find there is a race or acceleration toward adopting new technologies given the current global situation?**

ICCA and IMEX Planet have already presented useful examples to the industry, and several large professional congress organizers in Seoul are expected to be in the final preparations to introduce new platforms to be implemented. It seems the hybrid event continues to be a part of the industry even after the current epidemic ends. Participants have already confirmed that even if they don't spend time and money to participate in the event abroad, they can get similar results through online events. It's hard to think companies will still invest a lot of money on business trips after the situation settles down.

After all, the question will be who is capable of providing the level of realism and who is going to provide a better platform to induce engagement from the participants. The business events market will have to face the big pivot.



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# Leading the Way for Digital Solutions

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The world has been taken by surprise by unexpected factors which have managed to alter mentalities, lifestyles and working norms. Regardless, our industry has quickly come up with the solution; hybrid and virtual events are multiplying by the minute for countries that were ready for the challenge. Capitalising on its already highly advanced tech scene, Norway was hardly caught off guard as new style event venues were made available almost immediately all over the country making it an attractive destination for interested associations.

*Words Vicky Koffa*

A traditionally industrial country focused on energy and fisheries, Norway is experiencing in the last decade an unprecedented boom in its technology sector, especially green technology. A diverse tech mix of hyper-growth scaleups, small creative start-ups and everything in between has taken over much of the national economy's interest. Innovation Norway has newly launched The Explorer, a free matchmaking service for connecting global challenges with green solutions to share with the world. As a consequence, the Nordic country was already up to speed when the new digital form of business events became necessary.

Digital technology was an existing part of everyday life for Norwegians both for conducting business and for public services prior to the pandemic. Excellent broadband connectivity, increasing numbers of ICT experts and augmented integration of digital technology for businesses during the crisis have brought Norway up to the third place of the Digital Economy and Society Index 2020 (DESI) - a European Commission monitoring tool.

## SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL EVENTS

Looking at the facts, there was no reason why one of the world's most important exhibitions on fisheries technologies wouldn't decide to go digital. Normally running biennially in Trondheim, the Nor-Fishing Exhibition gathers exhibitors, experts and politicians and presents the latest technology in the industry. Instead of cancelling, this year's three-day show went online for the first time, taking place between 18 and 20 August, and was awarded with great success by participants and organisers both.

Kristian Digre, CEO of the Nor-Fishing Foundation, said: *"This year marks our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and it was important as ever to produce an event of high educational and market value. This virtual version offered us the opportunity to invite keynote speakers with excessive knowledge to share. Another benefit was that both exhibitors and visitors got to experience all the elements of the exhibition. During the physical exhibition, parts of the program run in parallel, and then one must choose what to participate in. Nor-Fishing Digital was like a chronological TV program. In addition, all elements are available on the website after the event."*



© ARVID KNUSEN

The event is organised by the Norwegian digital event organisers Tappin, offering the participating exhibitors space for presenting their product as well as one-on-one meeting time with potential clients. With attendees reaching as high as 30,000 and business blooming, Digre sees this model of event as the way to go also post-crisis. *“Trondheim is in the centre of our industry, with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and research organisation SINTEF excelling in innovation. Combining this with a hybrid event where costs are reduced, attendees are increased, and exhibitors are numerous makes for the perfect solution for us for years to come.”*

### ABUNDANCE OF DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Options for virtual and hybrid meetings are not in shortage in Norway. New venues pop up at a regular pace with high tech material able to adjust to all types of events and attract even more delegates than before.

Taking a closer look, the Oslofjord Convention Center (pictured), located 1.5 hours outside Oslo, has risen to the challenge with its Oslofjord Hybrid Event studio. A 360-degree TV studio with a 120 m<sup>2</sup> LED screen offers the possibility to conduct interactive events online broadcasting simultaneously from several locations at Oslofjord. Participants join the event via an app where they can follow the broadcast live. The app allows viewers to participate by submitting questions, sharing photos and videos, and taking part in votes. There are also two-way communication solutions, linking those present in the studio with virtual attendees.

The easily adjustable studio was a perfect fit for Brunstad Christian Church's Easter Conference which attracted over 10,000 online users. The conference ran without a glitch exceeding previous on-site conferences in numbers of attendees while lowering the

cost for organisers. *“We at Oslofjord Convention Center stand together united during these challenging times. We really hope that safe live events will return soon, but until then, we do our best in delivering high-end hybrid events to our clients,”* says Johannes Lauchenauer, International Sales Director at Oslofjord Convention Center.

Norges Varemesse (Norway Convention Center), situated between the Oslo airport and the city centre, has also launched its new concept for doing business, the Nova Studios. In an effort to offer a high-end product leaving attendees fully satisfied, this solution can offer organisers to have 200 people in the crowd (the limit of the Norwegian Government restrictions), with all necessary safety measures, and an endless amount of people on stream.

The streaming of the Nova Studios project is more comparable to a TV-production. In addition to a six-camera production, AV, picture, sound and lights, there is professional staff on-site for hire. This makes sure the production will be of very high quality and attendees online will have a good experience.

*“Being 200 people in the crowd also creates another dimension than if the event would just be on stream. Most of us have experienced how the absence of people can make the experience of an event feel that something is missing. Clearly this is something we see high demand of, and ever since we launched, we have had organisers reaching out with requests. We have already 11 production days confirmed and many more on request,”* says Emil Johansson, Marketing Manager at Norges Varemesse.

#### More information

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# Reform, Not Simply Recover

As the world's brightest minds are spinning around concepts like recovery, disruption and regeneration, it seems that one thing is evident: change is imminent and necessary. The meetings industry, strongly as it has been affected by the pandemic, is called to step up and create a more sustainable way of delivering valuable events. Scotland shines the light on positive disruption by means of a wellbeing economy adapted to the social issues of today through leveraging the real impact of business events.

*Words Vicky Koffa*

Scotland has big ideas on how to evolve its meetings industry. A strong realisation that our society is now, more than ever, ready to accept deep transformation on crucial matters like climate change, equal rights, healthcare and education flows through all activities organised in the country, business meetings included. *"We are in the face of our industry changing forever and it's up to us to change it positively and create a better tomorrow for society,"* says Rory Archibald, Business Development Manager for VisitScotland.

Promoting the resurfaced concept of a wellbeing economy, an economy that prioritizes human and planetary wellbeing over the financial profit of the few, Scotland is placing a certain bet on the ability of association conferences to play a crucial role to this end. In the face of the disruption COVID-19 has brought, the time is ripe for measuring success of an event on community engagement, long-lasting legacy and socially aware destinations.

Associations that choose Scotland for any type and size of meeting are met with an

organised plan, a full-scale campaign even, with a list of concrete actions aimed at creating awareness and producing true wellbeing benefits. Archibald argues that *"GDP should not necessarily be our primary source of measurement within a destination in the current scheme of things. An association, which interacts with the community where the event is taking place, seems a lot more relevant and creates legacy. But legacy is more than a one-off benefit. Legacy should last years."*

## LEGACY BENEFITS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

These beliefs were put to the test in Glasgow last year, when a series of major medical conferences with important public health messages were hosted by the city, inspiring Glasgow Convention Bureau to create the People Make Glasgow Healthier campaign. *"People Make Glasgow Healthier was a platform for medical associations to really engage with the people of Glasgow through a varied range of activities. It was about bringing positive and informed health messages to our citizens and encouraging local interactions that extended beyond the conference itself, to deliver a genuine and lasting legacy from hosting these meetings,"* says Aileen Crawford, Head of Conventions at Glasgow Convention Bureau.

Economic benefit apart, the success of the campaign was measured through community engagement. *"We measured the number of local people who were engaged in the public health events and the numbers that were encouraged to do something different with their own health, from this conference inspired intervention,"* continues Crawford. In total, the campaign delivered seven public health events, linked to five major medical meetings reaching over 1,500 local people; new organ donors, CPR training and liver testing were part of the impact the campaign had on the public.

One year later, the city is seen as a leader in the field, able to attract senior academic and student talent to live, study and work

in the destination. Its academic profile is raised positively impacting the global reach of the city's University standing. *"The University of Glasgow's School of Medicine, Veterinary & Life Sciences regularly ranks first or second in the UK. This symbiotic relationship with conferences held in the city and research excellence is not a coincidence,"* explains Crawford.

Such initiatives are what Scotland is all about; creating a strong knowledge economy and innovative industry sectors which contribute to the well-being of communities, which in turn attract research-led conferences. Crawford goes further saying: *"Sustainability and legacy programs delivered by conferences can also help reduce social exclusion and deliver benefits to multiple community stakeholders, including disadvantaged groups through employment opportunities in the tourism and events sector and access to quality healthcare and education."*

## WELLBEING ECONOMY ALLIANCE

Scotland is now actively trying to turn the tide worldwide. It has created the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll), a leading global collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements and individuals working together to transform the economic system into one that delivers human and ecological wellbeing. In order to transform societies, importance is not given to returning to the status quo but to building a system

that delivers social justice on a healthy planet.

The country is also a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo) - together with New Zealand, Iceland and Wales - a collaboration of national and regional governments promoting sharing of expertise and transferrable policy practices. *"Our partnership sends a signal to local communities that there is a growing recognition that the economy can only be considered successful if it delivers human and ecological wellbeing. Delivering that requires major system change - so partnerships such as WEGo are more necessary than ever,"* says Dr. Katherine Trebeck, Advocacy and Influencing Lead at WEAll.

According to her, association conferences play a key part in building a wellbeing economy. *"It has been said that the 'illiterate of the future are people who can't learn and unlearn' - to the extent that association conferences enable people to see things differently, to learn from each other, and to work with each other on the challenges facing people and planet, and to the extent that they are mindful of their environmental impact."*

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# Teamwork for Climate Change Discussions Steers Recovery

Our planet has undergone great challenges, my reference going beyond the virus pandemic, extending to environmental and financial crisis. On the plus side, this wake-up call has led countries to the realisation that action for recovery on all levels is crucial and needs to happen now. The city of Glasgow and its premium meetings facility, the Scottish Event Campus (SEC), are promoting this recovery by attracting attention to climate change and its importance during this testing phase of healing.

*Words Vicky Koffa*



The Scottish Event Campus and Glasgow are setting the stage for the climate change discussion as the UK Government, upon winning the bid, selected the SEC as the host location for the UN 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties - known as COP26. Postponed to 1-12 November 2021 due to COVID-19, the conference is expected to attract over 30,000 delegates, including large numbers of world leaders. Both the UK and Italian Governments bid to host COP26; the main Summit will be held in the UK and the youth and preparatory events in Italy.

The discussion will of course revolve around producing a response to the climate change emergency through intensifying the need to curb emissions and accelerating the transformation of the world's economies to invest in climate resilience. The choice of Glasgow as host makes total sense considering the city's proven efficacy for organising large events and its commitment to protecting the environment - it ranks 4th in the world, and highest in the UK, in the Global Destination Sustainability Index.

What really stood out in attracting the event was SEC's close collaboration with

the city's main delivery partners. *"The SEC has strong relationships with organisations such as Glasgow Convention Bureau, Glasgow City Council and the multi-agency stakeholder community involved in delivering an event of this scale and complexity of COP26. They regularly work together. Glasgow is a mid-sized city with large scale event capability making the connections between the key organisations seamless. Collaboration is key to the success of the SEC in Glasgow,"* says Kathleen Warden, Director of Conference Sales at SEC.



## LEADING UP TO THE EVENT

Both the venue and the city are getting ready for COP26 and are supporting each other in contributing to Glasgow's goal to become a carbon neutral city by 2030. The campus is reviewing its energy strategy for the future and has already recruited an Environment Manager to create and implement initiatives across the premises to reduce its footprint. The venue also promotes sustainable travel, including free delegate bike hire, walking routes and a train station on site. In the same light, special focus has been placed on food and waste management, creating a sustainable catering offering for COP26 with its F&B partner – SEC Food.

The SEC has also supported the city in hosting the relaunch of Sustainable Glasgow, an ambitious project to improve quality of life in the city, boosting the economy and protecting the environment. George Gillespie, SEC board member and Executive Director of Neighbourhoods & Sustainability with Glasgow City Council, confirms that *"our relationship with the SEC has brought great results for the city. Projects such as Sustainable Glasgow are used as a vehicle to help the city's international profile and at the same time attract major events, which are in turn an important economic driver. The unique bond between the two parties is a tool used to benefit everyone."*

COP26 is expected to leave a lasting legacy for the city of Glasgow, and the world by extension. The SEC has proven to be the right place to create a platform to do just that; facilitate connections among Glasgow's leading organisations. *"The close collaboration between city partners*



*ensures that the impact of events can be felt right across the city. We all know that climate change is now at a critical point and COP will be the driving force in creating positive change to the environment and sustainability in our sector. COP is the perfect example of how conferences and meetings drive societal, economic and environmental change,"* says Kathleen Warden.

## GET READY GLASGOW

The synergy between the City Council and the SEC has also led to the 'Get Ready Glasgow' campaign, an online informative platform to prepare and include the citizens for the upcoming major event. Gillespie explains: *"Get Ready Glasgow is a tool that the City has developed to help communicate with key stakeholders across the region in the lead up to major events – the next one being COP26. It allows a wider audience to get involved in the event through fringe talks, exhibitions and initiatives, whilst keeping Glasgow open and operational for day-to-day life."*

Part of the city's preparation includes the £115m Avenues Programme, which is aimed at creating a cleaner, greener city centre with the promotion of active travel and prioritisation of pedestrians and cyclists.

Citizens can be updated and involved every step of the way and that ensures

a lasting legacy. Gillespie continues: *"The Avenues project will transform Glasgow for those who live, work and visit here. It will see our centre streets redesigned to increase connectivity, introduce sustainable infrastructure with streetscaping and biodiversity enhancements and improve the way public transport is accommodated."*

*"This is an ambitious large-scale project and investment that will help Glasgow and Scotland reach their emissions goals. It will enhance the city experience for conference delegates, tourists, residents and students for many, many years to come. It will also strengthen Glasgow's position as a leading destination for business tourism and highlight its capability to host large scale events."*

COP26 is a catalyst for the city of Glasgow coming together to tackle climate change – its impacts will be felt much further than the SEC. Initiatives such as Get Ready Glasgow and The Avenues Programme running simultaneously will help to positively change attitudes through increased awareness and physical improvements to the city, and will lead to reduced emissions and a pro-active, positive approach to cleaner, greener city life.

### Contact

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# Fighting the Good Fight Through Honesty & Cooperation

There is no looking back for Taiwan. Gone are the days that the island was focused on virus-surviving strategies and struggling to keep the meetings scene alive. The way forward seems bright and promising, with the hosting of hybrid exhibitions and meetings as well as a new epidemic prevention experience sharing platform set to bring the country in the limelight on the world stage once more.

*Words Vicky Koffa*

Throughout this challenging period, Taiwan has been in the centre of discussions as a role model in the fight against the global pandemic for practically every country in the world. Preparation in advance for COVID-19 and a patient-friendly transparent national health insurance system combined with the application of AI, Big Data and a skilful local workforce have rapidly taken the country out of the crisis and into the next phase—one ready to safely accept visitors and use its advanced tech skills to host new varieties of events.

## A TURNING POINT IN THE MEETINGS SCENE

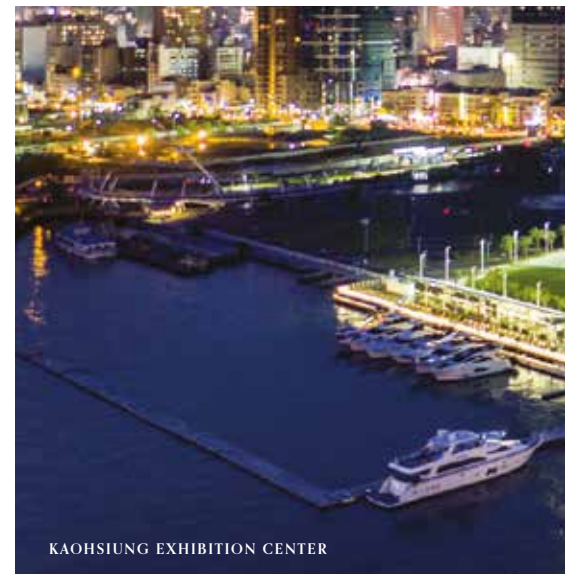
This and Taiwan's role as a leading Asian biomedical industry hub are the reasons why there was never a doubt as to where the second edition of the BIO Asia-Taiwan International Conference and Exhibition would be held. Jointly organised by both the global Biotechnology Innovation Organisation (BIO) and the Taiwan Bio Industry Organisation (Taiwan BIO), this year's event was a unique blend of online and live gatherings.

BIO Asia-Taiwan 2020 Online + Live, held in Taipei in July, brought together biotechnology and pharmaceutical executives and investors from North America, Europe and Asia to meet and explore business opportunities with Taiwan's emerging biotech sector. Under the theme 'Finding Cures in the Crisis' and through rich programming that included online company presentations from Asia and around the world, BIO One-on-One Partnering™ meetings, online seminars and workshops, and an online exhibition, the five-day major event was the first and biggest in Asia since the beginning of the pandemic.

*"BIO Asia-Taiwan 2020 Conference & Exhibition was the first large scale biotechnology exhibition to be held anywhere in the world since the onset of the pandemic. This year's event featured a unique blend of online and live gatherings. It is estimated that online conference views reached 5,000 views. In addition, having the meetings online also helped to remove the burden of travel and encourage wider global participation. For example, the one-on-one partnering meetings were very successful. There were*

*6,000 partnering requests this year,"* stated the Taiwan Bio Industry Organisation.

With no geographical limits, all scheduled meetings were successfully held during the 2020 event via the renowned BIO One-on-One Partnering™ platform, showcasing Taiwan's growing bio sectors.



KAOSHIUNG EXHIBITION CENTER

such as biotech, pharmaceutical, medical devices, precision medicine advances, as well as AI applications, ICT and IoT technologies, and new healthcare/medical investment opportunities.

### SHARING IS CARING

No matter the successful stories, Taiwan has not put the pandemic to rest just yet. TAITRA, Taiwan's foremost non-profit trade promoting organisation, has been responsible for the recent launch of a new digital tool meant to promote innovation and development through close and honest collaboration among world leaders. Their website, Taiwan Global Anti-COVID-19 Pavilion, is the latest effort to share Taiwan's experience and expertise with the world, enabling both public and private sectors to acquire relevant information and services from Taiwan.

The thoughtfully progressive platform invites interested parties to learn about Taiwan's best practices and research via videos of webinars, conferences and panels, all divided into three categories: Public Health, Smart Healthcare and Disease Control. The Taiwan Global Anti-COVID-19 Pavilion website also serves as a match making platform and information outlet. It functions as a source of reference for the business community when planning international travel, covering up-to-date travel restriction and quarantine regulations from 177 economies.

More into detail, the Industries section of the Pavilion website guides viewers to a selection of quality anti-epidemic products and direct contact with over 2,000 companies and relevant suppliers through the 'Taiwan Anti-Epidemic Solutions Ecosystem'. In the Quality Anti-Epidemic Products sub-section, viewers can track their desired product with a

diagram that leads to various categories, such as Treatment, Protection, Detection and more. Services provided by 20 leading medical institutions can be explored in the Medical Services sub-section.

### WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

The meetings world has taken note of Taiwan's ceaseless efforts to protect its citizens and its visitors and help rebound the country's—and the world's—economy. A safe environment and a developed tech scene have cemented the International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) decision to hold their first-ever hybrid conference in Kaohsiung this coming fall. Taiwan will deservedly be in the centre of attention once more as global delegates will get to reap—whether on site or online—the fruits of the country's hard work over the last months and even before.

Registration is now live for the 59<sup>th</sup> ICCA Congress, an event that “will demonstrate how global events can be successfully planned and executed during these times,” as James Rees, ICCA President, explains. The program intends to provide top-quality content in all of its versions: on-site in Taiwan, live streaming, and regional hub-events as well as relevant localised content in ICCA's global regions. The association world seems to be ready to get back to business, starting with Taiwan as its first stop.

More information  
[www.meettaiwan.com](http://www.meettaiwan.com)

Organised by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA  
Taiwan External Trade Development Council  
Ad. by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA





# Future-Proofing Technology

Lane Nieset explores the ways Canada's innovative developments in artificial intelligence, FinTech and cyber security are shaping the future of the technology field.



Canada's technology industry generates \$181 billion in revenue—earning it a place as one of the North American country's top priority economic sectors. Canada has long been a breeding ground for innovation, from when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone to more modern achievements in AI and robotics. Technology acts as a driver to nearly all of the country's other sectors, and now with the world taking a digital turn due to COVID-19, Canada is helping to innovate the industry on a global level.

In 2017, Google's London-based AI research division set up its first international research lab in Edmonton in partnership with the University of Alberta, which, along with the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute (Amii), has helped Edmonton emerge as a core member of the Pan-Canadian AI Strategy. In Toronto, meanwhile, BlueDot uses human and artificial intelligence to build solutions to track and anticipate infectious diseases, including Zika in South Florida and the pattern of COVID-19's viral spread as early as Dec. 31, 2019.

Over in Quebec City, the capital of the province, there's Coveo, an AI-powered platform that's aiding cloud-first businesses to future-proof by using analytics to identify the gaps between user expectations and digital experiences. As Louis Têtu, chairman and CEO of Coveo, puts it: *"Coveo is a Québec technology flagship with international visibility that we can be proud of. The Québec City area's bubbling technology scene and its highly skilled workforce provide an undeniable advantage for our growth."*

Montreal is another city in Quebec where a number of labs, research centres and companies have chosen to set up shop, including SCALE AI, Canada's AI supply chain supercluster, and the International Centre of Expertise in Montréal for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (ICEMAI), one of two centres of expertise of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI). You'll also find Google Montréal's Brain AI research lab, as well as the Microsoft Research Montréal lab, which teaches machines to read, think and communicate like humans.

It's facilities and specialists like these that draw global, tech-focused organizations and events to Canada, including Montreal's world-leading AI summit for the Americas, World Summit AI Americas, which brings together the major international influencers in AI across business, science and tech for two days of innovation and discussion on AI policy, ethics and regulation, applied solutions for enterprise, and hands-on workshops. In 2021, the event is slated to bring between 2,000 and 5,000 delegates to the city. Next summer, Montreal will also host the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence from 25-30 July.

## FOCUS ON FINTECH

As the second-largest financial centre in North America—and one of the continent's most innovative tech hubs—the Toronto region has emerged as the epicentre for Canada's FinTech industry, which is fuelled by the progress made in AI. The region boasts over 140 start-ups and accounts for half of the country's

60,000 FinTech employees. It's also home to the IBM Innovation Space, as well as the IBM Blockchain Global Data Centre, which utilizes IBMZ, a new system designed to encrypt large volumes of data. In spring 2021, Toronto will be the host of FinTech Connect, North America's premier FinTech expo. *"The city has emerged as one of the world's leaders in Fintech, giving us a competitive advantage,"* says Tara Gordon, VP of Sales & Service at Business Events Toronto. *"Because of this, Toronto is an ideal destination where meetings can capitalize on its extensive talent, including the businesses and leaders that ensure events are successful."*

Québec City, the "Insurance Capital" of Canada—named as such since it's the country's second-largest insurance industry hub—also supports a number of research institutions that are paving the way forward for FinTech. Two of the big ones: FintechLAB, a think tank for experts and professionals to reflect upon the political, economic, technological, legal and social impact of Fintech, and Blockchain Hub Quebec, a non-profit organization that promotes Blockchain technology in Quebec.

## DIGITAL DRIVE

The pandemic forced many businesses to advance their digital strategies in terms of technologies like machine learning for automation. As Per Nyberg, Stradigi AI's Chief Commercial Officer, explains: *"Most companies have spent the past number of years becoming more digitally prepared, so a lot of them are sitting on a wealth of data. Many had not gotten to the point where they could broadly take advantage of the data they had been collecting—that was always the next step."*

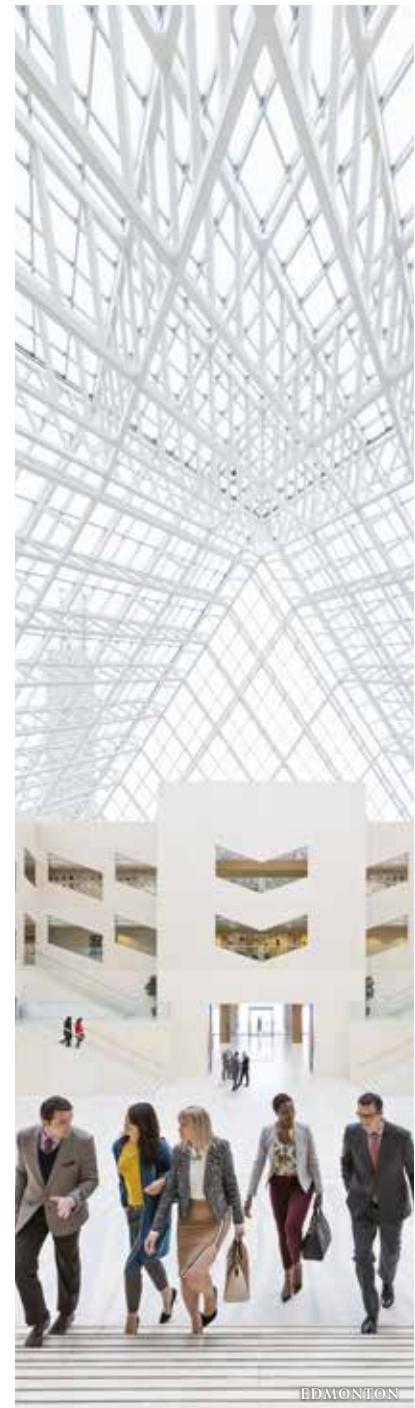
The Montreal-based AI SaaS platform company has clients around the globe, so the effects of COVID enforcing remote

working impacted them less, since their delivery mechanism is the cloud. Some companies are booming in terms of growth given the current circumstances, and *"they're trying to understand and maximize the increased demand they're seeing by improving customer behaviour modelling and segmentation and understanding intent,"* Nyberg explains. *"While there are adversely affected segments where many projects have been put on pause, the overall the trend is that businesses are accelerating their automation and machine learning plans, and there's a need from businesses for AI being easier to use. Given the pressure that every business is under, we see that people are looking to gain insights that are going to make a tangible difference in the here and now."*

Whereas AI was once looked at primarily for some core company-wide competencies, now Nyberg is seeing companies considering AI throughout the entire organization, from the marketing department to sales and supply chain. *"Businesses are looking for platforms and tools to take advantage of AI in the short term. They're looking for information that will help them today,"* he says. *"And they're looking at the diversification of AI and how they can expand or scale it across every business unit and function in the company."*

With this sector growing at lightning speed, and many of the prominent figures and facilities located throughout Canada, associations can build—and contribute—on this expertise through meetings and networking sessions, experiencing first-hand how technology like AI can boost their business.

To learn more on how Canada's AI expertise can boost your event, agenda, content and delegate count, visit [www.businesseventscanada.ca](http://www.businesseventscanada.ca) or email [businessesvents@destinationcanada.com](mailto:businessesvents@destinationcanada.com).



# Looking to the Future in Bern

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Maybe lesser known that some of its international big sisters, Bern is Switzerland's capital city. Set in the heart of the country, with easy access by train, road or air, it boasts a manageable size that has, over the years, given it a competitive advantage. Combining a medieval city centre together with some visionary architecture, Bern has also been attracting the attention of European and international associations for some time.

**Words Remi Deve**

The canton of Bern might well be the perfect example of what Switzerland offers at its best: a UNESCO World Heritage capital city with all year cultural atmosphere, a combination of turquoise blue water lakes and the most impressive peaks of the Alps. Meanwhile, the city of Bern itself doesn't have to blush with the superlatives it has been qualified with over the years: most beautiful flower city of Europe, birthplace of Einstein's relativity theory, cradle of Toblerone chocolate and home to the largest Paul Klee collection in the world are all features that visitors can enjoy.

## **STRONG RESEARCH**

With its large, modern convention centres and wide variety of accommodation options, Bern is also highly suitable for large association events. Professor and Chairman at the Department of Oral Surgery at the University of Bern, Professor Daniel Buser explains that it's the city's central location that is its stronger asset.

*"Bern is centrally located in Switzerland at the language border, which is a big advantage for congresses, since Bern is not only attractive for German-speaking, but also for French-speaking participants," he says. "Besides, Bern offers two first-class congress venues for large*

*congresses. The best known is the Kursaal Bern, which boasts state-of-the-art audiovisual facilities, including a four-star hotel, and everything at walking distance or easy accessible with free public transportation. There is also Kursaal Bern, which can host congresses of up to 1,400 participants, and BernExpo, ten minutes away from the old city, for events of up to 3,000 participants, which has a very large exhibition area."*

In that context, the University of Bern is one of the main drivers of the congress business in the city and offers top quality across the board. Enjoying special recognition in cutting-edge disciplines, it is reputed for the excellent quality of its teaching and offers a delightful setting, with a campus intimately linked to the social, economic and political life of the city - the capital of Switzerland. With more than 14,000 students, the University of Bern hosts two centres of competence in "climate science", working on governance and conflict, health and sustainability. Research is also strong in computer science, space research and of course the humanities.

Professor Buser has, in fact, been instrumental in getting some high-profile events to the city. He even helped establish a PCO office, which grew considerably over the years and was renamed Bern Congress Organiser (BCO) in January. *"I have*



*probably organized the greatest number of national and international congresses in Bern since 1999,” Buser explains. “That’s about 20 congresses. The largest one took place in 2004 with 1,500 participants. Afterwards, the Kursaal Bern underwent a huge renovation based on my recommendation.”*

## BIG CHANGE

The big change, lately, has of course been regarding the format of events. *“Every year, we organize at least one major congress or symposium with 600 to 1,000 participants, all in the Kursaal Bern,”* Professor Buser continues. *“The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to review the way we were doing business. So, in November, we will host our first-ever hybrid event – in collaboration with congress provider Habegger – for reasons which you might easily guess. To me, hybrid congresses are clearly the future, with local participants on site, and virtual participants from all over the world through the internet. This kind of setup offers new opportunities for Bern as a congress city, and Kursaal Bern is perfectly suited to help us grab those opportunities.”*

As Professor Buser acknowledges, conferences are vital for Bern in the bridging of our globe through science, technology and

research, where experts from many countries come together – virtually or physically – in a relaxed setting to discuss the very latest advances and plan for future collaborations to solve pressing problems that are common to us all. Bern is beautiful, safe city and holding conferences here enables the exchange of ideas in a relaxed, comfortable setting.

*“Congresses like the ones I support definitely help increase the reputation of the city on a national and international level”,* Buser concludes. *“With the help of Bern Welcome, who bid to host business events of all sizes and formats but who also flawlessly support us with the accommodation of participants or the organisation of social events and partner programs – among other things! – we can make sure that the world knows about what is going on in Bern!”*

### More info

On Bern

[bernhard.rhyn@bern.com](mailto:bernhard.rhyn@bern.com) \ [Bern.com/business](http://Bern.com/business)

On Switzerland as a convention destination

[myriam.winnepenninckx@switzerland.com](mailto:myriam.winnepenninckx@switzerland.com) \ [www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings](http://www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings)



BERNESE HISTORIC MUSEUM, AKA EINSTEIN MUSEUM

# Sustainability, from the Convention Centre to the Community

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Brisbane—the closest Australian eastern seaboard capital city to Asia—offers everything from close encounters with koalas and kangaroos, all in proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree rainforests. The South Bank precinct, on the banks of the Brisbane River, features 17 hectares of riverfront parkland, as well as Australia's only inner-city swimming beach. With so much urban green space it's fitting that one of the precinct's residents, the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC), has emerged as a leader in sustainability in the state of Queensland and across the globe.

*Words Lane Nieset*

Brisbane features one of the largest medical research facilities in the southern hemisphere, along with three of Australia's leading universities. The city centre is a quick, 20-minute Airtrain ride from Brisbane Airport, and the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) is surrounded by four major hotels (and there's another 50 more within a 2km radius). In addition to being a day trip away from islands, rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef, Brisbane also possesses its own riverside parklands and lagoons, enjoyable all year round thanks to a sub tropical climate, which guarantees more sunny days than Florida and warmer winters than the Bahamas.

Ian Chalmers, BCEC Facilities Director and long-time champion of advancing the Centre's sustainability initiatives, has an expanded portfolio with direct responsibility for the Centre's strategy going forward. Chalmers maintains the Centre's strong focus on sustainability issues, which have become so important for venue operations today. BCEC is an industry leader where environment

and sustainability are key factors in how associations choose their venues and cities.

BCEC holds the EarthCheck Gold accreditation from the leading environmental certification programme for its commitment to sustainable venue operations—and is on its way to a Platinum Certification this year. With such an abundance of sunshine, the centre went even further with the installation of a 309.42-kilowatt solar system. Since the 764 solar panels came online in March 2020, the system generated 130.81 MWh (megawatt hours) and a dollar saving of \$15,697 in the first four months.

The new solar powered system is expected to supply 40 percent of the energy demand from the operation of the Centre's Grey Street venue. The solar panels are intended to help cut electricity costs while boosting sustainability efforts in the South Bank precinct, which is often described as a green oasis, renowned for its vast green footprint as well as many sustainable initiatives for the community.

Another energy saving initiative which offers clients greater flexibility to create custom lighting scenes as well as saving 20% in power, is the recently installed app powered energy saving LED lighting system for the Centre's exhibition halls, concourse and car parks.

## CARBON CONSCIOUS

The Centre was an early advocate of sustainable venue operations. In 2001 BCEC became an inaugural member of Australia's Greenhouse Challenge and in 2008 the centre became the first in the country to develop its own carbon calculator for measuring event emissions. As BCEC General Manager, Bob O'Keeffe AM, puts it: *"We have developed a culture at the Centre where we believe as individuals and as an organisation we have an obligation to make choices that reduce our impact on the environment and contribute to building more caring communities."*

Since 2010, BCEC has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 64 percent,



SOLAR PANELS ON THE ROOF OF BCEC

water usage by 27 percent, and total waste by 45 percent.

As a partner of Foodbank, Australia's leading hunger relief agency, BCEC has donated over 145,000 meals to date and reduced food waste volume by 85 percent, using a waste dehydrator to create organic fertilizer for the surrounding South Bank Parklands.

In addition to donating meals, the venue has made the community an integral part of its mission, with staff proposing a recycling scheme to help fight against homelessness in the local area. Each year, BCEC encourages guests to recycle bottles and cans, which were used as part of a refund scheme through Queensland's Containers for Change, where funds raised are donated to local charitable organisations. *"Environmental, cultural and social integrity are fundamental to our daily operations,"* O'Keefe explained. *"We have a large footprint in the community and with*

*that comes an obligation to adopt a whole of community partnership approach for a shared goal to end homelessness."*

#### LIVING OFF THE LAND

The Centre's entire food philosophy is built around the culture and practices of sourcing the very best of available and accessible local seasonal produce, ensuring international visitors the experience of a uniquely authentic taste of local cuisine.

At the forefront of the drive to eat locally, BCEC's Executive Chef David Pugh is pushing forward the use of sustainable and ethical ingredients sourced locally. When delegates are dining at an event, they'll be sipping on local craft beer and Queensland wine, and savouring chicken and vegetables sourced from Queensland's Scenic Rim; and beef from the Darling Downs.

Described by Queensland's Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, Mark Furner, as a 'world-renowned chef', Pugh is also a former Queensland Ambassador Chef, who has spent many years championing Queensland's seasonal produce and developing a strong rapport with farmers and local growers.

In addition to being named by Queensland's leading publication The Courier Mail, 2019 Icon of the Year, Pugh was selected as the state's second Eat Queensland Champion. *"I've worked in kitchens all over the world throughout my career, but nothing compares to Queensland produce. Queensland is the food bowl of Australia, and I've always been proud to showcase it in my menus,"* said Pugh.

#### Contact

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# Flanders' Response to COVID-19 A Risk-Proof Plan

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Over the past few months, the meetings industry has been turned upside down. The blueprint we've all be following for event design – at least up to this moment – is no longer valid. While the main goals of bringing people together and exchanging knowledge haven't changed, the 'how-to' has. Virtual meetings may be here to stay, but face-to-face conferences still offer value, especially when destinations like Flanders in Belgium provide tools like the Covid Event Risk Model to help planners organise events in the safest way possible.

*Words Rémi Dévé*

THE COVID EVENT RISK MODEL IS APPLIED  
BY THE FLANDERS HERITAGE VENUES.  
UNIQUE HERITAGE LOCATIONS FOR  
CONFERENCES IN FLANDERS.



In the early onset of the pandemic, many event organisers started to postpone events from spring to summer. But as border restrictions and lockdown orders remained in place for months, they realised even summer may be too soon for a F2F conference. Events as large and legendary as the Olympics pushed its dates back a year, while the annual Cannes Film Festival simply cancelled. Associations, meanwhile, saw an acceleration toward another option: the digitilisation of events.

Some went fully virtual, while others still hope for their members to meet in person. As countries and regions are gradually emerging out of lockdown, associations are focusing on agility in order to adapt to the rapidly changing environment. Some will argue that people will be less inclined to travel abroad, so many associations will need to develop a hybrid model for meetings, while others will replace large events with small-scale or regional ones. Since conferences are often the main source of income for associations, the industry needs to develop a new model for those who want to meet in person, so they can host events in the safest environment possible.

#### STEPS TOWARD SAFETY

This is precisely when Flanders' COVID Event Risk Model comes in handy. Developed in partnership with scientific experts, specialised researchers, EventFlanders and the Alliance of Belgian Event Federations, it offers planners a two-part approach to prevent against any COVID safety concerns.

The process starts with an Event Scan on Visit Flanders' dedicated website (see url below), where associations will receive a safety label – a green, orange, or red one – that can be used as a reference by local governments when granting organisers permits for meetings. They can then utilise the COVID Event Risk Model to adapt their event in order to make it as compliant with sanitary rules as possible.

*“The Protocol is actually a guide based on 20 parameters that are known to reduce or do just the opposite—namely increase the spread of the coronavirus— to help them assess when it's possible to organise their events in accordance with the health safety measures laid out by the Belgian government,”* explains Tuyá Beyers, International Association Expert at Visit Flanders.

Not only are associations granted a guide to new meeting protocol, Visit Flanders also created a Venue Guidebook to provide tips to help meeting venues implement COVID-19 measures to create a safe and secure environment *“so you will be sure you're in good hands when you organise your conference there,”* Beyers says.

Since the COVID Event Risk Model is an educational and risk management model for event organisers (and an advisory model for the authorities), it's worth noting that the label awarded won't guarantee whether an event will operate. In these uncertain times, where rules and regulations seem to change from one day to the next, the final decision-making authority will be the one who determines whether or not an event will take place.

#### HYBRID APPROACH

We're at the beginning of a new era, and while associations are racing to go virtual with their conferences (despite a steep learning curve), some are already one step ahead and turning to hybrid conferences. Hybrid events may open up possibilities for event design as we once knew it by transporting more of the onsite feeling to the virtual element. This is when a tool like Flanders' COVID Event Risk Model is extremely useful, as the reach of the event will likely be greater if there's an on- and offline audience.

The model has already strummed up a lot of interest on an international level. After all, it helps associations secure their main source of revenue. If they can provide the best of both worlds – namely the physical and virtual ones – why shouldn't they offer that to their members, delegates and wider audience?

To get familiar with the Covid Event Risk Model, visit [www.covideventriskmodel.be](http://www.covideventriskmodel.be). The Venue Guidebook is available on [www.meetinflanders.com/en/covid-19-info](http://www.meetinflanders.com/en/covid-19-info). To contact Visit Flanders' International Association Expert, email [tuya.beyers@meetinflanders.com](mailto:tuya.beyers@meetinflanders.com).

# Safer & Easier: The Road to Success

Congress Center Basel, Messe Basel and Messe Zürich have joined forces and are now offering the possibility for association planners to organize meetings and conferences that comply with Swiss safety measures at no extra cost for them.

*Words Remi Deve, with Congress Center Basel*



The three Swiss infrastructure providers have used the lockdown imposed by the authorities to restructure their business model. They have merged their sales departments under a single roof and launched offers that enable organizers to hold their meetings and conferences in the same way as they did before corona.

In the past, the key advantage of the venues had doubtless been their location. Messe Zürich is located in the middle of a vibrant metropolis, while the halls of Messe Basel and Congress Center Basel can take pride in forming one of the world's largest inner-city congress districts.

Now they have made their case even stronger, making it possible for their customers to hold events at no extra cost and with no compromises on quality even given the current circumstances. Their proposed solutions, in view of the current situation, include the following:

- If the rooms and exhibition space required under normal conditions are not sufficient for the expected number of guests on account of the COVID-19 regulations, organizers will be allocated additional floorspace or bigger rooms at no extra cost.
- If restrictions on entry into Switzerland or subdued booking levels due to corona lead to a fall in visitor numbers compared to the organizer's expected figures, a proportional discount will be granted on the room rent.
- All three venues are offering modified General Terms & Conditions permitting an easy and straightforward cancellation or postponement of events.

*"We want to make the onsite planning easy for our customers", says Jonas Scharf, Head of Congress Center Basel. "To achieve this, they will be benefitting from our comprehensive know-how regarding the requirements imposed by the Federal Office of Public Health."* In this regard, Scharf's team has compiled

a template of precautionary measures, setting out the basic requirements for the safe staging of events. *"This also spares organizers additional expense",* he explains.

According to a study by the Deep Knowledge Group, Switzerland is regarded as the safest country in the world in respect of COVID-19, though, of course, precautionary measures have to be observed everywhere. In this respect, Congress Center Basel, Messe Basel and Messe Zürich are convinced that, with their attractive conditions, they are in a good place to attract events to their respective cities, while making sure organizers and delegates alike are working in the safest conditions possible.

For more information go to  
[congress.ch/reloadinglive](https://congress.ch/reloadinglive)





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