



THE ASSOCIATION  
MAGAZINE

# Headquarters

DEC 2019 #92

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Council's Insights  
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How to Implement  
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# “Abu Dhabi is on its Way to Become a Highly Competitive Destination”

Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau (ADCB) attended IBTM World and announced a partnership with the Society of Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), aiming to expand opportunities within the MICE industry. HQ interviewed **Mubarak Al Shamisi**, Director at ADCB, on his expectations for the destination and what is planned to meet them.



## Among the strongest competitors in the region, how is Abu Dhabi positioned in the meeting industry?

Abu Dhabi is becoming an increasingly popular destination for MICE, attributable to the comprehensive array of unique offerings available in the city. When choosing a destination for MICE activities, associations consider many factors such as safety, infrastructure, ease of transport, technology, available services and hospitality.

The capital of the UAE has tremendously developed over the past decade, providing excellent tourism facilities, world-class hospitality venues, convenient

transport options, and a stable, safe social environment.

Testament to its growing reputation as a leading destination for business tourism, the International Congress and Convention Association ranked Abu Dhabi as 74<sup>th</sup> in terms of attracting international association meetings. It was also titled as the ‘Leading Overseas Luxury MICE Destination’, during the China Travel and Meeting Industry Awards in 2017.

**We noticed a considered increase of medical congresses in Abu Dhabi by the end of the year. What is the competitive advantage that**

## Abu Dhabi brings to this sector by hosting medical conferences?

The healthcare industry in Abu Dhabi is rapidly growing and contributing to the increasing volume of medical tourism in the UAE, which saw a 5.5 percent growth year-over-year and reached Dhs 12.1 billion in sales in 2018. The capital of the UAE is home to some of the globally leading brands within the medical sector, including Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi and Mediclinic International, making it a prime hub for knowledge exchange and networking with medical professionals from various parts of the world.

The medical industry is considered a substantial element of the capital's 2030 strategy, which is aimed at diversifying the economy. Abu Dhabi already has all the necessary infrastructure to become a key player in the medical tourism sector and is on its way to becoming a highly competitive destination for medical and healthcare facilities.

Earlier this year, Abu Dhabi hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Medical Tourism & Global Healthcare Congress (WMTC) - making its first appearance outside of North America. This addition to the medical congresses in Abu Dhabi represents our competitive advantage and reflects our continuous efforts in uplifting the medical sector in Abu Dhabi. Other major events within the medical and healthcare sector continue to be part of our planned events, like the World Congress of Nephrology, World Heart Valve Conference, International Council of Nurses Congress and Wonca World Congress of Family Medicine.

**Abu Dhabi is the capital and the largest of all Emirates, so it is a logical strategic option for events in the country. How do you intend to adjust this reality with the investment in new infrastructure, facilities and equipment?**

Through a close and regular interaction with our partners and key stakeholders, global trends related to business travel, conventions and exhibitions are closely monitored to develop the tools and mechanisms that would help us achieve our overall objective of becoming a leading destination for events and MICE activities.

Recently, technology and ease of access have become a priority for travelers across the globe. In response, we have implemented a series of updates to our Abu Dhabi Calendar app in order to enable visitors to book and navigate the city's top events easily using their smartphones.

Additionally, Abu Dhabi offers high-end meeting facilities, venues and services including a state-of-the-art exhibition centre, Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), which hosts more than 327 events per year and welcomes over 1.6 million visitors to the venue. That, along with both existing and upcoming hospitality venues, transport services and tourism facilities, will make Abu Dhabi the place to be for events and business conventions.



▲ Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi

**In the heart of the Middle East and right in the center of Eurasia, the United Arab Emirates has an advantageous feature regarding accessibility and meeting points. Is this relevant for Abu Dhabi to increase direct connections, convention centres and new hotel space for the region?**

Abu Dhabi is a highly accessible destination, with two thirds of the world's population within an eight-hour radius and the other third within four-hours radius. Another competitive advantage it that it lies on a similar time zone to some of the world's biggest cities, minimizing jet lag for visitors. Due to its appeal, we have witnessed a surge over the years in the number of visitors.

The government has already announced plans to further expand the extensive array of facilities and hospitality venues in order to accommodate the ever-growing volume of tourists visiting. Etihad Airways, our national carrier, serves more than 100 destinations across the world and with a massive new terminal underway, the city is expected to serve the increasing number of passengers flying through and to Abu Dhabi.

**What are the priority markets that the Emirate expects to reach in the upcoming years?**

Abu Dhabi is experiencing an overhaul of its economic structures through numerous diversification initiatives introduced as part of Economic Vision 2030, seeking to achieve 4 percent non-oil GDP contributions by 2030. For tourism, we aspire to deliver a holistic tourism strategy that will enable Abu Dhabi to reach its target.

We aim to reach a variety of markets, mainly the ones considered top sources for tourism to Abu Dhabi. Currently, China is considered the top source market for tourism in Abu Dhabi, followed by India and the UK. The capital aims to attract over 600,000 Chinese visitors by 2021. Another prime focus of ours is the UK, the leading European source market for tourism and third largest overseas market for Abu Dhabi.



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BUILDING BRIDGES  
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# The Potato and the Congress

That this planet is made of rice and potato is something on which we can all agree, I'd say. However, I would have never imagined the existence of congresses for products such as the famous tuber - considered a food for the poor in bygone days.

These days, instead, potatoes are a true food phenomenon and one of the world's largest crops. Countless associations and their associated congresses around it exist across the globe. I'll note one that just happens to be located in Brussels: the European Potato Processors' Association (EUPPA). There is also a globally significant biennial business event known as the World Potato Congress (WPC), of which I had never heard - until I was notified that Adelaide, in South Australia, had been named as the host city for the 2023 World Potato Congress.

The 2023 World Potato Congress is expected to attract over 1,000 delegates to Adelaide for the week, generating over \$4.5 million for the State's economy and almost 40 direct jobs. That shows just how a congress can impact a destination, with the city gaining a spot on the global map as a unique destination for congresses in the agro-food industry. A premium food destination!

I can well imagine that this congress will serve to inspire other destinations to promote themselves as a premium destination for some popular product or another.

The options are many. Rice, which has a similar history, is also a staple food now subject of various congresses.

Sometimes the presence of an event is really able to change everything.

During my recent visit to Limpopo in South Africa, for example, I spent several days travelling through the area where the marula grows. This very popular fruit is used to create the renowned Amarula liqueur. The province is rich in marula trees, but poor economically. A congress could help change this.

A congress can have a magical effect on an economy, which would remain otherwise underused. That's why I am looking forward to the world's first Amarula congress!



**MARCEL A.M. VISSERS**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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# “The Creation of **On-the-ground Relationships** is Vital”

The International Stem Council is a non-profit member based association working towards the advancement of science, technology-engineering and mathematics throughout the education sector, with the aim of fostering academic engagement and collaboration through events, conferences and exhibitions. The main focus is STEMfest that, since the inaugural conference in Malaysia in 2013, has attracted between 800 to 1,200 delegates. HQ interviewed **David de Alves**, of the International STEM Council, on science education.



## As an association that organizes education-related congresses, what are your criteria for choosing your event destination?

Our aim is to find not only destinations that have a strong academic sector but, increasingly and ever more importantly, cities that have a strong community focus and are willing to make links between our network with those that are already part of the on-ground science and education sectors.

This can often be overlooked by many Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVB) - or even just misunderstood in the belief that simply providing a list of potential networks is more than enough. Instead it's the development of a city-wide community network that can be continuously fostered and developed that provides a leading edge. Doing the latter can underpin not only one particular bid but more importantly create an ongoing, sustainable way to provide future opportunities that exist far beyond short term metrics.

## Do you usually look for traditional destinations in the meeting industry

## or try to adjust to emerging cities with a strong connection to the education sector?

Having our very first conference in Asia, rather than the mainstay locations of Europe and North America, taught and informed many of our organisational values. It also made us realise that the greatest opportunities for impact often come from being a bigger fish in a smaller pond.

That smaller pond can simply be areas and markets of need - where the value of an event and conference can be fully realised by being in a city whose networks are willing to engage with international delegates.

This ability to genuinely provide a platform to engage with local networks is often an unrealised factor that emerging destinations should actively promote as a differentiating feature.

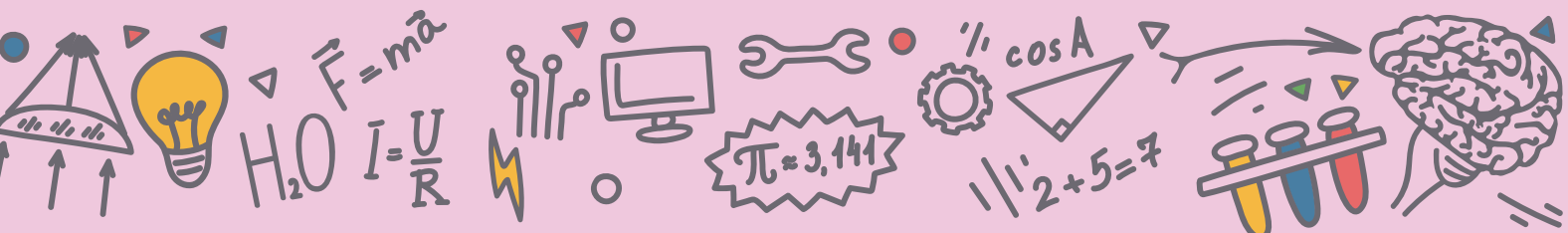
We have all had the experience of being within a conference that lacks any opportunity to engage with and encounter locals and the knowledge and expertise

they bring. Such is the disappointment from delegates where such local engagement and interaction is increasingly an important factor both as a pre-decision basis as well as post-event feedback.

As we've grown, we tried to lean into this community focused approach rather than simply taking up what can often be seen as easier bets in cities that might not be as open to fostering this engagement between international attendees and local hosts.

## What is the most frustrating point while choosing a destination for your event?

Often the perspectives of non-profit associations are misunderstood - the of the needs and priorities of member based organisations often are finely balanced with limited time, resources and a degree of risk aversion that is very different from corporate and other clients. The approach needs to be one that dismantles barriers to entry rather than being treated in a purely transactional or service based model.







# Asia's Hidden Value and Opportunities for MICE

**Nisan Bartov**, manager of Events Initiations and Development at MCI Group, shares some numbers with HQ and tells us his personal views and experience on the trend of event initiations in Asia.



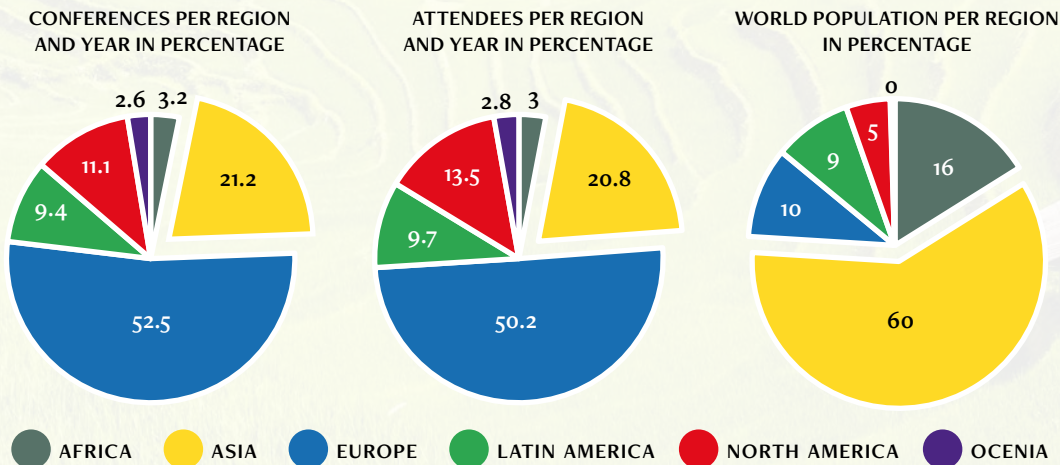
According to ICCA, the number of conferences has increased within the last decade by 3,300 events or 25 percent more compared to 2009. The number of worldwide attendees has also increased by over 1 million, which is equal to a 21 percent increase. On the contrary, the average number of participants per conference has dropped from 399 to 378. In other words, the increasing number of conferences is almost equivalent to the corresponding number of participants.

Almost unchanged within the past 10 years are the following figures: two thirds of all conferences are being held in Europe (53 percent) and North America (11 percent). Interestingly, the ratio is similar to the number of participants, 50 percent in Europe and 14 percent in North America.

Only 21 percent of all registered conferences are being held in Asia, and similar to the above, only 20 percent of all participants worldwide are from this region. This is a significant disproportion, considering that 60 percent of the world's population lives in Asia.

The reason for this is the Highlands of Tibet – as I learn from one of the scientists I work with. The Highlands of Tibet contain the highest volume of ice outside the poles and feed Asia's largest rivers supplying the fundament for modern civilization, namely water, food and energy. Ancient agriculture settlements enabled the population of the entire region to grow faster than elsewhere. Already 3,500 years ago, at the beginning of modern civilization, 60 percent of the world's population used to live in Asia. So this ratio has not changed ever since.

The increasing population in cities causes new challenges related to food production. There is less land for agriculture, partly due to climate change in addition to less manpower in farming environments. The needs of our fast-growing cities demands new solutions in production, logistics, transportation, etc. Urban growth brings with it new challenges, such as ageing, traffic and pollution, which in turn can lead to more innovation, more technology, more resources, more consumption, more energy, etc.



## So, why not create your own event?

The need for new conferences especially in Asia is then obvious. More educational programs are already being held to support the increasing number of meeting professionals in the region, as well as new MICE shows encourage rotating conferences and incentives to take Asia into consideration.

Just recently, I attended a show in Singapore. My aim, however, was not to bring one of our conferences to the region, but to learn about the needs and eventually decide which conference could be initiated and where. We don't have to create another conference for the sake of having another conference. We have to bring our contribution to support and enable education and the know-how for local communities. I believe that conferences need an educational value, relevant content and legacy.

When I meet with Convention Bureaus (CVB), a typical conversation might start as follows:

CVB: "How big is your group?"

NIBA: "I don't have a group"

Obviously, this is not what my colleagues expect to hear and I intentionally try to bring them out of focus. Most CVBs are on the lookout for rotating conferences that they can bid for and they are ready to invest a fortune, even though the chances of winning a conference can be 1 in 10 or less. After bidding for the same conference a second or third time, maybe they will win it at the fourth attempt. Then what? The very same conference will probably not come back to the same destination for the following two decades.

Usually, the next question from the CVB would be:

CVB: "Well, so how can I help you?"

In the classic format, there are three parties involved in conference management:


- the Association, the owner of the event
- the PCO, the operator and financial risk taker
- the Destination, the host of the event.

Accordingly, the question should not be "How can I help you?", but rather "How can you help us?"

Now we can start the real conversation, cleared of all clichés and open to a new model based on how we can create our own conferences: can we use all the assets spent on losing bids to invest in new conferences that will permanently or regularly return to the same destination? And of course, there will be no need to bid for them, on the contrary, we can build a long-term strategy and secure business.

It is the responsibility of the MICE industry to support new conferences. It is the responsibility of the associations to create content and legacy relevant for their hosting region and, with this, to review their bidding strategy and to avoid irrelevant destinations from taking part in tedious and expensive bidding processes.

The world is changing and so does the MICE industry. We are facing new challenges that create new needs and new opportunities. What is relevant today may no longer be tomorrow, and yet we need to be prepared for what we cannot foresee and what comes next.

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# Online Learning: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Online portals support the lifelong learning needs of associations and their global audiences.

It is a win-win solution: organisations reach their audience no matter the location or the income of members and popularise their latest content, while the professionals have access to high-quality, accredited education delivered by a reputable source and available 24/7. Yet, there are many hurdles to go through.

## Minimising the development process

Short educational videos that break information into small, easy-to-consume parts require less of the learner's time and energy and may seem more achievable than other training formats.

## Maintaining courses over time

Short chunks of microlearning take less planning and development time and are therefore easier to maintain and keep updated.

## Offering trainings in various languages

In order to reach a global audience, it is important to offer translations for the educational material.

## Retaining relevance in a fast-moving context

Continually improving and enhancing the portals in line with user feedback is critical. It is important to undertake regular needs assessments to guide the topics and formats of resources and materials provided.

## Working within platform limitations

Make sure that you have a depth of understanding of the potential of each tool you choose and balance that with the realisation that there is just no such thing as a perfect online education platform.

## Establishing new programmes and the associated risks

There is always a risk embarking on a new programme, so spend time to make sure that they are set up with the greatest likelihood of success.

The portals are always guided by the field: they must address gaps and reflect needs in order to be considered credible sources that professionals return to regularly. However, there are external challenges that will be ongoing throughout the process.

## Governance

The true challenge is navigating the different kinds of structures and processes in place for each organisation.

## Funding

It is difficult to create a compelling case for a fledgling programme, so gaining that first supporter is always a challenge but, once a portal's user numbers increase, it begins to mature and develop a reputation.

## Audience generation

Create a comprehensive marketing and promotions strategy to reach the right audience and adjust it over time.



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## For more information, contact:

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# The Tools to Keep **Informed**, **Focused** and **Successful**

We asked two members of the World PCO Alliance, Japan-based Congress Corporation and Singapore-based Ace:Daytons Direct, about their tactics and approaches to keep at the forefront of industry trends. Here's an overview of what they shared with us.

## **Equip your team with the knowledge that will keep them at the helm of the events industry**

An educational program that grooms someone for the industry is an excellent starting point. In Singapore, upon entering into the MICE industry, it is advisable for the newcomers to take up the Professional Conference Management course conducted by local association SACEOS. Once a newcomer has gained some experience, they may consider getting their Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) accreditation.

The team at Congress Corporation regularly attends IMEX, ICCA, IBTM and IAPCO EDGE, as well as seminars held by local governments and industry organizations. Ace:Daytons Direct adds PCMA, ASAE and Singapore MICE Forum to their list.

Doing recaps of past events and having senior staff training newer team members are just two examples. An end-of-year meeting is another effective way to share knowledge and solutions. Finally, don't forget to travel! Meetings held abroad expose you not only to alternate practices you can bring back to your team, but also to important global trends.

Ace:Daytons Direct encourages all PCOs to regularly consult trade journals as well as ICCA statistics to stay informed on the latest matters that are shaping the industry.

PCOs should be aware of what is going on around the world, both in terms of important events as well as the state of the economy. They also gain novel solutions and insights on new ways of thinking from operating actual meetings in a

diverse range of domains, knowledge that in turn is available to clients.

## **Transfer vital knowledge and tools to your clients**

Both Congress Corporation and Ace:Daytons Direct cite technology as one of the primary elements of continued education. However, not all clients will be eager to embrace technology and PCOs are encouraged to take into account their client demographic.

In addition to technology, educating clients also involves explaining the other critical elements of a successful event, such as selecting the right venue and the quality of supplier relationships.

In conclusion, PCOs have a plethora of tools at their disposal to ensure that their teams have a rich base of expertise as well as an in-house culture that facilitates knowledge-sharing. Allowing their clients to benefit from their teams' expertise and open communication empowers clients to make informed and strategic decisions that will result in successful events.



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#### Learning

The goal of the EAS is to give the opportunity to cover a variety of topics ranging from new strategies for associations, digital transformation, membership, GDPR, change & risk management, new sustainable ways of doing business and event design.

#### Last but not least, you'll fall in love with Brussels

Brussels is the top world's centre for international associations, with more than 2250 based in the city, and n°1 European destination for hosting international association meetings (cfr UIA statistics). Take advantage of the EAS to visit Brussels. Because once you have visited Brussels, you will not want to leave this magical city!

The EAS is a must-attend event for representatives of international associations: a great moment of learning and discovery, but also an opportunity for a real exchange during two interactive summit days! What are you waiting for?

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# Change Mindset

## A Case For Experiencing Awe



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Children view the world through a lens of curiosity and wonder. They can feel amazed by some of the most common views or experiences, such as golden leaves magically falling down from the trees in the autumn or waves ‘eating up’ sand on the beach.

As we grow up, we tend to become more rational. Used to our routines, we rarely take the time to stop and contemplate the world around us. We lose the habit of experiencing awe. As many studies show, along with the habit itself we may actually be losing much more.

Feeling amazed by nature or a piece of art allows us to stop focusing on ourselves for a moment. The thrill of being faced with something bigger than us, which we cannot fully comprehend makes us feel less central to the universe and an integral part of it at the same time. As philosophical as it may

sound, it can actually be instrumental to alleviate stress. It also brings back the right perspective to our day-to-day responsibilities.

This sense of belonging and calm helps develop a healthy change mindset. When we are connected to our core values, we fear external changes less because we operate out of a strong core base. We also learn to deal better with the unknown on an emotional level. Absorbing the positive thrill of novelty, we channel it to constructive activities. The change mindset is all about taking ownership of our actions and understanding that we can shape our own life’s narrative even if we’re not always able to control all the variables.

As is often the case, when we stop obsessing about ourselves, we can actually more easily identify key issues at stake and drive better overall performances for the team or organisation.

So how can we make awe a part of our lives without each time having to set off on an exotic holiday? The answer is simple but not necessarily easy. The key is to reconnect with our inner child and actively look for ‘awe-worthy’ moments every day. We can train ourselves to do that by no longer simply passing through our life without truly living it. Observe, listen, engage.

‘Awe-worthy’ moments will find you and so will your inner child.

# How to Work With Partners to Implement **Communication Strategies?**

The World Customs Organization (WCO), an intergovernmental organisation representing 183 Member countries, organised its first Global Communication Strategies Conference on October 8-9 at WCO's headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. The event attracted over 200 participants from 50 countries, including 48 speakers from Member administrations, international organisations and the Private Sector. The goal of the conference was to collect best practices, share knowledge and build capacity for communication experts.

## Catalogue of best practices for communicating

In the second session, WCO Members were invited to share their experiences with conference participants. Small island countries listed the importance given by customs to communication and the strategies adopted.

Participants discussed: traditional methods of communication used by Customs administrations vs new digital methods such as web and social media-based communication strategies; communication gaps between the Customs and local stakeholders; How to link the work of Customs with the impact to the public; introducing the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); highlighting the positive impact after reviewing the strategy; developing storytelling skills to communicate with the audience through simpler words and stories and engaging the audience through games and questions.

There was a specific session during the conference dedicated to storytelling, which illustrated the concept

## Understanding customs' challenges and the new communication landscape

During the first high-level panel discussion, WCO Deputy Secretary General Ricardo Treviño Chapa introduced the nine priorities identified by the WCO following discussions with Members, which formed the basis of the new WCO Strategic Plan 2019-2022.

The Director General of the European Commission Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) stated that the main challenge for the community is communication.

The Head of Customs Investigations at the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) highlighted the need for enhanced coordination between partners in the fight against fraud and the unique role of Customs during joint investigations.

The Chief Trade Facilitation Section of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) shared some insights on their strategies for motivating more participation from stakeholders and congratulated the WCO for its leadership role as well as its drive to strengthen cooperation with partner organisations.







▲ Ludovic Thanay, Head of Communication of WCO

## Embracing new technologies: a lab for ideas

The last session of the Conference saw experts from Microsoft, Accenture and Meltwater explain how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data mining have transformed the communication landscape and how the technologies are already a reality.

From Natural Language Processing to Machine Learning and Deep Learning, participants discovered how AI can power efficient communication tools mimicking human-to-human interactions that are less resource-intensive, and provide a 24/7 response to Customs queries. Representatives listed their practices involving AI: experience of introducing AI in a Customs communication strategy; how “chatbots” are used on the Customs website to respond to queries from the public, alongside a dedicated app and a mobile application; implementing AI to improve customer service and make effective use of the available human resources, etc.

At the end of the conference, participants congratulated the WCO for this initiative and proposed that this event becomes a regular feature in order to provide Members with an opportunity to share best practices while inviting experts to present new strategies to raise the profile of Customs and assist in providing information to the public in a more effective way.



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of transforming data into stories and emphasized the importance of implementing strategies as a way of changing the audiences' behaviour.

### Engaging with stakeholders in a common dialogue

The conference went on to demonstrate how Customs could improve its communication impact by involving its stakeholders at different stages of the communication process. IATA representative indicated that Customs administrations could leverage on their unique position to strengthen communication with all the actors along the supply chain.

Uganda Customs shared its local experience of communicating with remote stakeholders and strategies to adapt the language and message to various types of stakeholders, including women entrepreneurs, as well as discussing examples of partnership with bordering countries.

Belgium Customs shared their experience working with stakeholders through National Forums as well as interacting with partners along the supply chain in regular meetings to discuss future Customs projects and ensure cooperation through dialogue.

The private sector perspective on knowledge translation was provided by Crimson Logic, which also highlighted technologies and tools to improve the methods through which Customs communicates with its stakeholders.

### Unlocking the power of social media

The participants also discovered best practices in relation to social media. A presentation explained techniques for discovering fake news and ensuring that target audiences obtain facts that are verifiable. The presentation also focused on the challenges related to ensuring the credibility of information spread on social media - specifically, statistics demonstrate that ‘fake news’ attracts more engagement than legitimate news because of: the news-like format, an increased use of ‘fake news’ by politicians and its spread by traditional media, the inherent tendency for humans to seek information that confirms their existing bias.

Finland Customs shared their best practices, namely the use of sniffer dogs to create emotions that are relatable by the general public, and stories that create emotional engagement.

Europol shared the experience of the organisation regarding crowdsourcing, thus involving the general public in the search for most wanted EU criminals. Such an experience could be applied to Customs where the assistance or support of the public could be sought for global/regional/local operations. Participants listened attentively to the advice on the implementation of such a strategy with minimal investment and management commitment.

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# HQ World Tour





# Belfast:

## “The Friend at Hand”

A rising star in the MICE industry, Belfast is quietly becoming one of the best deals as a top-notch meeting destination. Check out this UK outsider’s position on the global events circuit.

— Manuel Fernandes reports —

*“Belfast has outrun many of the proud cities of the Empire in the race of progress, aided by no physical advantages, fostered by no patronage of Cabinets of Parliaments, pampered by no doles from the treasury of the State, by its own inherent energy and determined purpose.”*

The words of Thomas O’Hagan, former Lord Chancellor of Ireland, echo across the Belfast Maritime Trail as we move away from the harbor to reveal the unchanged facet of the city’s urban resilience. We arrive in Belfast, nicknamed ‘old smoke’ as a reference to its industrialisation, through the drumlins that guide us on our short trip between Dublin and Northern Ireland. Then, the similarities between the two countries fade away as we arrive in the capital, which is like a UK hybrid in the northern part of the island.

By the end of an impressive year with 112 conference wins for the city’s tourism marketing agency - Visit Belfast - along with its sharp rise in the ICCA global rankings, Belfast’s growing reputation as a leading candidate when

it comes to hosting events is becoming increasingly solid. But what made Belfast one of the best destinations of 2019? This is explained by a strategic investment in urban infrastructure that included a successful transformation of its International Convention Center (ICC Belfast), a robust hotel structure within the city’s portfolio and a constructive interaction between its public spaces and business venues.

With more than 500 direct flights a week from Great Britain, the city still withstands a few hardships and burdens that have reached their peak during the ‘troubles’, symbolically depicted with the impressive **Peace Wall** and several tribute murals in West Belfast. Today, they are a symbol of cultural diversity, integration and peaceful coexistence.

### So, is Belfast for meetings?

In the MICE sector, this atmosphere has generated strong human resources, as well as the ability to generate collaborative value and the reconfiguration of several historic buildings.

Considered by Lonely Planet the best destination to visit in 2018, with global attractions such as golf and Game of Thrones and its strong connection to the history of the Titanic, Belfast also turns its attention to the meeting industry. The city offers a comprehensive and connected set of exhibition spaces, hotel units, congress centres and historical buildings.

By encouraging a complementary network of partners and stakeholders, Belfast was capable of setting up a strategy for small and medium meetings without competing with large-scale events. All here is picturesque and charismatic. However, the Brexit threat still hangs over a new deal to protect the privileged relations with Europe, responsible for most of its customers and direct flights.

As an advantage, the Northern Ireland capital has a number of unique features. Notable factors include the tireless collaboration between its agents, its walking-friendly size and a notorious hospitality. A proven commodity served with



▲ Titanic Belfast



▲ Duke of York



▲ Queen's University Belfast

a Guinness pint as we get lost in the Cathedral Quarter and Bradbury Place, deeply attached to their roots, music and folk arts.

### Hotels, cathedrals, palaces, and prisons!

Belfast's facilities amaze visitors not only for the diversity of its activities but also for the entrepreneurial spirit of these unusual spaces.

You may be surprised to see a museum-made prison serving as a gala dinner backdrop or an Anglican church hosting a pet meeting on Sundays. However, this is the reality of **Crumlin Road Gaol** and **St. Anne's Cathedral** that offer interesting alternatives to the already vast hotel network.

**Grand Central, Europa** and **Clayton Hotels** combine refinement and comfort with tradition right at the heart of the city with a joint capacity of over 800 rooms for various delegations and entourages. The **Titanic Hotel Belfast** maritime-style building recreates the

headquarters of what was then the largest shipyard in the world, converting a warehouse where such iconic ships were designed, into a hotel able to host conferences, dinners or group screenings. Titanic Belfast opened in 2012 to commemorate the centenary of the launch of Titanic from Belfast.

The **Hilton** next to Belfast Waterfront Hall, with meeting rooms for up to 420 delegates and large multi-purpose halls, serves as a gateway to the Belfast International Convention Centre. **ICC Belfast** is the premier venue for associations and corporations with a set of auditoriums, offices and meeting points and a stunning panoramic view for the Lagan River, bringing together several teams and committees. An architectural masterpiece that focuses all the city's efforts on an inclusive space for working groups.

Other cultural attractions are the **Ulster Museum** or **Queens University**, ready to host multifunctional teams with grandstanding conditions and the latest technology.

The sumptuous and central **Belfast City Hall** welcomes MICE with tailored rooms for receptions and dinners. Featuring a remarkable sound design and erected in a Scottish Baronial Gothic style, the **Assembly Buildings** bring the Irish Presbyterian Church to the centre of the meetings with one of the finest conference and working venues in the centre, accommodating up to 1,150 delegates.

Exploring the countryside, we also came across the quiet and peaceful **Larchfield Estate**, an idyllic 600-acre forest and woodland setting perfectly suited for corporate events and group getaways. Last but not least, be seduced by Northern Ireland's royal residence with its breathtaking gardens and unique history. **Hillsborough Castle** will take you into a fairytale through its illustrious halls and grounds, cater for up to 350 guests.

Belfast is the overview of all these parts and undoubtedly, an essential piece on the MICE board for the future.



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# Redefining Thailand: a Country That Keeps Reinventing Itself

We have been aware of Thailand promoting the MICE sector for a long time. But not everyone knows that this country of smiles keeps looking for new products – over a hundred. Thailand has again started a campaign this year to ensure it will keep its first place in the Asia Pacific MICE sector. The MICE Forum 2019 also revolved around Thailand's dynamic approach to the MICE sector.

— Marcel A.M. Vissers reports —



▲ Nichapa Yoswee\_TCEB Vice President

## Redefine your Business Event through over 100 new activities and venues just launched

Just like every year, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) organised a media fam-trip at the end of August to show MICE travellers a number of examples of its new attractions and activities. The entire programme revolved around the theme of 'redefine' and it immediately became clear what this means when arriving at the **Sukhothai Bangkok hotel**. This hotel is a garden paradise in the centre of Bangkok and, according to culinary experts, houses the best restaurant of the entire city.

It's Nichapa Yoswee, TCEB's Vice President of Business, who proposed the Thailand Redefinement programme.

The present journalist had difficulties keeping up trying to write down the list of brand-new attractions. It all starts with new incentive activities, such as wildlife projects, the creation of spa products, and discovering ethnic hill tribe cuisine.

A total of 115 new incentive activities and venues across 14 cities have been launched for 2020, spanning seven

themes – history and culture, CSR and green meetings, beach bliss, exhilarating adventures, treasured team building, lavish luxury, culinary journeys.

Activities include enjoying ethnic hill tribe cuisine in Chiang Mai, producing snacks for wildlife near Pattaya, dinner on a floating table in the lagoon in Phuket, exploring the historical streets of Bangkok on a Thai Bus Food Tour... and discovering a new venue: a former rice-milling barn in **Khon Kaen**.

## Not just the capital, but all over the country

To TCEB's credit, it does not only pay attention to its capital Bangkok. It also lets smaller cities pass the revue. The most important new projects in the second-tier cities are still located near primary destinations.

We can experience a coffee café run by inmates participating in an occupational training programme in **Chiang Rai** (near Chiang Mai), the process of sea salt being turned into spa products by salt pit operators in **Samut Songkram** (near Bangkok), a crab bank with young crabs before they are released into the sea in **Chonburi** (near Pattaya), the production

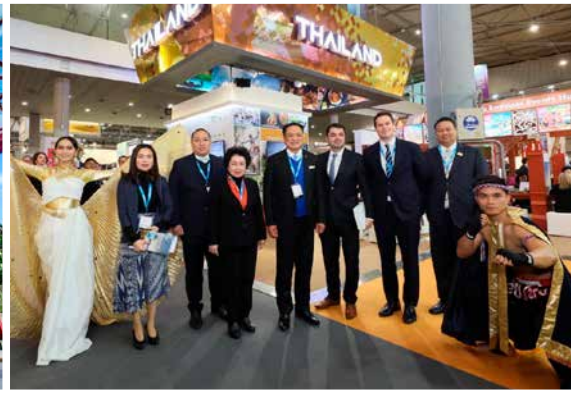
of paper and thread from pineapple fibre in **Song Khla** in southern Thailand, and team-building activities in a former US military camp in **Udon Thani** (near Khon Kaen).

Besides these, there is a range of new venues which can host team-building and themed adventure activities: **Volume Climbing Gym** in Khon Kaen, **Zero Latency** (virtual reality team building) in Bangkok, **Water Sport Ground** in Pattaya, **Thai Wake Park** in Chon Buri, and the **Wind-surf Club** in Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

"In the past year, we've collaborated with key MICE cities and other major destinations across Thailand to develop their local resources and to create new activities based on their local culture for the business events sector. These new products span seven themes which we call our 'Magnificent MICE themes'. The simple fact that we have over 100 new products to offer clearly demonstrates how destinations in Thailand are determined to meet planners' needs for



▲ Queen Sirikit National Convention Center



▲ IBTM World 2019 Thailand stand with Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister, TCEB President and Reed's CEO, Darren Johnson



▲ IMPACT Challenger

immersive creative and cultural products,” Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, President of TCEB, said. “The collaboration also reflects the ethos of our new campaign – Thailand Redefines Your Business Events – to deliver redefined experiences to clients and showcase Thailand as a diverse destination. We believe Thailand will always remain a preferred and competitive destination.”

**MICE Forum 2019**

Each year, TCEB organises a forum attended by all leading players in Thailand’s MICE industry. The presence of heads of global organisations like ICCA, Ufi and Site made this year truly unique. The presidents shared their views on the developments in Thailand one by one. Additionally, major bit of news was presented: MICE has now been incorporated into the government’s 20-year national development plan as a new growth-driving engine.

**TCEB’s support campaign promoting sustainability**

‘Meet Sustainable’ offers max 200,000 baht for a group (50 at minimum) holding an event with at least two out of seven sustainable practices, such as a venue certified for sustainable environment or energy management, electronic registration and reusable badges, donation of left-over food to non-profit organisations.

The 115 new activities and venues are available at the following locations:

- 5 MICE Cities – Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Khon Kaen
- 9 other cities – Chiang Rai (near Chiang Mai), Udon Thani (near Khon Kaen), Samut Songkram, Samut Sakhon and Chacheongsao (near Bangkok), Chonburi and Rayong (near Pattaya), Song Khla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat (southern Thailand).

**New planner support campaigns**  
 Aimed at encouraging planners to use the new products, TCEB has developed support campaigns for events in core MICE cities and other locations:  
 ‘Meet Now: The Big Sisters’ (Bangkok or Pattaya) - supporting groups from 50 to over 1,000 people with up to 500,000 baht.  
 ‘Meet Now: Beyond Bangkok & Pattaya’ - supporting groups from 30 to over 1,000 people with up to 1,000,000 baht.

**New options in Bangkok and Hua Hin**

A sunset cocktail really redefines the view at **Mahanakhon Observation Deck**. A two-tiered observation tower is part of the complex that also hosts Bangkok’s highest rooftop bar and a 63-square-metre glass tray floor.

**TRUE ICON HALL** offers most advanced technologies in the region to attract high- value global conferences and events to Thailand

As for dinner, redefine memory at **Praya Palazzo**, an elegant villa by the Chao Phraya River and a graceful oasis in the middle of busy Bangkok City. Or in **Hua Hin**, RedefineMy Soul at McFarland House, Hyatt Regency. Discover a unique modern European cuisine with a healthy twist at **McFarland House** with the best ocean view in town. Or have dinner at **ME2**, one of the ten best restaurants in Bangkok.

Redefine experience with local wisdom at Thaka Community, Samut Songkram. Here you learn the amazing benefits of coconut, one of Thailand’s leading export products. Try also the **Thai Buddhist rituals** of monk blessing and alms offering in Bangkok city.

Redefine my Body, at **Somset Phra Srinagarinda Park**.

Finally visit a **Thai sturgeon Farm**. It’s a sturgeon-breeding farm set up by a Thai-Russian duo in the resort town of Hua-Hin, Southeast Asia’s most reliable source of sustainable, high-grade caviar.



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▲ Elbphilharmonie Hamburg



▲ The heart of the Elbphilharmonie: the Grand Hall

## Hamburg is Heading to The Future... and Beyond!

The first time I went to Hamburg seven years ago, it reminded me of my hometown in Italy and it was love at first sight. Coming back there recently, I realised how many changes the city has been going through. Indeed, the famous catchphrase “To Infinity and Beyond!” appropriately describes the driving ambitions of Hamburg: let me tell you why.

— Emanuela Barbiroglio reports —

Officially known as the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, it is the largest city in Germany after the capital and the metropolitan region is home to over five million people. Lying on the River Elbe, which flows into the North Sea 100 km up north, it has a long tradition as a commercial hub and its port is Europe’s third largest one.

Hamburg is a destination to discover, or re-discover if you, like me, have been there before but have not kept pace with such a fast-growing city. In this pursuit of freshness, however, the prime effort is to leave nobody behind. Thanks to the creation of eight economic clusters, the whole Metropolitan Region is able to address the needs of any sector.

If you happen to doubt this, it’s good to remember that The Beatles performed there in August 1960 just at the beginning

of their career. I guess this says a lot about the reputation of Hamburg as a nest for modernity.

### To the future

Hamburg has been one of the first Germany’s federal states to promote its strengths and competencies in a systematic way, through eight economic clusters: Media & IT, Creative industries, Aviation, Healthcare, Life sciences, Renewable energies, Logistics and Maritime industries.

The Head of Corporate Communications of the Hamburg Convention Bureau, Michel Molenda, tells me there are many advantages in adopting this policy for the Hamburg Marketing GmbH, for the work of people represented by the clusters and for the city marketing. “As a MICE destination, Hamburg is also very well

networked both nationally and internationally, as well as within the city itself. Particular mention should be made of the business and science clusters, which network players from business, science and politics in order to create synergies for increasing innovation and added value for Hamburg as a location.”

For instance, the Creative Industries Cluster manages artistic events in Hamburg and the people behind them. It helps not only individuals, but also associations, with tailor-made consulting programs and finding the right space for their projects. Next-Media is a regional initiative created within this context and responsible for organising the ScoopCamp conference, which gathered international guests and speakers at the **Theater Kehrvieler**. The Global Investigative Journalism Conference #GIJC19 held every year at **Hafencity**





▲ The new CCH

says. “For the coming years, we have won a large number of contracts for international and national association conventions. Our focus with regards to international conventions is on health-care, science and digitalisation-related events as well as the start-up scene.”

The main industry sectors hosting meetings and events in Hamburg are as follows: Finance, Chemistry/Pharmacy and Medicine/Medicine technologies.

The latest hotel figures amount to 397 hotels and 68,300 beds, with rooms available to hire if you wish to host your event there. The biggest venue is the CCH 12.000m<sup>2</sup> Exhibition space, 12.000m<sup>2</sup> foyer, 12.000 seats in up to 50 halls. Other venues include:

- Grand Elysee, the largest five-star private-owned hotel in Germany and the largest congress hotel in Hamburg with 510 beds and 4.200 m<sup>2</sup> meeting space.
- Hafencity by Marriott, a new congress hotel scheduled to open 2024, will accommodate up to 1100 people.
- Many meeting hotels and venues for large groups such as the Fischauktionshalle, or hotels like Privathotel Lindtner, or the Radisson Blu.

Hamburg has case studies of major global events which took place in venues throughout the city, such as the Rotary International Convention, NEXT Conference, OMR, IATA 2018 etc.

From the airport to the city centre, it will take 25 minutes by taxi or 20 minutes by train.



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**University Hamburg** is another example of the results reached with the collaboration.

One of the most important outcomes has probably been the successful bid for the World Congress of the International Society of Stem Cell Research (ISSCR 2021) and the Bio Europe in 2019. Around 4,000 people are projected to arrive in Hamburg in that occasion. This experience established a best practice example of how international biddings turn into success when bringing in the local expertise and providing strong networks to the clients. “The Cluster Life Science Nord is keen to play an active role in driving innovation in the medical field and has a strong interest in fostering international encounters and cross-border collaboration,” says Sarah Niemann, Marketing Manager of the Cluster Agency Life Science Nord.

Hamburg is also experimenting with new means of transportation, such as Moria, a ride pooling service using just electric vehicles.

In the future, the city is going to host the ITS (Intelligent Transport Systems) World Congress, the world’s biggest congress and most important international industry event on intelligent transport systems at the **Congress Center Hamburg (CCH)** expected to attract about 15,000 visitors, and the Messehallen, Hamburg’s trade fair grounds at selected locations in the city from 11 to 15 October 2021. ITS covers topics like autonomous driving, car communication, seamless urban public transport solutions, new solutions

for city transportation, first and last mile (both individual and logistics), etc. The city of Hamburg has secured a long term strategy for all ITS related projects to align with others and deliver measurable benefit for the authorities, locals and guests while in Hamburg.

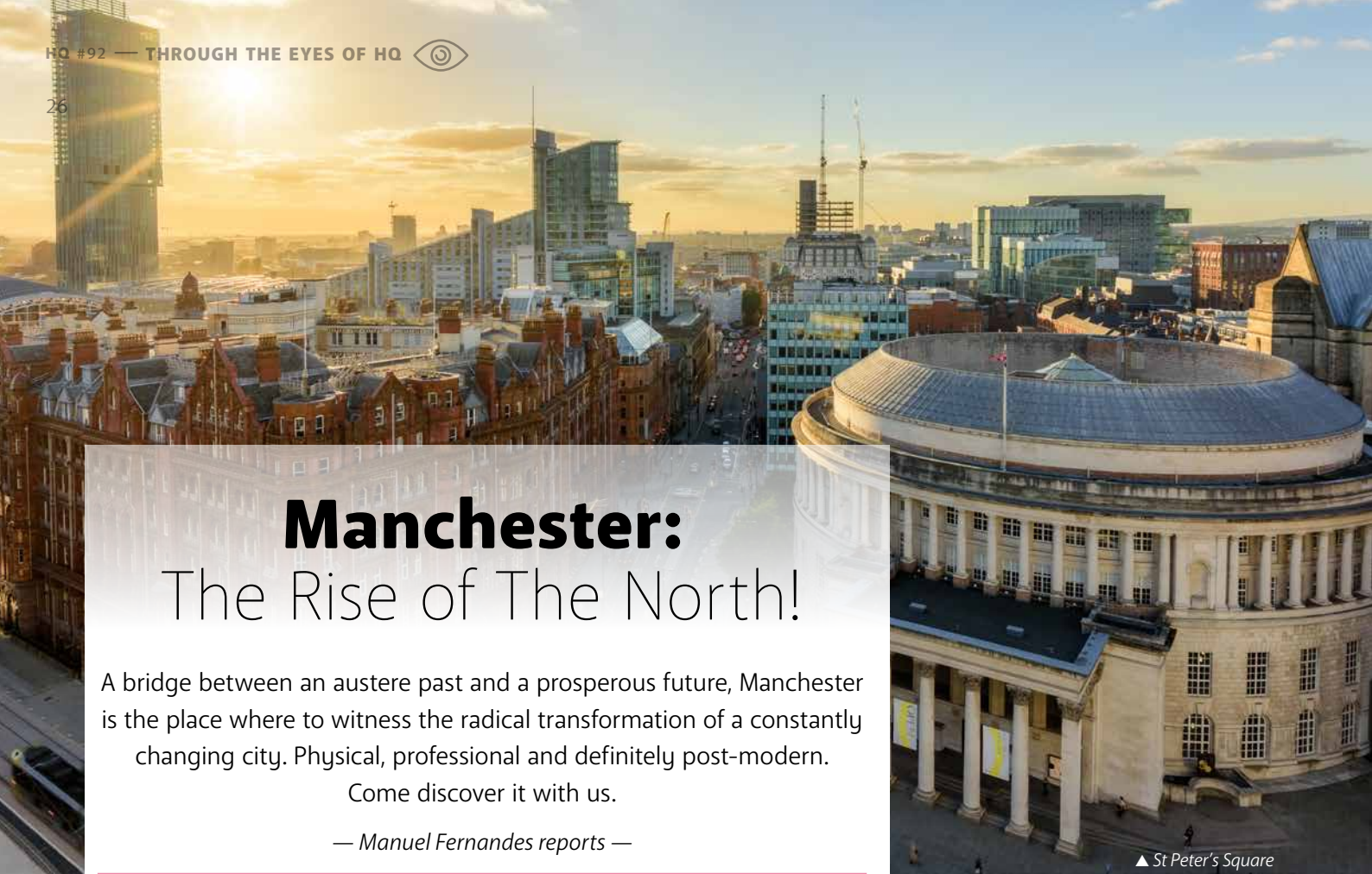
Moreover, the EU supports an intensive exchange between the different clusters, which resulted in the creation of the Cross Innovation Hub.

### ... and beyond!

None of these achievements would have been possible, however, without the right venues.

Hamburg’s newest landmark and architectural masterpiece is the **Elbphilharmonie**, where visitors can be moved to tears by the orchestra while admiring the incredible wooden structure perfect for spreading the sound.

Notably, the Congress Center Hamburg (CCH) has been undergoing comprehensive modernization and remodeling since January 2017. With a total available exhibition space of 12,000 square meters, another 12,000 square meters of foyer space and 12,000 seats in up to 50 halls and rooms, they will be offering their customers nearly unlimited options for their conventions, conferences and other events from August onward. Heike Mahmoud is the Chief Operating Officer at CCH and she is very proud of the undergoing work: “The new CCH will be among the largest, most advanced convention centers in Europe,” Mahmoud



# Manchester: The Rise of The North!

A bridge between an austere past and a prosperous future, Manchester is the place where to witness the radical transformation of a constantly changing city. Physical, professional and definitely post-modern.

Come discover it with us.

— Manuel Fernandes reports —

▲ St Peter's Square

**O**n the top floor of luxurious Radisson Collection Hotel, **The Edwardian Manchester**, it was impossible to look away from the sea of cranes that offered the city skyline a dystopian atmosphere. Manchester is an unfinished project and, like in all ongoing projects, there is a mix of excitement with great anticipation for a future that already shows its face.

Both domestic and international investments are already moving to Manchester and this is reflected in the MICE engine. Gateway to northern England, Greater Manchester wants to assert itself as a global destination for international delegates, thanks to new events and a new airport terminal expected to receive an additional 20 million visitors.

With the support of one of the largest student campuses in Europe, the establishment of a scientific research and development cluster and a boom in the hotel sector, the roadmap for meetings

in the education, health and cultural sectors is passing through here.

On the other hand, the traction of a rampant youth and its cultural diversity, which sparked a social renaissance of 2.8 million people, prepared the city to host Europe's largest arts centre: The Factory, planned for 2021.

Manchester currently boasts the UNESCO's title of creative city of literature and firmly imposes itself as the *de facto* capital of Northern England. Two hours from London by train, the city provides over 200 direct flights with quick train rides (20 min) from the airport.

## The Conference Tour

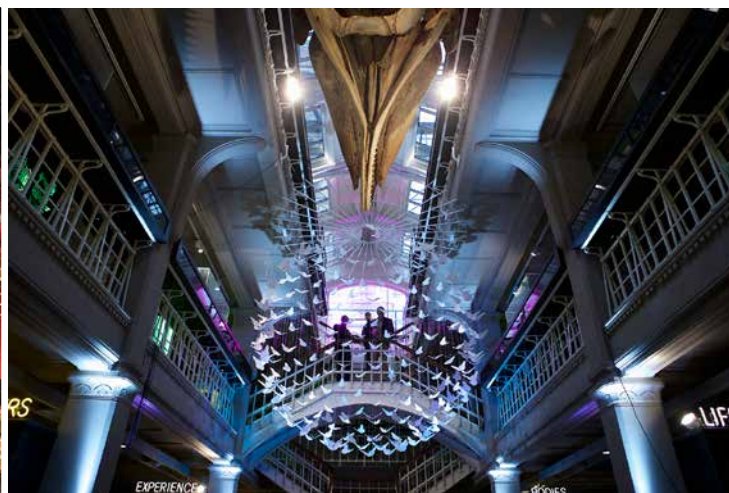
Symbolising this renovation, the award-winning venue **Manchester Central** showcases the city's premier space for congresses, conferences and business meetings. Established in what was once the old city centre's train

station, this building played several roles until it reached the current convention complex, which retains its Victorian architecture with state-of-the-art facilities. A familiar figure for the Mancunians, this venue preserved the same characteristics for over 130 years and now features a multifunctional space with an iconic large and divisible Central Hall, an 804-seat Exchange Auditorium, an exchange hall for trade exhibitions, several galleries, meeting and exchange rooms with internal IT, AV, catering and event management services.

During our city tour, this liberal and innovative sentiment fueled by connectivity and partnership was slowly deciphered by Manchester's long history of protest and rebellion. From the industrial revolution at its core in Castlefield and Ancoats to the Peterloo Massacre, through an intrinsic history of Marxism, left-wing politics and suffragette movements, this city has always carried a leading position in political and social



▲ Christmas markets in Manchester



▲ Manchester museum

progress. All of these elements can be seen in libraries, such as John Rylands or Chetham's, and in bastions like the Royal Exchange Theatre or Midland Hotel (where Rolls met Royce) that crystallise a time that followed another pioneered era. A collective organisation around the same narrative and strategy: promoting Manchester as a whole.

### The Hotels

At the exquisite Edwardian, luxury hides a historic part of the city within the walls. The Grade II-listed Free Trade Hall, once a venue for political speeches and a concert hall - who has never heard of Bob Dylan's and Sex Pistols' ground-breaking concerts here? - is now an upscale hotel with 22 fully equipped meeting rooms and spectacular events venue that can accommodate as many as 550 guests.

Other training rooms, business centres and premier boardrooms can be found at **The Hallé**, nothing less than the original Free Trade hall itself.

Nearby, **The Lume** is a new 19-storey hotel development shared by Crowne Plaza and Staybridge Suites, which plans to rebranding to Hyatt-branded properties in early 2020. You can 'stay for a month, meeting or martini' at this hotel complex, as you can enjoy one of the Plaza's 212 hotel rooms or the 116 studios and one-bedroom suites from the catalog. As for meetings, Crowne Plaza

has a dedicated events floor, with flexible spaces and seven rooms including executive boardroom and creative attic.

Just around the corner, we face the stunning **Principal Manchester** timing our journey with its clock tower. This architectural masterpiece in downtown Manchester is a time machine lined in silk and cotton. Among its classic, executive rooms and suites, this museum hotel also houses meeting rooms, a ballroom and lounge, along with the Refuge, a dining space right next door. A movie set that recalls the mystique of old hotels.

### The Universities

The university conglomerate is also a fundamental part of the global thinking of this city. Relevant institutions responsible for 25 Nobel Prize winners, including the creation of the world's first stored-program computer or the isolation and characterization of graphene, the two universities focus their attention on the forefront of science, technology and engineering. The slogan 'Where great minds meet' is no accident.

**The Manchester Metropolitan University** prides itself on putting sustainability and ecology at the core of its contemporary spaces, featuring multiple meeting rooms, lecture theatres and residential accommodation. A good example is 'MetMUnch', an award-winning global student-led social enterprise that

conducts training sessions for schools and businesses.

Grouped around Oxford Road and very close to each other, we found the **University of Manchester**. A diversified structure, research beacon and collaborative agent of the city, the university provides a range of facilities for conferences, like the University Place, Manchester Meeting Place, the Core Technology Facility and Renold Building. As a century-old institution whose intent is to expand by 2021, it offers conference facilities that can cater for 10 to 1,000 delegates with stunning locations for dinners, receptions or other events for up to 500 guests.

Attracting conferences in a collaborative way and delivering a world class delegate welcome by also developing its own story: here is Manchester's mission by 2025.



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# Unveil the Beauty in **Helsinki**, “Daughter of the Baltic”

What do you know about Finland? The most common answers are Santa Claus and vodka. Fair enough: these two already represent the meaning of a good life in Finland. But, of course, I am just joking.

My idea of good life includes many aspects, especially: clear environment, food and drinks, good education, reliable medical care, and freedom. In Helsinki, I found them all.

— Vivian Xu reports —



▲ Löyly design sauna

## A Land of Good Life - Foods

Entwined with the Baltic sea, combining the atmosphere of an international metropolis with the coziness of a small town, Finland’s capital Helsinki provides you with a taste of nature and green.

Finns are loyal to their culinary roots. You can find fresh seasonal food markets everywhere throughout Helsinki. Restaurants are committed to delivery local food with seasonal products.

## A Land of Good Life - Education

Finnish National Board of Education is focusing on early childhood education and lifelong learning. They even have released their own new definition of competences human beings and citizens can achieve (see the chart). The national goals for basic education and transversal competences are knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will.

Moreover, the concept of ‘Equality, Equity and Inclusivity’ has been implemented into the Finnish educational system. Under the condition of respecting the background differences, special education classes for different student groups were provided.

Promoting internationalization in Finland, language awareness was also brought on the focus. The learning of foreign languages starts in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (English,



**Island Lonna**, a former minesweeping island recreated to become an open-to-public area where all the hustle and urban noise can be left behind in order to enjoy the precious moments of peace and quietness. Kindly notice that the island is closed during the winter time, so you should give up the idea of sneaking in and pick mushrooms. | *How to get there: 10 minutes ferry ride from Helsinki’s Market Square*



**Restaurant Töölönranta**, a cozy and light filled networking and dining space located in Töölönranta bay in the city centre. Serving local sandinavian cuisine with a sense of european touch. Max capacity for dining is 180 guests. | *Address: Helsinginkatu 56, Helsinki, Finland*



**Restaurant Meripaviljonki**, a unique floating restaurant floating on the waves of Säästöpankinranta next to the congress venue - Helsinki Congress Paarisitorni. Serving seafood oriented menu, the restaurant is truly an ideal choice for seafood lovers. | *Address: Meripaviljonki, Säästöpankinranta 3, Helsinki, Finland* |

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▲ Messukeskus Slush event

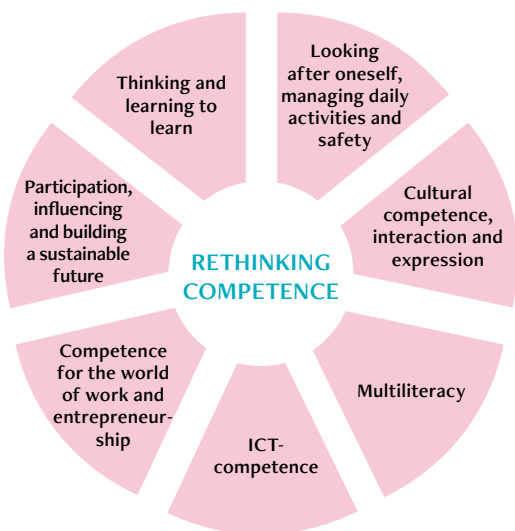


▲ Finlandia Hall, Concert Hall

Swedish, Spanish, French, Chinese, Saame) and English Enrichment Program (EEP) is implemented. As a result, students should reach a B2 level by grade 8. And, as a foreigner, you shouldn't worry about the language barriers in Helsinki because almost everyone can speak fluent English with you.

patient-centred design that overthrew the general concept of a hospital by presenting a playground-like space and family-oriented environment, which evokes a sense of security in patients of various ages. The interior design is rooted in the Finnish archipelago through Tove Jansson's original drawings, paintings and quotes from her Moomin stories. Each floor was designed by different themes and named after the Moomin stories.

If you wish to bring a larger scale events to this cozy city, **Messukeskus** will be your host. Equipped with the 40 versatile meeting rooms from the capacity of 40 up to 15,000, it is Finland's largest event venue. Messukeskus is playing a leading role in corporate responsibility by increasing the share of renewable energy and by utilising carbon neutral alternatives in the business operations. In 2029, Messukeskus will celebrate its 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary and it aims to be completely carbon neutral by then.



The hospital works closely with Helsinki University Hospital and the Faculty of Medicine since its opening in 2017. The Pediatric Research Center promotes the research of pediatric illness, teaching and networking. To date, up to 97 percent of children with leukemia have been cured and 95 percent of patients who went through kidney transplant survived.

Another unique venue in Helsinki is **Paasitorni**. In the early '90s, it served as a workers' house. The building itself is representing different decades. By preserving the spirit of each era, the building was carefully remodelled and reconstructed. The new building hosting the hotel with 170 guest rooms in the inner courtyard was completed in 2012. Paasitorni consisted of 30 characterful and dynamic meeting spaces that can facilitate event up to 800 delegates.

**Event Venues**

The iconic **Finlandia Hall** is surrounded by Töölö Bay, located in the city centre. Designed by world-renowned Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto, it serves as a multipurpose event venue. The main auditorium is the crown jewel: with a total capacity of 1,700 seats, this hall is where Alvar Aalto's vision has been realized to the maximum. If you are looking for a more intimate space for your event, the Helsinki Hall auditorium serves the capacity of 340 seats in theatre style. Of course, you will find plenty of small meetings room in this elegant venue.

**A Land of Good Life – Care for Our Future**

New Helsinki Children's Hospital, a state-of-the-art facility that serves sick children from all over Finland, opened last year with a price tag of €170 million. It replaced an outdated facility from 1948.

The hospital treats people from newborns to 15-year-old. It offers a



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# “Italy at Hand 2019” Destination Rome

How to showcase a country that has as much to offer in terms of tourism as it has in terms of business travelling? This was the question that Convention Bureau Italia has tried to answer at its second major MICE event.

— Manuel Fernandes reports —

▲ Italy At Hand 2019 (Gala Dinner)

Italy needs no introduction and it is likely that most of our readers will know about it from previous holidays. Full of monuments, attractions and legendary sites, and with a cultural diversity that is hard to compare, it is an essential country to tell the history of Europe and the world. This is quite clear with the 5<sup>th</sup> position of the most visited countries by the World Tourism rankings and with four cities (Rome, Milan, Venice and Florence) in the top 50 with the most tourists. But how does this translate into the business of meetings, conferences and events?

Well... According to 2018 ICCA Statistics Report of Country & City Rankings, even though the Transalpine country is in a respectable 6<sup>th</sup> place for international association meetings, there is no trace of any Italian city in the top 20. This means that there is room for improvement - which has led to Convention Bureau Italia setting up an

international project for various market stakeholders.

Italy At Hand is a three-day event that brings together several MICE Industry buyers and exhibitors in an itinerant format for exchanging ideas, services and business. A handshake indeed between Italy and the world.

The event started crawling as a communication campaign in 2017 and chose Bologna for its debut as a side event in 2018. This year, to celebrate and cement this promotional event, CBItalia settled down in Rome for three days of business, cooperation and dialogue. It did so with the precious collaboration of the Roma and Lazio Convention Bureau, the strategic sponsorship of the Italian Government Tourist Board and the Italian Trade Agency. Plenty of arguments to surface the many advantages of *‘la bella vita’* directly to the meeting business platform.

## The Event 2019

To bring ‘Italianness’ closer to its participants with a mix of fun and interaction, the organisation decided to start the event with four playful activities.

Attended by 45 international event organisers and 35 national promoters along with institutional guests and other personalities, the first day tightened the bonds of coexistence just before opening night. Rome is a city that, if it did not exist, could not possibly be imagined or recreated. An open-air museum boasting the highest concentration of monuments and archaeological sites in the world, the eternal city is indeed one of the first great metropolis built by humanity. It is not surprising then that the route of places passed through the **Palazzo Colonna** and the **Galleria del Cardinale** which preserve the timeless and resounding charm of the noble residences in Rome. The latter, which



▲ Grand Hotel Aminta

occupies part of the Palazzo Colonna, also functions as private and business event and meeting spaces among the gardens of the historic residence.

The second day, we were able to explore Rome and the hidden corners of the city while the first business meetings were held so that all buyers and suppliers could meet, until the much-awaited Gala Dinner. At about eight that evening, the guests began to swarm in the lobby of **La Nuvola**, the quintessential Rome Congress Centre that hosted the premier evening of the event. This impressive contemporary masterpiece that defies gravity and symmetry has an overall maximum capacity of 8,000 seats, among which over 6,000 are in the conference halls and 1,762 in the Auditorium. Designed with

state-of-the-art technology, this meticulously sized, futuristic building is perfect for such receptions and purposely built for MICE events.

The third day was set aside for hard work. A show-round consisting of several stands among venues, hotels and regional agencies, showing the best that is being done from North to South. The venue was the **Auditorium Parco della Musica** in the heart of Rome, the biggest multi-functional arts complex in Europe.

After the exchange of cards and last words during the lunch break, guests marveled at a prodigious show by sand artist Stefania Bruno who, like a magician reading the fate, predicted the next event for Southern Italy. Matera, Italy's magical city of stone, will be the next stop to host Italy at Hand 2020, boosted by the current status of European Capital of Culture.

### Naples Escapade

The promotional post-tour integrated into the 'Italy at Hand' program brought us to know the splendid Campania and timeless Naples. After a long trip, we parked our transfer bus at the **Grand Hotel Aminta**, a pearl of the Neapolitan Riviera. One of the most gorgeous,

well-positioned and historic buildings in Sorrento, this plateau over the sea is picture-perfect for a cocktail reception or a welcoming dinner with a magnificent view across the Bay of Naples.

After a one night stay, we headed for a dream come true in what Naples portrays. The 'new city' of ancient Greece, built on mysterious layers of history and the living memory of eternal civilisations and landmarks, is not scarce in its event and congress ambitions. Capodimonte Museum with an overwhelming art collection, can share its large halls to cater several meeting groups and solemn dinners. The **Santa Maria Donna Regina Vecchia** church has transformed a millennial nunnery into a cluster of beautifully sounding rooms and chambers, predisposed to serve as meeting spaces. Finally, the **Royal Continental**, set in one of the city's most exclusive streets, is a 10-story venue that resulted from the merger of two hotels to maximise its space and resources, providing a large number of meeting and dining rooms, an auditorium and countless welcoming spaces.

Italy At Hand is a two-year-old event which aims to highlight the core values of the country as an open door to the MICE industry, represented in the art, love, rituality, and innovation of its interactive activities. As a matter of fact, who can resist the charm of this country? Italy has been here at our feet to be enjoyed. Come and see one of its many regions to organise your event and, perhaps, Matera.

▼ Sand show of Matera as the new host of Italy at Hand 2020



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# Where the Sea Shapes the City: **Copenhagen**

There is a city where people can ski on the top of a power plant, taste authentic sushi in a slanting-looking tower and swim in front of the United Nations quarter. It's the same city where you'd take a selfie with The Little Mermaid: Copenhagen. I went there to grasp the secret formula of this odd mixture and came back convinced that it is all about the sea.

— Emanuela Barbiroglio reports —



▲ The view from Maersk Tower

Copenhagen surprises the visitor at every corner. It is among the most sustainable cities in the entire world, despite being largely affected by climate change. In fact, the city has developed strategies of adaptation long before any other, because of its long history in relation to a rising sea. Situated on the eastern coast of the island of Zealand, plus another small portion on Amager, it is separated from Sweden by the narrow strait of Øresund.

What doesn't come as a surprise, then, is the extraordinary offer of this city meant to be *hygge*, a Danish word for something that can 'give courage, comfort, joy'.

## Courage: green energy

It's not by chance that the majority of people in Copenhagen moves around by bike. Copenhagen was European Green Capital in 2014 and says it aims to become the world's first CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral capital by 2025 through the removal

of the city's 2 million tons of carbon footprint.

People who prefer other sports, can opt for ski on the recently opened Copenhill. It is the dream of sustainability: the city's new epicenter for urban mountain sports, which may very well also become Copenhagen's new sustainable landmark. Here at 85 meters above ground, locals and visitors can engage in a string of outdoor activities, while simultaneously, the green waste to energy plant below them is converting waste to cheap, green district heating and electricity for the capital area. In front of them, an astonishing view of the city and its wind turbines on the canal.

**Scandic Falkoner**, the hotel that hosted Tomorrow's Urban Travel 2019, is all about a commitment to a better future. The event was indeed a conversation about the impact of the tourism industry on our planet and our communities, as well as the future opportunities to turn

this impact from negative to positive to ensure a sustainable future in the meeting industry.

A tour of **Maersk Tower**, the University of Copenhagen's Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, will also make visitors experience the unique facilities in price winning, sustainable architecture, not to mention the view from there! They will also learn about ground-breaking research within the health and medical sciences.

## Comfort: elegant, organic food

You can have dinner at **Almanak & tour** of The Standard. This beautiful piece of functional architecture used to host the custom authorities, but is now home to two fantastic restaurants and a bar.

Connected to the Bella Center, **SUKAIBA** Copenhagen is for sophisticated Japanese inspired food culture in a lively international atmosphere. It is a complete





▲ The Bella Center

experience, with a thrilling scene of Copenhagen from the skyscraper.

Copenhagen's upcoming urban neighbourhood, **Refshaleøen**, has got a new playground for creative minds and street food enthusiasts near the waterfront: the project called 'Reffen', from the nickname of the island it is based on. Opened in Copenhagen in May 2018, its ambition is to create a melting pot with a food market, creative workshops and innovative businesses. At Reffen you'll find more than 50 start-ups in the form of food stalls from all over and the area consists of the building called 'Maskinværkstedet' (a big former engine repair yard), 5,000 square meters of outdoor space and additional access to 4,000 square meters of a shared outdoor area by the water. All of the stalls have to follow the sustainable dogmas 'Reduce and Reuse', use compostable food service, reduce

▼ Copenhagen Hill



food waste, use organic, free-range and local ingredients wherever possible. They also have to sort their waste so it can be reused as far as possible.

### Joy: living on the sea

Copenhagen will host the World Water Congress and Exhibition, IWA2020, in October next year. The global event for water professionals covering the entire water cycle will bring a strong representation and contribution from Nordic and Baltic Sea countries and it will address the topic 'water for smart liveable cities'.

IWA2020 will engage stakeholders and key contacts within the conventional water sector and beyond. It will be the chance for Denmark to showcase its long history of 'blue and green' solutions. Congress participants will be able to take inspiration from a real 'living water laboratory', where like efficient waste-water treatments allow you to swim in the harbour and new climate resilient neighbourhoods like the sustainable Nordhavn are being built.

### A final lesson

Industrial PhD student Thomas Trøst Hansen is the person behind the extraordinary work of the Copenhagen Legacy Lab. He studies academic events and their impact at Aalborg University. "Copenhagen has a lot to offer associations that run knowledge intensive events. The city is home to numerous world-class research environments within life science, cleantech and food science. The culture of trust and innovation makes interaction with local businesses and authorities a source of inspiration and development," he says. "In early 2020, we will launch the Copenhagen Legacy Lab, where we will organise workshops that match associations with local stakeholders including businesses, research communities and public authorities. Here we will support the development of associations by sharing the experiences and networks of the city."

BC Hospitality Group is then worth a mention, as it is one of Denmark's biggest companies in hotels, conferences, fairs and hospitality. Part of the group, **Bella Center** Copenhagen was established in 2014 and it is Scandinavia's largest conference and exhibition centre with 121,800 square meters and 48 permanent meeting rooms. When the construction of the new congress hall will be over, 14,000 square meters are added and the new congress hall will be ready early in 2021. "The new version of Bella Center Copenhagen will support Copenhagen's efforts to continue to be a leading congress destination," says the Head of Media Relations Karen Østerbye.

The total capacity for venues vary from 12,000 participants of Bella Center to hotels with meeting capacity. As for accommodations, there are currently more than 22,000 rooms in Copenhagen. This number is set to increase significantly in the next couple of years as more hotels are currently being built.

The Danish industry is specialised in Life Science, Cleantech and Sustainability, ICT, Bio Resources and Food, and Architecture and Design.

At least 26 events are planned to take place in Copenhagen next year.

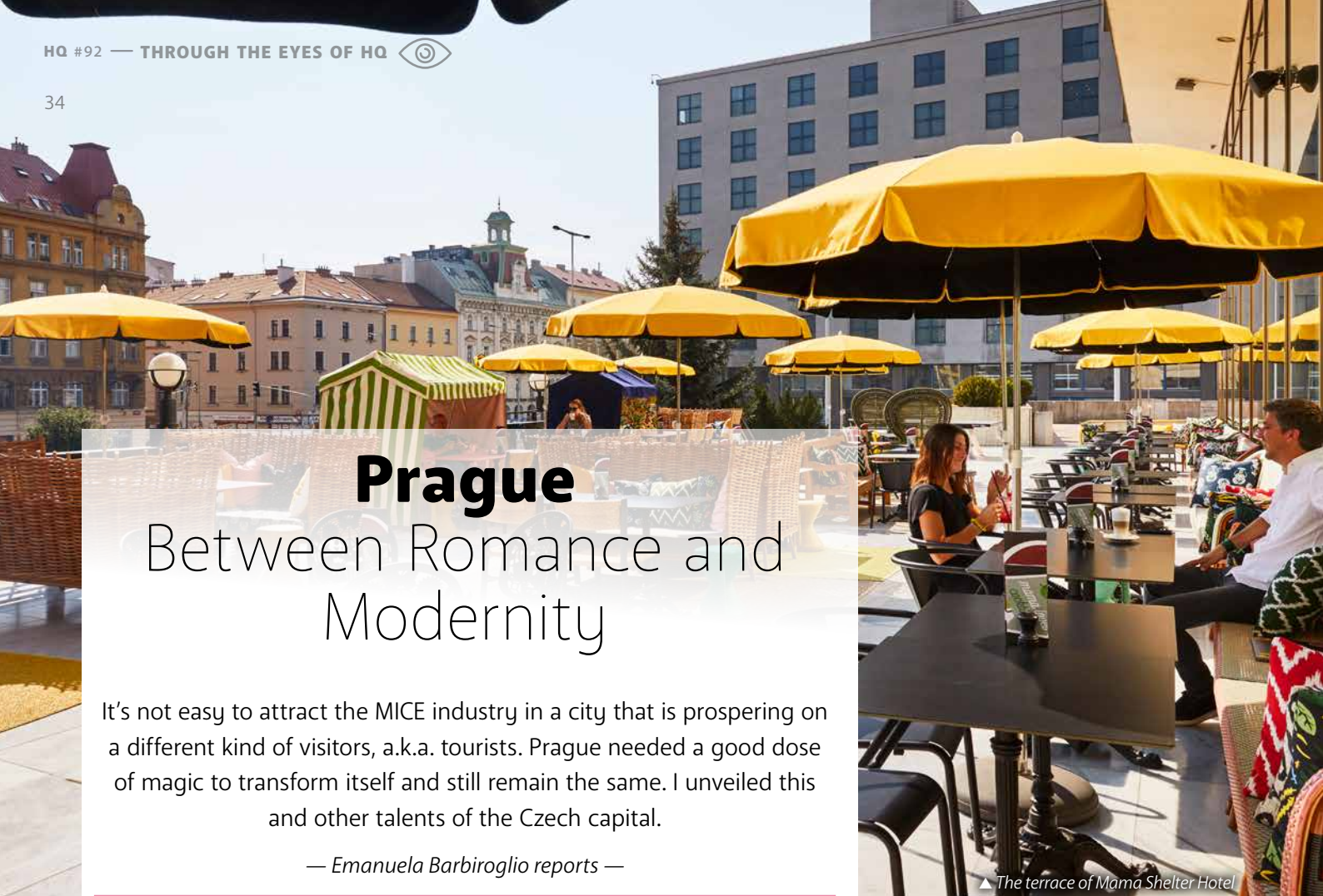
Copenhagen's airport is easily reached by metro, train, busses and taxis. It only takes approximately 15 minutes to go from the airport to the city centre (Nørreport station) and it's even quicker to go to the Central Station.



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# Prague

## Between Romance and Modernity

It's not easy to attract the MICE industry in a city that is prospering on a different kind of visitors, a.k.a. tourists. Prague needed a good dose of magic to transform itself and still remain the same. I unveiled this and other talents of the Czech capital.

— Emanuela Barbiroglio reports —

▲ The terrace of Mama Shelter Hotel

According to data released by the Czech statistical office, 2018 was a record-breaking year for tourism in Prague and the Czech Republic as a whole, with over 21 million people visiting the country last year. Chinese couples choose the iconic Charles Bridge to take their photo shooting. An enormity of school trips fill the city. When it comes to business travelling, how does the city strike a balance?

### Making a virtue out of necessity

The **Lobkowicz Palace**, part of the Prague Castle complex, best represents this challenging task and the consequence is a beautiful one. They offer an interesting opportunity for every individual whose aim is to learn more about The Lobkowicz Collections - displaying unique art, sharing recent discoveries about the most significant pieces by Bruegel or Velázquez, and providing

deeper insight into the rich history of the Lobkowicz family, one of the oldest Bohemian noble families.

“Prague has been continuously changing in the past decade, pleasantly surprising visitors and locals alike,” says Vendula Dedková, Director of Business Development at Lobkowicz Events Management. “At the Lobkowicz Palace, we are aware of these changes and participate by offering new experiences and educational activities for our visitors, scholars, students and guests of the various events we host at our venues.”

### Programmes for groups

Food is always a good idea so groups can stop by at **Chocotopia**, a newly opened entertainment center where they will learn how to make their own special chocolate treats, or visit the wax museum to take pictures with the

wax statues of Marilyn Monroe or Karel Čapek, the Czech writer best known for his science fiction and for having introduced the word *robot*.

The **Mlýnec Restaurant**, with lunch provided by Zátíší Catering Group, is the best alternative for whoever just want to relax in front of the charming Charles Bridge while also avoiding the crowds. You'll have your dose of chocolate anyway, no worries, as they serve a special mousse that is as tasty as it is ingenious.

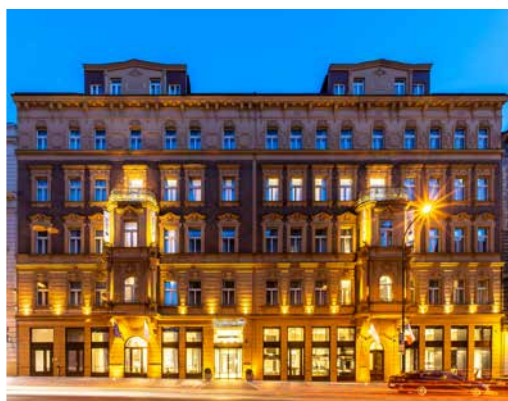
### Polished brutalism

Prague has mastered the art of taking historical patterns and develop them, adding some good dose of coolness. Take for example these three venues:

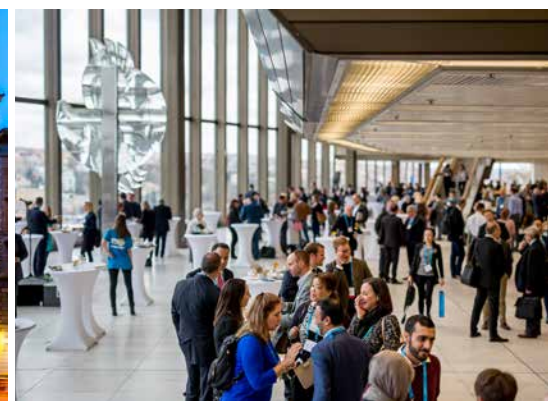
The recently refurbished **Prague Congress Centre** is getting ready to build a new exhibition hall and has a



▲ Cubex Centre Prague



▲ Radisson Blu Hotel Prague



▲ Prague Congress Centre

current capacity of 10,000 participants in more than 20 halls, lounges and 50 meeting rooms, with the largest room hosting 3,000 people. A metro station and two hotels with 800 rooms are just next to it.

“In recent years, there has been a huge development of the meeting infrastructure within the city, including the refurbishment of Prague Congress Centre,” says the Director of Sales and Marketing, Lenka Žlebková. “Main investments have been made in sustainability of the building and high technologies like new wifi network with 200 CISCO access points and 2 GB/s connectivity or the digital navigation system with LED screens that can be customised according to the clients’ needs.”

**Cubex Centre Prague** is a brand new and unique venue winner in the category ‘best new venue’ of the 9<sup>th</sup> Global Eventex Award. Thanks to its variable and multifunctional interiors, it is an ideal venue for the organisation of a wide range of different events such as congresses, conferences, corporate presentations, concerts, exhibitions, as well as balls and gala dinners for up to 1,700 people.

“The story behind the venue shows the traditional and genuine architec- tonic design of Cubism put into modern form,” says the Marketing Manager, Dagmar Alexandra Bernardová. “We combine this traditional approach with modern technology so our clients can

run their events seamlessly and to high standards.”

The new multifunctional and congress centre **O<sub>2</sub> universum** is directly linked to the O<sub>2</sub> arena with its 21 halls of different sizes at disposal. The total capacity is of 10,000 visitors and the largest hall can host up to 4,500 people. “It is a complex that is unrivalled in the Czech Republic, but unique in comparison with prestigious multifunctional complexes around the world. It can serve very well for conferences and corporate meetings for several hundred participants, as well as after connection of all the premises it is suitable for congresses with several thousand participants,” says Robert Schaffer, CEO of Bestsport company, O<sub>2</sub> arena and O<sub>2</sub> universum. “After connecting the existing O<sub>2</sub> arena on all four floors, we get space for up to 28,000 visitors with plenty of exhibition space, several restaurants of all categories and almost unlimited possibilities for any space arrangement according to the client’s wishes.”

Based on the data of Czech Statistical Office, in 2018 there were 816 hotels offering 42,487 rooms and 93,169 beds in Prague. Based on the KPMG study prepared for Prague Convention Bureau in 2017, the total MICE capacity of Prague exceeds 169,000 people and there are more than 240 venues.

In 2018, top three industries were: medical sciences, education and social

sciences. According to the Prague Convention Bureau, at least 69 events will take place in Prague from November this year until the end of 2020.

HQ suggests to stay at one of the following hotels: **Courtyard** by Marriott Prague City, as well as the **Prague Marriott Hotel** in the city centre and currently under renovation, the unconventional **Mama Shelter Hotel**, **Vienna House Diplomat** (four stars), **Orea Hotel Pyramida** (four stars), **Hotel Kings Court Prague** (five stars) and **Radisson Blu Hotel Prague** - all equipped with spacious meeting rooms, in case you wish to host your event there.

Transfers can be arranged by Data Autotrans. From the airport to the city centre, it can take as little as 25 minutes. From the airport to the O<sub>2</sub> universum, the Prague Congress Centre or Cubex Centre Prague, it will take from 35 minutes to around one hour.

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# Stunning South Africa

## ICCA's Number One MICE Country in Africa

On my first trip to the African continent, I was lucky enough to spend a week in South Africa. From the melting pot of cultures in Cape Town, to the subtropical Highveld jacaranda city which is Pretoria and Johannesburg, the metropolitan financial centre of South Africa, I saw some excellent spots. No wonder the South Africa National Convention Bureau is the leading player in the African MICE industry and it holds a strong tourism image of the country.

— Vivian Xu reports —

### Cape Town, the unbeatable MICE city

Situated on the southwestern coast of South Africa, beneath the majestic Table Mountain, and embraced by the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, is South Africa's oldest working harbour – Cape Town – inherited an absolute advantage from mother nature. This legislative capital of South Africa is ranked as best MICE city in Africa and has hosted 53 international association events in 2017, according to ICCA Statistics.

Located on the N1 highway (only a few minutes' drive from the Cape Town CBD), the **Century City Conference Centre** was designed as the hub and pivotal point of the precinct. Decorated

with bold architectural forms in harmony with the simplistic modern style, the venue offers meeting space for up to 1,900 guests. Adhering to the instructions of the Green Building Council of South Africa, the conference centre proudly ensured the green design principles by implementing water and energy saving practises during business events.

If you are a fan of red wine, you must know that the famous Pinotage is South Africa's signature red wine. Dating back to 1692, **Lanzerac Wine Estate** is one of the oldest heritage farms in the West Cape. People there have been cultivating the award-winning Pinotage for decades. Nestled in the Jonkershoek Valley

between the imposing Stellenbosch mountains, this historic estate's rich winemaking history can be traced back to the early 1900s, when the first Lanzerac wine was made with grapes harvested on the farm.

In 1958, the farm was converted into an elegant hotel with bars, lounges, dining areas and guest rooms. In 2015, a tragic fire severely damaged the main operation areas. The Lanzerac Hotel re-opened its doors to the public one year later with the same glory, legacy and chic vibe that they have always been known for. It is now offering a countryside romance graced with original artworks and a collection of antique furniture that blended with 21<sup>st</sup> century luxury. Moreover, Lanzerac's high-end functional facilities made it the most sought-after meeting venue for hosting high profile events, corporate conferences, management meetings, etc.

▲ Cape Town



▲ Statue of Nelson Mandela in Pretoria



▲ Former powerplant, cooling tower in Johannesburg

Before we get too tipsy from Pinotage, let's indulge in the 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> century visual arts and cultural expressions.

**Norval Foundation**, located in the Steenberg area of Cape Town, exhibits South African art. The space is flooded with daylight from the glass wall of Triple-volume Atrium. With views of the Table Mountain and vineyard landscape, the atrium creates a tranquil connection between urban and nature, making it such a unique venue.

### Pretoria, the academic city

South Africa's capital, Pretoria also has the academic city reputation thanks to three universities: University of Pretoria, University of South Africa and Tshwane University of Technology. The strong academic support from the city is definitely a key point to attract international association events.

Just under an hour's ride on the high-speed Gautrain from OR Tambo International Airport to Pretoria is the best way to avoid heavy traffic. Located at the Menlyn precinct, **Summit Place** is an ultra-modern venue that is situated on a rooftop. The terrace can be used as an intimate open-air foyer with its panoramic view of Pretoria. It can accommodate up to 250 guests in cocktail style and 200 guests in banquet style.

Not far away in the Menlyn Maine precinct, the **Sun Arena** is a new home for large events in Gauteng with 8,500 seats. The **Maslow Time Square**, including the Casino & Entertainment Hotel, offers 238 rooms with 3 and 4 star-standards.

### Townships, the new appeal

'Township' is the term used to indicate the undeveloped and previously racially segregated urban areas at the edge of towns and cities. As tourism is one of South Africa's fastest growing sectors, the Pro-Poor-Tourism (PPT) was an approach to generate net benefits for the less privileged. Recent results show that township tourism is considered to be moderately successful in terms of direct poverty alleviation.

To follow the footprint of PPT, South African National Convention Bureau and Gauteng Convention Bureau have dedicated their attention to develop townships not only as a side-visit or an incentive, but as business destinations. Since social responsibility is one of the major topics of the MICE industry, they want to generate tangible economic impact for the townships by bringing events there.

Though business events can bring three times more revenue than leisure tours, it is also important to bear in mind

that business travellers are way more demanding and much less patient than mainstream tourists. In my opinion, governmental sector has a key role to play by establishing township environment policy, in order to organise the area on a community level, as well as providing professional training programs for the locals. Private sectors such as PCOs and DMCs should take part in the market development actively under the support of the authorities.

The South African National Convention Bureau has already taken action by bringing their annual workshops to Soweto and using local venues as well as local event organisers. The top 100 international MBA students were welcomed in Philippi Township for their workshops under the support of Cape Town Convention Bureau.



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# The Love of **Tshwane** for **Meetings** and **Events**

The City of Tshwane, in South Africa, is a knowledge hub and a unique metropolitan African destination. It offers an authentic immersion in villages and townships, as well as the participation of the culturally diverse diplomatic community. It is a city with unique attractions, four universities, major manufacturing plants, the majority of South Africa's research facilities, and where travellers can get an 'out of Africa' experience within 60km of a major city centre. Tshwane is a fountain of leisure, knowledge and innovation.

Striving to become an international business travel destination of choice, the City of Tshwane has identified business tourism as a catalytic economic game changer. The local, regional and international associations' meetings market is seen as one of the most resilient sectors in the travel industry during times of economic turbulence. Furthermore, Tshwane is uniquely positioned to respond to this market with relevant content and innovation - provided through its academic, research, manufacturing and diplomatic capabilities and ties.

## The power of business events

Business events - such as conferences, exhibitions and tradeshows - have the ability to draw focus on an industry and subsequently a destination. The aim of business events of this nature is to grow the industry transaction of a particular sector through building relationships and offering opportunities. As such, the City of Tshwane appreciates the power of business events in catapulting the economy.

Fittingly, the Tshwane Economic Development Agency (TEDA), recently hosted the Tshwane Trade and Investment Summit (TTIS), which took place at the CSIR International Convention Centre between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. The Summit showcased 20 bankable projects to potential investors in five priority sectors, namely:

- Tourism
- Energy and Renewables
- Agro-processing
- Automotive
- Property and Construction

At this Trade and Investment Summit, the City of Tshwane made a commitment to 'reducing red tape and rolling out the red carpet for investment and business.'

Business events are still the most lucrative segment of the tourism industry with the growth of facilities for meetings and events being seen worldwide.



▲ Sun Arena at Time Square



▲ Exhibitions are Good Business

The presence of these events shows the drive for innovation and research in Tshwane, which is what makes the city an extraordinary location to host meetings and events.

The support given to organisers by the Tshwane Convention Bureau is unsurpassed. Organisers in the MICE industry are guaranteed assistance with bids, site inspections and destination information. In addition, the Convention Bureau is able to facilitate meetings with local suppliers, negotiate accommodation rates, help with venue sourcing and obtain high-end incentives.

Business travel and events are core to the Bureau, which is focused on building Tshwane's local economy.

For organisers, the City of Tshwane has a smorgasbord of offerings: from great conference venues to a strategic location, from a selection of choice incentives to enticing tourism experiences, from access to experts in a range of fields to a wide choice of entertainment and lifestyle options.

We are looking to the future to attract more meetings and events to South Africa's capital and we are saying confidently that Tshwane is open for business. We look forward to welcoming associations and other business events planners to our beautiful city.

Tshwane has seen a growth in events coming to the city due to the increased capacity of the destination, namely the Sun International, Time Square Arena, as well as Maslow and Capital Hotels in the Menlyn precinct.

The forward-book for business events in Tshwane is growing with congresses confirmed for 2020 including:

- The World Association of Industrial Technology Organisations (WAITRO) Summit 2020. Dr Ndumiso Cingo, Manager for Strategic Partnership at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said: "The CSIR is honoured to have been selected to host this important event in partnership with WAITRO. We look forward to successfully hosting this milestone event which will also mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WAITRO."

- The World Congress of Music Therapy 2020, which will be attended by some 1500 delegates. Mrs Ilse van Niekerk, Chairperson of the South African Music Therapy Association said: "We are proud to inform you that the World Congress of Music Therapy is being hosted at the University of Pretoria 7-11 July, 2020. The World Congress is held every three years in different elected countries, in partnership with the World Federation of Music Therapy. The year 2020 signals 21 years of the Master's Music Therapy training at the University of Pretoria and 26 years of music therapy in South Africa, with its early beginnings at the University of Cape Town. In celebrating these milestones, we could think of nothing more appropriate than hosting the World Congress for the very first time on African soil. The theme for the congress is 'The Polyrythms of Music Therapy'.

▼ Worlds Meet in Tshwane



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# ECM Summer School:

## The Meetings Industry Educational Programme to be Held in Turin in 2020

European Cities Marketing and Turismo Torino e Provincia announced that 2020 will see the 34<sup>th</sup> ECM Summer School taking place in Turin, Italy, from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of August. The renowned educational programme on the Meetings Industry will provide 60 new delegates with the basis and know-how to progress a rewarding career in the sector. Constant education and knowledge sharing are the success factors for future business development.

Since 1987, the ECM Summer School sets out the background and context of the Meetings Industry with a focus on European and international best practices. The set-up of the event allows maximum interaction between students and experienced meeting professionals of the ECM Summer School faculty. The format also guarantees students will meet with as many counterparts as possible and that they will be interacting with speakers and peers in plenary sessions, group work, network or social events.

We live in an always evolving world, and the Meetings Industry is no exception. Ongoing education is a success factor for both important and second tiered destinations. The ECM Summer School is an unmissable learning opportunity for all professionals worldwide wishing to develop their knowledge and skills required for a successful career in the conference, meetings, incentive and event industry. The course and content are specifically designed for delegates working for convention bureaux, tourist

offices, congress centres, hotels, venues and airlines. The ECM Summer School is also ideal for those working or wishing to work for DMCs, PCOs, Meeting, event planners and exhibition organisers.

“It’s a crucial task for top management in each organisation, whether it is a Convention Bureau (CVB), tourist board, congress centre, airline, hotel, DMC, PCO or meeting planner, to train every employee continuously,” says Pier Paolo Mariotti, ECM Summer School course leader.

Under the guidance of senior professional leaders from the industry, lessons will include best practice, acquisition of international events, how to adapt to new trends, destination sales, marketing strategies and an understanding of the matrix of client decision making.

“I can truly say that ECM Summer School has been a wonderful experience for me!” said Silvio Hidalgo Gonzalez, Project

22<sup>nd</sup> > 26<sup>th</sup>  
**AUGUST 2020**  
 Turin, ITALY  
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**34<sup>th</sup> ECM  
 SUMMER  
 SCHOOL**

*An unmissable learning opportunity for all professionals working in convention bureaux, tourist offices, congress centres, airlines, hotels, DMCs, PCOs & meeting planners!*



Manager at Antwerp Convention Bureau and student during the 33<sup>rd</sup> ECM Summer School in London. “I brought home lots of new insights from the MICE-industry and I made many new connections with very talented people from all around the world. Thank you, ECM Summer School for the great programme and organization!”

And Mariotti added: “Despite tackling up-to-date issues like new technology, hybrid meetings and green meetings, the winning formula has remained a unique opportunity for young professionals just entering the Meetings Industry to spend three days with some of the biggest names in our business.”

The faculty are all members and/or partners of European Cities Marketing and give their time on a voluntary basis – a way of giving back to the meetings industry: Lone Alletorp Callard (Wonderful Copenhagen), Nalan Emre (IMEX Group), Christian Funk (tw tagungswirtschaft), Barbara Jamison (London & Partners), Sam Johnston (Convention Bureau of Ireland), Cain Leatham (IMEX Group / GB Fitness), Sissi Lygnou (AFEA Travel & Congress Services), Heike Mahmoud (Congress Center Hamburg), Kristin McGrath (Visit Albuquerque), Christian Mutschlechner (retired from Vienna Convention Bureau), Miguel Neves (Miguelseven.com), Mathias Sondermann (SAP), Dennis Speet (ICCA) and Daniel Waigl (CIRSE) led by the course leader Pier Paolo Mariotti, CMP CMM (EURAC Research).

The ECM Summer School qualifies for CMP certification and every student with an ECM Summer School diploma also gets 20 Clock Hours for their overall CMP certification.

## Hello DLO.

### Destination Learning Organisation: Repurpose and reskill

For years now, we’ve talked about the shift from destination marketing to management. Discussed strategies, reasons and trends to support that shift in focus. Related that shift to digital trends of communication, innovation and then, later, overtourism. But perhaps, in our eager discussions and new strategic claims, we have forgotten to ask important questions like: what skills does this shift require? Are the DMOs currently staffed to manage – or better yet lead – destinations? Do you find that you yourself have future ready skills to address the challenges ahead for tourism and destinations? Looking around at your team and your colleagues, do they? And who are the best to learn from – in tourism or elsewhere?

Shifting from marketing to management is more than a strategic claim or slight refocus of your budgets. You can choose to either lean back – and very soon, risk becoming a relic of the past – or you can lean into the opportunities as they come and stay relevant!

During ECM Spring Meeting in Graz, March 11-14, 2020, you will not be leaning back, but get your hands dirty and your heads spinning. You will review the future-readiness of your own skills and those of your team and find inspiration to the journey to become a real DLO – a destination organisation that leads the urban habitat through continuous learning.



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## Stellar **Training Platforms** for Young Professionals

Read the views of **Aoife McCrum**, Director of Digital at SoolNua, and **Gráinne Ní Ghiollagáin**, Business Development Manager at SoolNua - both co-council members at Meetings+Millennials.

The hiring process can be a daunting and time consuming one. Shifting through CVs, sitting through endless interviews, salary negotiations, ensuring it is the correct fit, then the endless coaching and training that goes into that one individual to make sure they can thrive in that role... perhaps after six months, you have a strong new employee!

But the process does not end there. According to LinkedIn's 2018 Workplace Learning Report, 93 percent of employees would stay longer at a company if it invests in their careers. Training and development are no longer optional perks that companies offer, they are expected.

According to the Association for Talent Development, companies with a formalized training program have a whopping

218 percent higher income per employee than companies that don't invest in their staff.

Not only does a comprehensive training programme increase overall profit and productivity, it also signals that employees appreciate and value their people and that they are willing to invest time and money in an individual. Thus, in turn, the employees are motivated and engaged with the company - decreasing the amount of time you would have to spend on the hiring process if they opt to move on.

Understanding what training and development programs to invest in for your employees can be hard to navigate. That's why we have highlighted in the next page three different training opportunities for your millennial employees.

### FYP - Forum for Young Professionals:



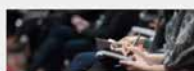
This programme takes place right before IBTM in Barcelona every year and is by application only. Facilitated by ICCA, the 35 delegates that attend the three-day programme are comprised of ICCA members (ranging from convention bureaus, venues, PCO, transport companies and meetings support) and associations. They have to be within the specified target group of less than 30 years of age and hold one to three years of experience in the meetings and events industry. The wide range of demographics allow for a full spectrum of opinions and experiences across a series of educational sessions and deep dive discussions. We had the privilege to attend this programme and we have kept in contact with the people we met - we are even still in the WhatsApp groups years later!

### PCMA - webinars:



Webinar: Event Sustainability: People, Planet and PROFIT

JOIN ONLINE: November 14, 2019 @ 1:00 PM CST



Webinar: Turn Your Conference into a Content Machine

JOIN ONLINE: November 15, 2019 @ 1:00 PM CST

Encourage your employees to sign up for webinars and allocate time in their week to log in without distraction to topics that are of interest to them, so they can further their knowledge and development. There are lots of online education webinars out there and PCMA have a wonderful range of topics to choose from. Think of this as the Netflix for education option: you choose when you want to digest it!

### SITE - Young Leaders Conference:



This conference takes place right before IMEX America in Las Vegas every year. If your employees are within the first five years of their career in the incentive industry, it will help them kick start their professional journey. The SITE Young Leaders' Conference presents an opportunity to meet young professionals from all around the world and gather to learn, energize and focus on both personal and career goals. "Setting aside our precious time is never easy, but when such a great opportunity arises, it is worth it!" Heidi Goettemoeller, Conference Co-Chair, said in her event testimonial. "Attendees get to experience a stellar combination of networking opportunities with each other, with recognised industry leaders

and with keynote speakers. Innovative sessions draw on the experience of being a young professional. With these new connections and education opportunities, I found that my passion for the MICE industry was reignited."

Finally, talk to your team members about what professional development they might be interested in pursuing. There are lots of options!

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# Training the Next Generation of Association Leaders

## Why Flexibility Matters!



As we were preparing for the challenges and objectives for next year, we started first by looking at our internal training programs.

While association professionals strive to provide training to their members, we often overlook the value of training ourselves. When I first began working in the association sector, I was both enchanted and repelled by the variety of new challenges that I faced in my job. From managing complex legal and financial structures, to interacting with governmental institutions, association professionals are now expected to provide expertise in a diverse array of fields. Yet, having the opportunity to learn new skills during a packed work schedule can be difficult even for the most committed of us.

### Internal training matters

A misconception about professional development courses is that they are time-consuming and costly. But this need not be the case. At Interel, we are proud of our culture of continuous professional development. Our in-house training programmes have been tailored to promote ease-of-access and encourage participation. For over a decade, Interel has run “Lunch and Learn”

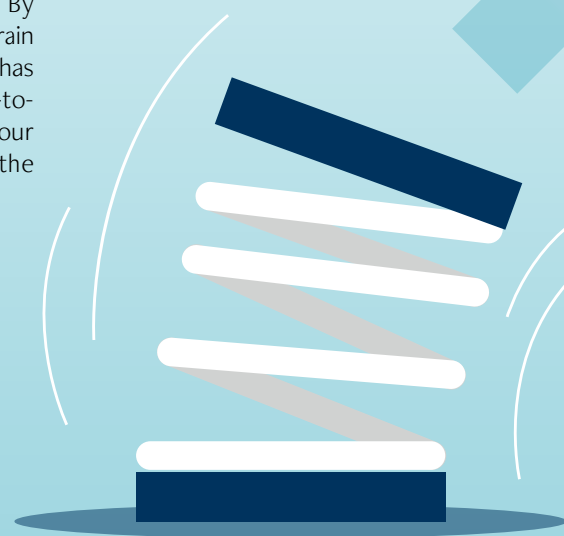
peer-to-peer learning workshops. In these sessions, participants teach each other useful skills ranging from video-editing to budgeting. The key to the success of these training programmes is that they are all offered in a peer-driven environment without pressure of any assessments. Delivered only during lunch breaks, these courses allow colleagues to improve their professional and language skills without having to commit time outside of their working hours. By empowering your staff members to train each other, our experience at Interel has shown us that having a relaxed peer-to-peer learning culture can help make our association be more prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

### Flexible training is more accessible than ever

When we consider external training programmes, the first question we ask is whether the training format is in line with our needs. While training programmes that offer formal accreditation are often welcome, many teams may benefit from more

#### AUTHOR:

Oisín Nolan, Association Coordinator at Interel Association Management





that is not only the substance of training programmes that matters, but also the format in which they are portrayed.

### Higher education can be flexible, too

adaptable and less pressurized learning environments. For instance, both eLearning courses and one-off seminars provide the flexibility that association professionals require. With so many of these adaptable training options available to association professionals today, the next generation of association leaders may prefer formats that can easily fit into their busy work schedule. We have found that organisations such as the FAIB, visitbrussels, the European Society of Association Executives, or national or sectoral equivalents, provide regular courses that directly respond to the challenges that we face in our sector. These organisations are also beginning to transition some of their trainings onto online formats, making it easier for us to take part in them. Our experience has shown us

While the aforementioned training formats provide us with important professional skills, there also exists a range of flexible higher education courses that are available to association professionals. For instance, in recent years in Brussels, certain universities have adapted their course offerings in the field of Association Management to provide the flexibility to those wishing to complete a course alongside their busy work schedules. Both the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and the Solvay School of Management offer executive diplomas in Association Management, allowing association professionals to further their core competencies in the fields of law, accounting, government relations, and management. At Interel, we encourage such commitment to professional development in these areas as we find that such courses have tailored to the needs of our industry. By being provided in different locations or online, these flexible courses allow for the next generation of

association leaders to be equipped with the professional skills that they need.

When countering the new disruptions that our sector faces, professional development opportunities continue to be a great tool for association professionals to come up with useful skills. As Eric Ries, author of the book 'The Lean Startup', says: "The only way to win is to learn faster than anyone else." We find that training can both translate into tangible results for our associations whilst equally meeting the professional development needs of our team. What each style of training discussed in this article has in common is that they balance realistic learning outcomes with the ongoing professional responsibilities of association professionals. By promoting these flexible professional development opportunities in your organisation, you can prepare the next generation of association leaders for the challenges of tomorrow, without having to sacrifice the business needs of today.



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# The Power of **Accessible Education** for Economic Growth

At the heart of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, lie 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set to create a better world. The fourth sustainability goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – a principle IAPCO is very much aligned with in achieving its own mission: 'to raise the standards of service amongst its members and other sectors of the meetings industry by means of continuing education and interaction with other professionals.'

**E**ducation fuels growth, drives job creation and opens new investment opportunities. We appreciate that, by building capacity in standards of professional conference organisation, this provides the building blocks on which economic growth can flourish. International meetings create a buzz, build public and political awareness, and provide a focus for the host destination to showcase excellence. All of which leads to inward investment and job creation.

IAPCO is committed to do its bit providing everyone interested in the economic impact of conferences with the right education to meet the IAPCO quality standard as an integral component of the infrastructure required to open new destinations for international meetings.

As part of our overarching education strategy, IAPCO is particularly focused on achieving three targets from SDG4 by 2030:

1. Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

2. Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
3. Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

“Education is a fundamental right and the basis for progress in every country,” the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. “Prosperous countries depend on skilled and educated workers. The challenges of conquering poverty, combating climate change and achieving truly sustainable development in the coming decades compel us to work together. With partnership, leadership and wise investments in education, we can transform individual lives, national economies and our world.”

## So how are we making progress?

We know that the workforce's education plays a major part in the economy's performance and growth. According to UNESCO, education generates productivity gains: the increase in the average educational attainment of a country for one year means an annual per capita GDP growth from 2 to 2.5 per cent.

Existing evidence also supports that "the quality of education, measured by the knowledge that students gain as depicted in tests of cognitive skills, is substantially more important for economic growth than the mere quantity of education," Eric A. Hanushek reports.

We are living in a knowledge-based economy where the workforce's intellectual ability is, and should be, treated as an asset worth investment.

There is now a greater need than ever for educational programmes to be regularly refreshed to reflect industry best practice, as well as a need for courses to be affordable, accessible and convenient. IAPCO's approach to education combines a mixture of face-to-face and online learning to accommodate different learning types, geography and resources.

IAPCO supports experienced and novice organisers build and refresh their knowledge to successful bidding for international meetings with key destination, ambassadors and commercial stakeholders.

We adopt a collaborative approach working closely with CVBs and other key destination partners to ensure that EDGE education help destinations attract international meetings by developing a locally skilled infrastructure.

"One of the greatest sessions I've had is learning about how PCOs actually work. Because we are the CVB, we must work with clients, PCOs, suppliers, local hosts and decision makers. Looking at different points of view has been an eye-opener for me," said Dylan Redas Noel, Head of Industry Development at Sarawak Convention Bureau in Malaysia.

"I learned a lot from everyone in the room. It's a whole different perspective. Everyone was participating in a discussion and debating. Everyone's input was just priceless in the room and in the session," said Araya Rungsang, Manager at the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau.

"IAPCO EDGE Seminar is a great opportunity for the delegates who would like to know more about the meeting industry or MICE industry. The knowledge they share is very practical and very useful for us to know more about client communication. I think it's a good concept to remind me as PCOs which we have to think more about the client. We are the platform to connect them together to realise the same goal and vision," said Jakel Lin, Project Manager at GIS Group in Taiwan.

"Durban, South Africa, has become a trending destination for International events. International events and specifically associations events have a huge economic impact on the destination. Moreover, on the knowledge legacy the event brings with it," said Ori Lahav, VP Clients and Operations at Kenes.

Our immediate focus is to develop our portfolio of online education and, by doing so, provide accessible education to build PCO skills for all - particularly for those in emerging regions.

"In today's knowledge-driven economies, access to quality education and the chances for development are two sides of the same coin," Børge Brende, President of the World Economic Forum, said. "All countries, regardless of their national wealth, stand to gain from more and better education."

By providing quality educational content online IAPCO's insights and knowledge can reach a greater audience, helping to substantially increase accessible, affordable education. IAPCO is committed to promoting quality education, furthering our abilities and sharing best practices - leaving no one behind and providing education for all.

### AUTHORS:

Jan Tonkin, Managing Director, The Conference Company, and Barbara Calderwood, Divisional Director Associations, MCI UK. With thanks to Dylan Redas Noel, Araya Rungsang, Jakel Lin, Ori Lahav, Karine Desbant, Avinash Chandarana, Haley So and MCI for contributing to this article.

### ABOUT IAPCO: MEETING QUALITY

IAPCO (International Association of Professional Congress Organisers) is the leading international association for professional conference organisers. Its mission is to raise the standards of service among its member organisations and other sectors of the meetings industry through continued education, connection and support. IAPCO represents today 135 companies comprised of over 9100 professional congress organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries.



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# Shared Learning: Bringing Education Opportunities to National Associations

Vikas Tembhare is the Managing Partner at DTORR, which is dedicated to consulting and development of the Association, Education & Meeting Industry. DTORR organised the Association Education Workshop for Indian associations on September 7<sup>th</sup> in the city of Hyderabad, India.

Swapping knowledge and experiences, we can empower a community or an entire industry. The constant exchange of notes and a strong connection are a must even for associations. While in many countries the national associations have well-established networks and a history of educational programmes, others are still in their infancy.

India is one such example of a nation with incredible civil society potential. Although India has well over a million associations, which may account for as much as an estimated third of the country's GDP, they lack a platform to come together to learn from each other. Education is non-negotiable when it comes to increasing the work and success of associations. It is crucial that this

education comes to the associations as many do not have the resources necessary to seek and attend events outside their region.

With this goal in mind, DTORR organised the Association Education Workshop on 7 September as a flagship event to bring together associations from all industries and fields to network and to share challenges and solutions.

“The primary agenda of the Association Education Workshop was to bring the non-profit industry's workforce together on one platform for exchanging knowledge and networking,” Vikas Tembhare, Managing Partner of DTORR said. “This was our first event in India and we had a huge response. We would try to repeat

it in different parts of India for the Industry. We thank all of our partners for their support.”

The workshop held at the Novotel Hotel, Hyderabad International Convention Center in Hyderabad, was attended by associations from the state of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and brought together many experts. These experts shared their knowledge on a variety of topics such as good governance, internationalisation, cross-cultural communication, professionalisation, growth strategies, governmental support and membership through panel discussions and interactive workshops.

‘Interactive’ and ‘engaging’ were the adjectives most used by the delegates. For many associations it was the first time they had a structured opportunity to exchange ideas with associations in other fields and, despite the exterior differences, the delegates shared many of the same concerns about their present situations, as well as future possibilities and challenges.



◀ Vikas Tembhare (on the left) - [info@dtorr.in](mailto:info@dtorr.in)



UIA supported this Workshop by providing a speaker

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# Educating on Responsibility

The information overload regarding “sustainable businesses” leaves even the most carefree event manager feeling overwhelmed and helpless when it comes to delivering ‘responsible event management’. Where does one start?

The meetings sector is almost synonymous with words such as single use (2018 word of the year according to the Collins English dictionary), food waste and carbon emissions. If you throw in the effects of over-tourism in the local community and the non-regulation of workers’ rights in exotic destinations, you’re all but ready to give it up for good.

In fact, the answer is pretty simple. As the late great Nelson Mandela sought to teach us, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”

## Externally:

### Build Capacity

Some convention bureaus are already leading the way in educating their suppliers. Lyon CVB recently launched an Engagement Charter which alerts and

commits providers to a series of behaviours that may have otherwise previously gone unactioned, for example efficient energy, waste and water management.

### Communicate

Your association already has a sustainability strategy? Fantastic! Tell everyone. Success stories, good communication and awareness raising activities are a brilliant way to educate stakeholders and inspire new approaches. Best practice examples of strategy communication from this year GDS Index include Vienna, Glasgow and Copenhagen CVBs.

### Educate Delegates

Many of us have heard of the Palau Pledge (a passport stamp that commits visitors to the island of Palau to respectful behaviour, considering their environmental impact). Why not adapt this for your delegates? Educate them on local customs and the environmental impacts of their participation and how they can be respectful of both during their time at your meeting.

## Internally:

### Build Capacity

A wealth of courses for integrating sustainability into Event Management are now available. Associations, chambers of commerce, local government and



## AUTHOR'S BIO

**Rebecca Johnson** is a Sustainability Consultant for the GDS Index, a destination level movement that benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of destinations, encouraging them to become more sustainable places to visit, meet in and thrive in.

private enterprise have all understood the necessity of gearing up. Monaco and Bangkok CVB recently provided forums for the EIC Sustainable Event Professional Certificate course, as well as sustainable guidelines for their own staff.

### Educate Yourself

Get online, get reading and learning. The GDS Index offers a sustainability ranking and profile of 58 cities worldwide, permitting associations to see for themselves those destinations invested in sustainable development.



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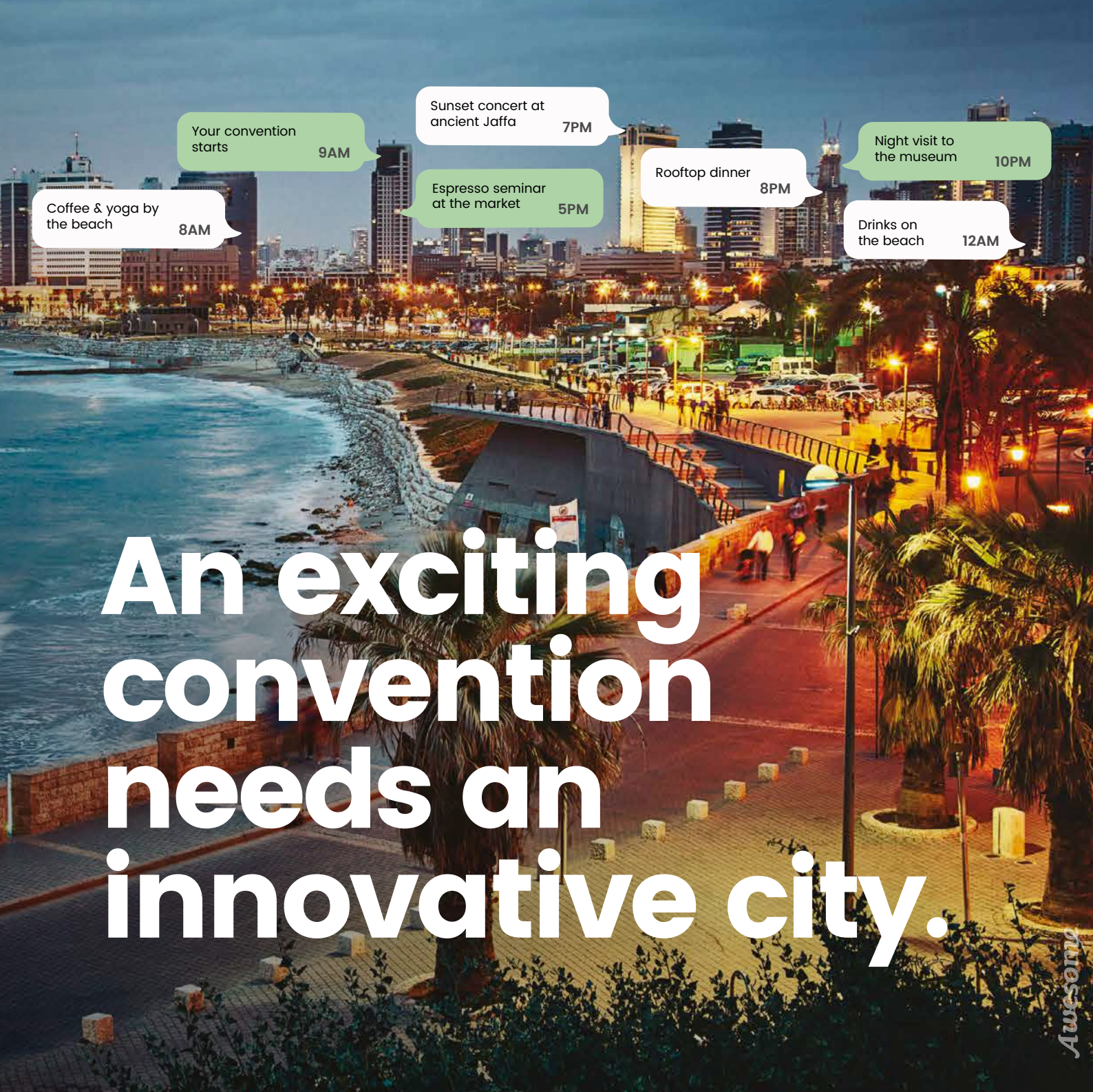
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