

Headquarters

JULY 2023 #110 BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY



THE ASSOCIATION
MAGAZINE

Aboriginal Australia

A Guide to New Indigenous
Experiences

IGLTA Global Convention 2024

Riding the Rainbow in Osaka

Inclusion Europe

"Nowadays, inclusion has
become everything but people
with disabilities"

World Parkinson Congress 2023

Bringing Barcelona Closer to
Parkinson's Patients!

Cover Story FIEXPO 2023

A Breath of Fresh Air From
Panama



WHERE DO WE STAND ON DIVERSITY,
EQUITY AND INCLUSION?



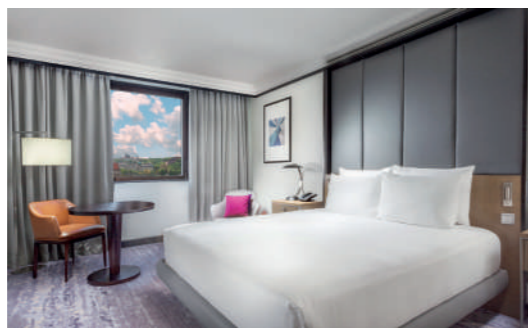
The Place For Big Imaginations



Hilton Prague is an award-winning downtown business hotel located in the heart of the immersive and vibrant Czech capital. With four floors of meeting spaces, a large capacity of guest rooms, three restaurants, two bars, and multiple convention and banquet spaces, catering for groups of various sizes from 10 up to 2000 delegates, the hotel provides the ideal location and facilities for any potential meeting and event in one welcoming, contemporary-design space.

Hilton Prague has been recently ranked as the Best Hotel for Meetings in Central Europe by industry-leading meetings, events, and hospitality technology provider, Cvent.

Hilton Prague, Pobřežní 1, Prague, Czech Republic, 186 00, prague.hilton.com, +420 224 841 111



Editor's Letter



WE ARE ALL SIBLINGS!

AUTHOR: MARCEL A.M. VIßERS, EDITOR IN CHIEF

We are all equals – at least that is what we are often told. For a long time, I doubted this statement, because I was brought up with a big difference between boys and girls. In many countries, there is still a big difference between men and women in companies and organisations. And there is still a lot of preaching that we are all siblings on this earth. Sure, but there is still a big but. Fortunately, a new definition has emerged in our society that shows us the many differences between people and how we have to learn to live with them if we want to move forward. And any progress in the way we think, feel and act takes at least 50 years to grow. Before we turn to the articles in this issue of *HQ*, let's take a quick look at the concept of diversity.

Diversity is about the kinds of differences we can experience with each other. The visible ones (ethnicity, binary gender, age, etc.) and the invisible ones (non-binary gender, religion, culture, character, beliefs, politics, etc.). Diversity is about the mix of differences between people: demographic (age, religion, gender, sexual diversity, culture), physical abilities, as well as differences in character, level of education, areas of expertise, organisational culture, etc. In short, diversity is about all the differences between people.

All well and good, but how do we deal with this concept on a daily basis? It is often exciting when we start talking about this topic. Not everyone wants to be confronted with another religion; not everyone believes that there are only boys and girls. And yet we cannot get away from the idea that experiencing diversity can bring great benefits to society. People who think very differently are often more creative, more active and often achieve results that the outside world says are impossible. Yes, it is possible, by embracing differences and extending them to those around you. But we have only just begun to think this way – the fifty-year wait is not over yet.

“ Diversity is about the kinds of differences we can experience with each other. The visible ones (ethnicity, binary gender, age) and the invisible ones (non-binary gender, religion, culture, character, beliefs, politics, etc.)



CONTENTS

JULY 2023

- EDITOR'S LETTER** — 3
- INTRO** — 6
- HQ ESSENTIAL**
 - Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference — 8
 - Inclusion Europe — 10
 - SongDivision — 12
 - World Parkinson Congress — 14
 - IGLTA Global Convention — 16
 - UIA World Congress of Architects — 18

- DESTINATION INTERVIEWS**
 - Aboriginal Australia — 22
 - Christchurch — 26
 - London and ExCel — 28
- EVENTS**
 - FIEXPO 2023 — 30

- PCO INSIGHTS**
 - World PCO Alliance — 33
 - Kenes — 36
 - Congrex Americas — 38
- ASSOCIATION INSIGHTS**
 - ESAE — 40
 - IAPCO — 42
 - CityDNA — 44
 - AIPC — 46
 - Cvent — 47

THE ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE

BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Marcel A.M. Vissers
marcel@meetingmediagroup.com

MAGAZINE MANAGER
Manuel Fernandes
manuel@meetingmediagroup.com

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Vivian Xu
vivian@meetingmediagroup.com

EDITOR
Jesús Guerrero Chacón
jesus@meetingmediagroup.com

RESPONSIBLE EDITOR & ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
Mechelseplein 23/1
2000 Antwerpen, Belgium

SOUTH KOREA REPRESENTATIVE
Soohoon Oh
soohoonoh@medireponline.com

FINANCE & ACCOUNTING
Farhana Khan
T. +32 (0)3 226 88 81
finance@meetingmediagroup.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
65€ in Belgium
75€ in the EU
95€ in the rest of the world

Cover photo © Antonios Ntoumas from Pixabay



Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference

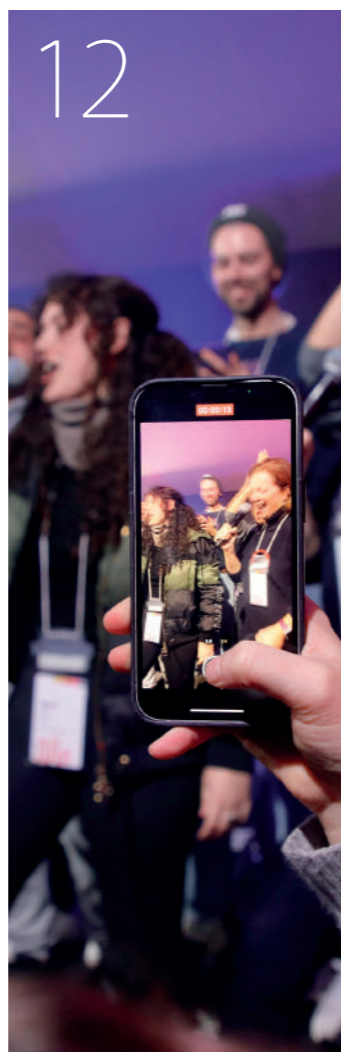
To gather, dream and amplify our voices



8

SongDivision

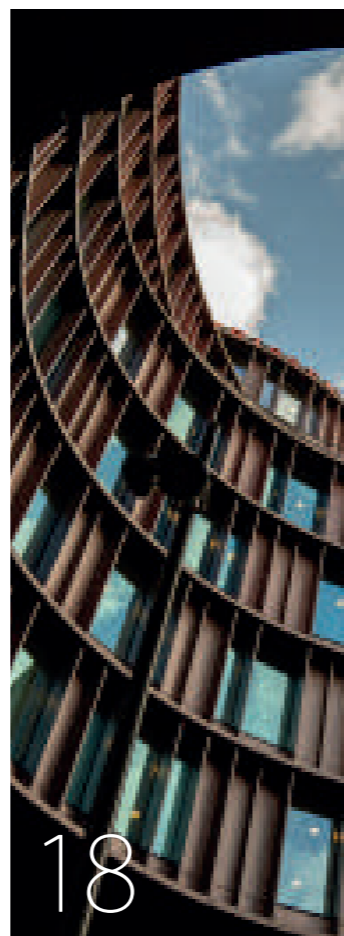
Unleashing the science of music



12

UIA World Congress of Architects

Sustainable futures - Leave no one behind



18

Christchurch

A city in pursuit of balance



26

FIEXPO 2023

A celebration of LATAM meetings industry in Panama



30

Congrex Americas

Associations are both subtle and powerful



38

ESAE's Path to inclusive excellence for all associations



40

Making Room for Everybody!

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES (HE / HIM / HIS), HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

It is not unusual that at the end of another issue, I find myself wondering about my own considerations on that particular topic. And it is no wonder that my notions of **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)** have been greatly expanded after speaking with so many key players and industry experts. According to a recent *IBTM Gender Equality Report*, in a global sample of 2,000 people working in the event management industry it was found that 76.9% are women. A female-dominated industry, one would say. However, the percentage of men in the industry increases significantly with seniority levels; and when it comes to directorial positions, of that sample only 16% of the women included were at this level of seniority, compared to 32% of men. Merit over stats? I'll let you guess. In another report, a *2022 Equity Benchmarking Study* by the *Events Industry Council* found that 61% of event professionals surveyed identified themselves as white, with minimal representation of other ethnicities, especially in senior management where only 15% are black and with only 6% representation at board level. The study also found that employed event professionals (83% of all respondents) are significantly more dissatisfied with DEI in the industry than those who are self-employed or have alternative employment types.

But that is only the tip of the iceberg! To the naked eye, it may appear that DEI refers only to criteria of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Well, there are many more situations of exclusion and underrepresentation than meets the eye. Take, for example, our 'Association Profile' **Inclusion Europe** – an association that fights for equal rights and the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their

families in the European ecosystem. According to them, within the 705 deputies that make up the European Parliament, only 10 represent the approximately 100 million citizens who have some type of intellectual disability. They ask, "where is our representation, diversity and inclusion?" Despite all this, the pages that follow show some positive directions that associations and destinations can take together: The **World Parkinson Congress** held in **Barcelona** was a shining example of how an event can educate society and train frontline staff to accommodate delegates with Parkinson's disease; **Osaka**, which will become the first city in Asia to host the **IGLTA Global Convention 2024**, is demonstrating a leadership position in the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community and a clear commitment to discrimination-free travel spaces and experiences; and **Copenhagen**, which celebrated its **UIA World Congress of Architects** largely because of its urban design that emphasises human scale, inclusion and public service. Three Australians convention centres explain how they adapted their services and event bidding to the needs of their First Nations, and our friend **David de Alves** describes what he saw at the **Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference** connecting people from many fringes and providing spaces where differences melt away and opportunities flourish.

If these DEI principles only serve the trends of the moment, mere protocol formalities or over-imposed participation quotas, they will miss the root of the matter: as our collaborator Sven Bossu tells us in his chronicle, it is all about values! To make room for everybody!

HQ ESSENTIAL INTERVIEWS



- 8 Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference
"To gather, dream and amplify our voices"
- 10 Inclusion Europe
"Nowadays, inclusion has become everything but people with disabilities"
- 12 SongDivision
Unleashing the science of music to engage event attendees
- 14 World Parkinson Congress 2023
Bringing Barcelona closer to everyday life for Parkinson's patients
- 16 IGLTA Global Convention 2024 Osaka
Riding the rainbow in Japan!
- 18 UIA World Congress of Architects
"Sustainable futures - Leave no one behind"

& STORIES

Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference: To Gather, Dream and Amplify our Voices!

Throughout the association, conference and meetings sector, our most common core objective should always be the notion of bringing people together. In connecting people, we provide spaces where opportunities can be explored, different perspectives can be shared and ultimately new types of collaboration can occur. *By David de Alves (he/they)*



more than delivery agents. It is only through active engagement and participation that they ensured the many diverse stakeholders and community participants were able to both contribute and take away the kind of empowered involvement that defines an authentic conference experience.

It has been inspiring to see how innovative conference design, delivery and evaluation has led to such positive outcomes for conference delegates, partners and organisations. Engaging with various stakeholders, conducting consultations and applying accessibility standards should be an opportunity to engage with your audience and members rather than a burden.

It is only when we take stock from first principles and try to understand the intersectionality between diverse groups that we can genuinely commit to the kinds of solutions that open up space for dialogue, collaboration and empowerment among diverse and marginalised voices.

While we all have an innate drive to bring people together, we must recognise that genuine engagement means we should always strive to create platforms that equitably allow for all voices and perspectives to be heard. Moreover, these principles and commitments should not simply be treated as a “nice to have” or optional, but as core business – anything less often simply fails the authenticity test, where delegates, staff and the community can sense the difference between shallow and deep commitment.

While it is paramount that venues play their part – it is also crucial that other stakeholders like convention bureaus and conference organisers take their lead. It is exciting to see the work undertaken by **David Jefferys** from **LGBT-MPA** and **Rory Archibald** from **New Intent**, who through their respective organisations have long advocated for a deeper understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion within the international conference sector.

It’s thrilling to note that the next Worldpride will be hosted in Washington DC in 2025, followed by Amsterdam in 2026.

Surely by then we can aspire for the conference industry to learn from the cutting-edge design and experience by bringing in those with lived experience and all those who have a commitment towards equality, diversity and inclusion. Throughout the international conference and meeting sector, varying principles often come in and out of fashion – while others are truly universal and at the core of what we do.

All these principles and case examples of embracing diversity, equity and inclusion should be treated as fundamental first principles – as it is only when we embrace all perspectives can our sector be at the forefront of welcoming and including all people.

Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference showcases how the ideas of diversity and inclusion are at the very roots of what brings us together and drives a successful event – one that not only informs but also transforms its participants. The conference programme allowed for participants to embrace the opportunities that come from connecting with each other. It not only tasked delegates to dream of better futures but went further in empowering that vision by amplifying the voices that can make it happen.

Success is realised when gathering together meets purpose as we are all stronger when we work together. When one of us is empowered – it is all of us that benefit.

Ultimately it is only when we see ourselves as part of the same rainbow of humanity, that we can then commit ourselves to creating events, spaces and platforms that truly allow for all people to gather, dream and amplify towards a more just and inclusive world.

David de Alves, Executive Director of International STEM Council, has worked in the non-profit association sector organising academic conferences over the last twelve years. His past work also includes community engagement, political campaigning and marriage equality advocacy in his home country of Australia.

Thus, it seems fitting that the mission of the recent **Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference** was “GATHER, DREAM AND AMPLIFY”, which so succinctly echoes these very principles – principles that we all instinctively rely on to create welcoming, meaningful and impactful events.

Sydney Worldpride Human Rights Conference exemplifies the fact that we can only ever create meaningful impact when we bring people together in one shared space. It is within a common collective space that people find themselves empowered to create the kind of bonds that allow for collaboration, consensus and change.

It was the largest LGBTQIA+ human rights conference ever held in the Asia-Pacific region, attracting over two thousand in-person delegates. The conference, which took place at the beginning of March 2023, brought together activists, community members and political leaders from across the world to discuss the issues and challenges facing LGBTQIA+ people globally. Combining inspiring keynotes, panels and roundtables with interactive workshops, performances and networking events, the event set an important milestone on how to embed diversity and inclusion principles. Moreover, by committing to a truly responsive content delivery model, where core design and engagement with stakeholders was central, it allowed for an event that was truly community-led with a focus on delegate empowerment.

The **Sydney International Convention & Exhibition Centre (ICC Sydney)**, where the event took place, has showed their pre-existing commitments including accessible walkways, ramps, lifts, braille signage and hearing augmentation devices. Additionally, organisers also implemented further measures including Auslan (sign language used by the Australian Deaf community) and international sign language interpreters for sessions. Further access to audio description and captioning was available via projected screens and an easily downloadable app.

As part of its commitment to Indigenous participation and reconciliation, there was an emphasis on incorporating First Nations representation throughout event delivery as well as a Welcome to Country at the **Darling Harbour Theatre** to acknowledge, celebrate and pay respect to the Traditional Owners of the Land.

In order to create safe and accessible spaces for all participants, inclusive and non-gendered bathroom signage was utilised. Similarly, increased emphasis was placed on accessible toilet access for those with hidden disability and medical needs. The conference also provided space for mental health resources in allocating a wellbeing lounge, quiet/sensory room and creative and therapy rooms for the physical and mental health needs of delegates.

These world-leading case examples demonstrate the importance of venues and hosts treating their role as



Today, associations increasingly wish to recognise the strategic importance of **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)** as a management discipline, working to incorporate a wide range of demographic groups into their staff and Boards. Inclusion Europe is a membership association created in 1988 that represents people with intellectual disabilities and their families in all aspects of society, advocating their interests and concerns to the European institutions and the United Nations. The main issues they grapple with continue to be education, accessibility, voting rights, employment and health care, as well as the right to decide and non-discrimination, as many of these people are under guardianship.



“Nowadays, **inclusion** has become everything but **people with disabilities**”



To talk about all these issues that directly affect millions of people in Europe, we sat down with director **Milan Šveřepa** (*featured up*) and advocacy expert **Soufiane El Amrani** (*featured down*).

What are the red flags you are dealing with in the scope of your work?

Milan Šveřepa: The main one is still social segregation. The latest surveys show that there is much work to be done to close down a number of care institutions in Europe, as the number of people placed in these institutions has not changed in ten years. Despite much work done at this level, these asylums continue to take in people who should be more actively integrated. By placing elderly, children or disabled people in a nursing home, they are deprived of their individuality and their social relationships. Big part of everyone’s lives is the constant overcoming of daily challenges, and this cannot be achieved with the overwhelming protection of an institution of this nature. We argue that people have the right to live in their own homes, make decisions about their lives, have friends, jobs, things that are absolutely normal for most people in society. The origin and the pernicious effects of this institutionalisation in the 1960s are well described in the film “*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*”.

How have these two years of the pandemic affected your work and social advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities?

MS: Like so many other associations, we closed our offices and that was a problem for an advocacy

organisation like ours. However, I think we found some relevant aspects: members started to participate more in meetings as they were no longer restricted to a specific location, which is why online meetings turned out to be an effective way to upscale our participation. Another interesting element is that with the discontinuation of the original format, we have partnered with organisations across Europe to run their own sessions and programmes within our self-advocacy conference. This has greatly increased the participation and decentralisation of the debate, as many of these organisations operate at a local level and deal with culturally bound issues. We also organised events in specific countries under a common umbrella, which was beneficial both for general participation and for replicating other formats with our stakeholders.

What reasons do employers give for not hiring people with intellectual disabilities?

Soufiane El Amrani: They are afraid to hire a person with intellectual disabilities because the idea that we can be too burdensome or too dependent at work is still perpetuated. Often, these are just allegations to justify the alleged inability of these candidates. Others imply that it is very complicated and time-consuming to integrate the person into the group dynamics. It all comes down to time, money and resources to guide that person on this journey. It is also important to disseminate understandable

information about texts, guidelines and procedures within our easy-to-read programme. That’s the point of having information written in a way that people can more easily understand.

“*If the recruiter insists on the disability aspect, they will be excluding most of these people from an internship or experience to build a career.*”

How can educational and social barriers be broken down to include these people in working environments?

SEA: I would give them the opportunity to apply and to move on to more advanced stages of recruitment. I remember my two interviews for Inclusion Europe, even before they called me to tell me the job was mine. That opportunity gave me enormous confidence in my abilities and professional worth.

MS: There are many things that organisations do unintentionally that end up discouraging people with disabilities from applying by pushing certain roles away from their profile. And there are several barriers that can be easily removed, one of them is unnecessary criteria such as the insistence on an academic degree for a particular job. After all, are they hiring someone for a job with the knowledge and skills that the position requires, or for the requires, the values and attitude the person has?

At a time when DE&I encompasses so many minorities, voices and agendas, isn’t there a risk of these agendas to collide and overshadow each other?

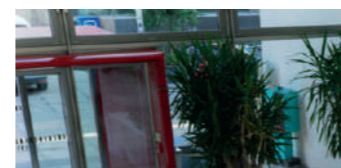
MS: I don’t think it’s a risk, I think it’s already happening. Inclusion has become about everything but people with disabilities. I have been telling this to the Boards of most organisations and companies, as it is becoming very relevant in their corporate identity. If we look at the audience of the conference I spoke at (*European Association Summit 2023 in Brussels*), we come to the same conclusion – in those sessions, everyone stated a number of DEI agendas, except people with intellectual disabilities. Our organisation is called

Inclusion Europe since 1988, and the word “inclusion” has been applied in this sense for decades. Many other activists groups have been incorporated into this, and that is a good progress. But people with disabilities should not be left behind. Take the European Parliament (EP), for example: The EP has 705 Members representing about 450 million citizens, 100 million of whom have some kind of intellectual disability. Among these 705 Members, I believe there are no more than 10 people with disabilities. Where is this representation, diversity and inclusion?

The concept of self-advocacy is a key pillar of your platform as it puts faces and voices to the real problems of these people. Do you think that through these testimonies the message can be better understood?

MS: Absolutely. One of the major reasons for our existence is the visibility of people with intellectual disabilities, highlighting the trials and tribulations they have to go through. As we know, these people tend to be invisible in society, and are often placed in institutions or hidden from society. Obviously, many families and activists are now proactive in fighting for their rights, yet our advocates continue to be segregated from the media, the market, politics, etc. Our main achievement in this regard was the video of the 2019 European elections broadcast directly from the EP, giving huge visibility to the inclusion movement. Our main priority is to normalise relations with the people we represent without isolating them in a bubble. For us, the right to vote is also a very significant part, because in more than half of the EU countries people under guardianship cannot participate in elections. The “**Hear our Voices**” 2023 conference will specifically focus on the development of self-advocacy in Eastern Europe with various self-advocates from countries such as Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine or Romania.

The “Hear Our Voices” conference will take place from September 20-22 in Tallinn, Estonia, and will be entirely driven and designed by self-advocates explaining what it is, how to create it and how to spread it. The purpose will then be to draw attention to this gap and highlight the many stories of this region about social inclusion.



Unleashing the **Science of Music** to **Engage Event Attendees**

Making real connections has become more challenging than ever in a world of in-person, virtual and hybrid events. **SongDivision**, a global people engagement company, has found a powerful solution to create lasting memories among event attendees – music. **Ardie Worsley, Chief Marketing Officer**, tells *HQ* how SongDivision has helped global giants like Netflix, Deloitte and Microsoft, as well as renowned trade shows like IMEX and AIME, deliver impact through the power of music.



Could you tell our readers how SongDivision uses music to create positive energy and memorable moments at meetings and trade shows?

At SongDivision, we harness the power of music to create transformative and unforgettable experiences. We integrate the process of creating live music into face-to-face, virtual and hybrid meetings and trade shows.

In face-to-face meetings, attendees can understandably be anxious when they meet for the first time. This produces cortisol in the brain, making us operate from our amygdala in “fight or flight” mode. Creating music together produces oxytocin, the “cuddle chemical”, moving us into the prefrontal cortex, where we can operate from a place of empathy and creativity, the perfect brain space for collaborating with others.

In virtual and hybrid settings, people often find it hard to form meaningful relationships due to the absence of shared physical spaces and face-to-face interactions. During the pandemic, we adapted our approach to deliver the same level of engagement from face-to-face meetings into virtual and hybrid meetings. We saw first-hand that shared musical experiences were enabling a sense of togetherness, even when people were physically apart.

At trade shows, our artists and musicians create personalised songs for attendees and tailor performances to align with event messaging, creating unique and memorable experiences that leave lasting impressions. We offer songwriting at trade show booths, performances at trade show events, and we also provide interactive songwriting workshops and collaborative jam sessions where attendees can directly engage with music and create.

Apart from creating a positive atmosphere, how can music succeed in making people connect and bond during business events?

Music can be more than a soundtrack at an event. Working as a team to navigate songwriting strengthens bonds and provides a sense of community and connectedness while promoting positive emotions that reduce stress and anxiety.

Our world-class musicians and facilitators have worked with the likes of Paul McCartney, Prince, and Adele. They bring their unique experience to every event, guiding attendees through personal and collective growth moments.

Can you tell us more about the techniques you use to tailor your music to different events (IMEX, AIME, international association events)?

SongDivision has delivered its services to all kinds of events of all sizes ranging from 4 attendees to as many as 100,000 attendees. We work closely with event organisers to understand the event’s purpose and what they want attendees to gain from it before exploring ways to elevate the event experience through music.

Our collaborative music experiences include Song Slams, InstaHit® sessions (songs created on the spot for attendees), Sound Baths, Rock n’ Roll Game Shows and Virtual Happy Hours, among others.

How does SongDivision ensure that the music selection is inclusive and representative of diverse nationalities, ages, cultures, backgrounds, and personal preferences?

Music is a universal language that effectively finds common ground amongst diverse teams. Creating



music collaboratively allows everyone to contribute regardless of age, sex, culture, physicality, or ‘rank’ within the company.

The content is created by the audience members, nobody knows their individual culture better than they do, and they infuse it into their music choices and lyric writing.

Music selection is always guaranteed to be tailored to our audience members as the participants select the music. When SongDivision musicians play well-known songs, they’re doing it based on attendees responding to being asked, “What was your first concert?” for InstaHits® and IntroHits (short, custom songs used to play speakers onto the stage), the style of music is picked by the recipients of the song, not the SongDivision musician.

Is accessibility considered while preparing the music selection for specific events? Making sure attendees with different abilities can engage with the activities?

We encourage event organisers to strive for accessibility in their events for greater inclusion. Our process aims to increase accessibility as we target multiple senses:

- Sight – through visual performances;
- Sound – through the music that is created;
- Touch – through audience engagement with physical instruments and clapping.

We also use lyrics on screens, and guided interaction with our band is always extremely visual. What’s more, we also find that some people learn via writing, which we cover via our lyric writing process.

Do you collaborate with local artists to ensure different perspectives and styles are represented in the music experiences proposed by SongDivision?

SongDivision has a global network of high-calibre session musicians who are songwriters and team-building

facilitators. Our meticulous selection process ensures our clients’ events are led by locally based musicians who have played with the best artists in the world.

How have event organisers measured the success of your music-based experiences at creating positive connections?

Our clients often ask for attendee feedback, and we’ve constantly been told about how our experiences successfully engage their people, promote collaborative environments and ignite creativity. This is down to music selection, the immersive nature of our activities and the uniqueness of the experiences we co-create with our clients.

Clients of SongDivision have advocated for our services, resulting in high amounts of repeat business and high word-of-mouth referrals. SongDivision distributed satisfaction surveys to clients of over 1,200 SongDivision experiences between 2021-2022, and the overall satisfaction level was at the highest level, showing ‘Very Satisfied’ on average.

More info on songdivision.com

In 2022, SongDivision delivered their services to:

- 69,583 participants
- 183 companies
- 16 countries
- 281 events (147 in-person, 112 virtual, 22 hybrid events)
- Group sizes ranged from 4 to 2,000
- Delivered to Fortune 500’s, start-ups, small businesses, associations, non-profits, schools, governments, industry events
- We’ve had individual virtual events with employees logging in from across 5 countries - in 13 languages. We brought work to over 300 musicians. For the first half of the year, SongDivision provided the only work many of them had (as it had done throughout the pandemic) as all ‘live’ music work ceased to exist. This was a vital lifeline to many of them and their families, something the SongDivision team is very proud of.

World Parkinson Congress 2023: Bringing Barcelona Closer to Everyday Life for Parkinson's Patients

The 6th **World Parkinson Congress 2023**, which was held from 4-7 July 2023 in Barcelona, Spain, provided an unparalleled international and interdisciplinary forum to highlight the latest developments in Parkinson's Disease (PD) worldwide. But the benefits for Barcelona go far beyond the economic impact and overnight stays, as the event will leave an invaluable legacy in the city's social and scientific fields.

The congresses are held every three years and provide an international focus for basic scientists, clinical researchers, healthcare professionals and people with Parkinson's disease to come together under one roof to discuss and debate the latest scientific discoveries, medical practices and general care related to Parkinson's disease. The Parkinson congresses are 100% inclusive scientific events, and the 2023 one will take place at the **Barcelona International Convention Centre**, a convenient location in terms of transport and accommodation for all delegates. More than 10 million people live with Parkinson's disease worldwide, around 150,000 of them in Spain, and the **World Parkinson Coalition (WPC)** – the organising body – aims to address its most pressing issues by preparing staff and professionals in Barcelona to interact confidently with delegates attending the congress.

“A significant challenge for people living with PD is travelling comfortably and safely. PD is often misunderstood, so accessibility issues and lack of awareness by local staff can present a myriad of problems causing additional stressors,” **Elizabeth Pollard, executive director of WPC**, said in a statement. More than 4,000 delegates are expected to attend this year's meeting, 50% of them being Parkinson's patients. For the **Barcelona Convention Bureau (BCB)**, ensuring a welcoming and safe experience for congress delegates meant educating public services and hospitality industry leaders about PD, leaving a lasting and conscious impact on the city. This has translated into new alliances between the local Parkinson's community and the service industry so that this relationship and the positive repercussions will continue beyond the week of the congress. The aim on both sides was clear: to leave the city better prepared after the congress was over, ensuring a broader understanding by the local community (at all levels such as hotels, restaurants, public servers) of Parkinson's phenomena and symptoms in multiple and different contexts.

Make the City Parkinson Ready!

A WPC initiative imagined for its host cities, **Parkinson's Ready** is a collaborative training programme aimed at educating and preparing frontline staff in Barcelona to interact with delegates living with disease during the congress. The programme includes a series of tailored training sessions, which began in April and ran through June, for transport workers, hotel and convention centre staff, police and first responders, and airport customs officers, among others – so that this knowledge stays with all those who have been trained and can use this new information with future guests in their hotels, meeting centres, trains, taxis, etc. In Barcelona, the WPC partnered with the Catalan Parkinson's Association, the BCB and AbbVie pharmaceuticals to support the PD community through its legacy training programme both logistically and content-wise. “Our key requirement for any city hosting the congress is that it has to go through our Parkinson Ready Programme otherwise we won't choose that city. One of the reasons why we loved Barcelona so much is that when we presented the plan, they didn't settle for the basics but really went with it in full partnership with the various stakeholders. This is the most all-inclusive programme we've ever deployed in a city,” commented Pollard.

“BCB has employed considerable enthusiasm in actively collaborating with WPC and the Catalan Parkinson's Association to create a high-impact Parkinson's Ready programme as part of its commitment to sustainability and positive impact on society. We firmly believe in the transformative power of conferences and events and strive to ensure they leave a meaningful legacy. We are convinced that the Parkinson's Ready will not only prepare the city to welcome congress participants, but also provide a welcoming and safe experience for all,”

Anna Bueno, Association Meetings Manager at BCB, told HQ. First applied in Glasgow at the 2010 congress, this training programme was the subject of a case study by Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre, which eventually took home the 2011 ICCA Best Marketing Award. Already in 2017, the WPC received the “Incredible Impacts Award” for fully including people with Parkinson's in all planning decisions made ahead of the congress. “By educating leaders in the hospitality and public service sectors about Parkinson's disease, we are also offering the city of Barcelona the opportunity to better understand this disease and to foster greater empathy for those living with it,” Bueno concluded.

“A significant challenge for people living with PD is traveling comfortably and safely. PD is often misunderstood, so accessibility issues and lack of awareness by local staff can present a myriad of problems causing additional stressors.”

What is Parkinson's disease?
It is a brain disorder that causes involuntary or uncontrollable movements, such as tremors, stiffness and difficulty with balance and coordination. Normally, symptoms start gradually and worsen over time. It is caused by a loss of nerve cells in the part of the brain called the substantia nigra responsible for producing a chemical called dopamine.

How to identify the Symptoms?
Knowing the symptoms a person may have is important to avoid unwanted confusion: Slowness or involuntary movements; changes in speech and facial expression; physical blockages.
It is also important to identify if the person is accompanied.

What to do?
Convey calmness, try to communicate; patience for speech; stay away from crowded spaces; do not leave the person alone; do not try to pick someone up if the person falls.





IGLTA Global Convention 2024 in Osaka: Riding the Rainbow in Japan!

The **International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA)** – a global leader in promoting LGBTQ+ travel and an Affiliate Member of the **United Nations World Tourism Organization** – will join forces with the **Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau (OCTB)** to hold its 2024 Global Convention in the Japanese city.

Osaka will become the first host city of the IGLTA Global Convention in Asia, demonstrating a leading position in the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan, and its commitment to discrimination-free travel spaces and experiences. Home to the second largest LGBTQ+ scene outside of Tokyo, Osaka has paid special attention to diversifying its tourism hubs which has resulted in it being the first destination in Japan to develop tourism strategies for the LGBTQ+ community. In 2019, Osaka launched the LGBT Leading Company initiative, assessing organisations for their actions to ensure that all individuals can enjoy the same benefits, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Furthermore, Osaka Prefecture was one of the first regional-level government to implement a same-sex partnership system, for which more than 500 couples have registered as of January 2023.

On the other hand, Osaka is preparing to receive a huge influx of visitors for its **Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan**, undergoing rapid development that goes through mega-conventions like this one. The theme of Expo 2025 is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives", a philosophy that, according to the organisers, is deeply shared with IGLTA's mission. Expectations for LGBTQ+ tourism are also encouraging, with the World Tourism Organisation and the World Travel and Tourism Council ratifying the segment's good momentum and lift in this post-pandemic period. We then asked IGLTA and OCTB about the details of the bidding for this Global Convention, Osaka's LGBTQ+ tourism strategy and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community in the country, and what impacts and repercussions they expect to be there beyond 2024.



Jonathan Lucas, MICE Promotions Specialist at Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau

How did Osaka manage to stand out from the rest when it came to securing the rights for the 2024 IGLTA Global Convention?

To stand out from other cities that are also great MICE destinations, we had to emphasise our commitment to diversity and inclusion. We market Osaka as LGBTQ-friendly, but also as a welcoming environment for all travellers, regardless of nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. We conduct seminars and trainings for accommodations and tour operators to ensure traveller hospitality, and have collaborated with these establishments to raise awareness for LGBTQ+ identities. This is the first time IGLTA has chosen an Asian destination, hence we have worked to help IGLTA members understand how accessible Osaka is and how a convention in Japan would benefit them. Osaka has attended every convention since joining IGLTA in 2018, increasing our presence not only among IGLTA staff but also among members. For example, at the 2022 convention in Milan, we took advantage of IGLTA's sponsorship packages to create spaces for attendees to enjoy and experience Japanese culture and cuisine. These efforts created a great buzz around Japan, and helped to realise that a convention in Osaka would be a great opportunity to establish new connections in Asia.

How important are diversity, equity and inclusion aspects in attracting new events to Osaka? Could this strategy create a trail of meetings and events in the future?



John Tanzella, IGLTA President/CEO

What were the key features and benchmarks within your RFP that tipped you towards the Japanese city?

We value destinations that have strong engagement within the IGLTA global network and within their LGBTQ+ communities, and Osaka definitely demonstrated both. The OCTB has been an active part of IGLTA for five years and the destination is a leader in increasing protections for the local LGBTQ+ community. We also have a very enthusiastic group of IGLTA business members throughout Japan offering their support.

What are the association's goals for attending this convention and the sustained growth of the segment by 2023?

We work to attract a wide range of meetings and events, from life sciences and industry to sports and entertainment, areas that represent some of Osaka's key strengths. However, attracting events that encourage diversity in all aspects is a key facet of our strategic planning, and since the launch of our LGBTQ+ tourism initiatives in 2018, the IGLTA convention is the first event of its kind to be held here that recognises Osaka's diversity and LGBTQ+ friendliness. It will certainly not be the last. We plan to attract more diversity-focused LGBTQ+ events and aim to foster the development of new such events, in our vision for Osaka to become Asia's number one city for LGBTQ+ people gatherings.

What are the outcomes and impacts that you anticipate for the direct benefit of your communities?

The concept of "legacy" was a critical component in our strategy for this convention. We knew that 2024 was the perfect year for IGLTA to come, because the following year we would be hosting the next World Expo. We are working closely with the Expo 2025 organisers on a wide range of projects and ideas to ensure that not only will the Expo be a success, but also that it will leave a legacy for Osaka, especially given that the Expo's main theme is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives". One of the projects we are working on with Expo 2025 is a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and the IGLTA convention represents a crucial part of this strategy with the representation of LGBTQ+ individuals. We anticipate that the attention, momentum and energy of the IGLTA convention will continue to thrive for the 6-month duration of Expo 2025, becoming an integral part of Osaka's identity, just as the influence and globalisation of the 1970 World Expo still remains in Japan today. This legacy will contribute to our goal of becoming Asia's number one city for international tourism and culture.

We are excited to attract tourism businesses throughout Asia to Osaka, many of whom will never have been part of an IGLTA convention before due to accessibility. It's not always easy to understand the impact that attending our convention can have – joining hundreds of like-minded tourism professionals united around the goal of creating more safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ travellers. We are confident that bringing our premier educational and networking event to Asia will leave a lasting impact in terms of inspiration, awareness, and future growth of LGBTQ+ travel.

How do you plan to spread this Japanese successful model in Asia and promote equality, inclusion and safety in LGBTQ+ travel from this convention?

Each IGLTA Global Convention incorporates a **Think Tank** led by our charitable IGLTA Foundation, which unites C-suite leaders to brainstorm solutions for LGBTQ+ travel challenges around the world. A report is then produced to share with the industry at large. This makes the Think Tank in Osaka the perfect forum to explore ways to enhance LGBTQ+ travel experiences in Japan and across Asia and share outcomes that can be applied in other countries.

UIA World Congress of Architects 2023 in Copenhagen: “Sustainable Futures – Leave no one Behind”



Natalie Mossin, President of Congress for the UIA 2023 World Congress of Architects

How did this bid impress and convince the UIA to bring the congress to the Danish capital?

The candidacy focused on how architecture can contribute to the SDGs, because this is the most pressing issue for architecture today. It was this urgency that the Nordic Section presented to voters at the UIA General Assembly. The research and practice

presentations, seminars and exhibitions at the congress address this question: how can the built environment contribute to sustainable futures everywhere? We need to share new practices and research knowledge, experiences and learning globally in order to meet these challenges in time. Copenhagen is also a destination with fantastic architecture with many sites showcasing new sustainable architectural solutions and urban developments. In terms of logistics, it was also a great choice with a central connection through its airport, security for delegates, and a congress venue for over 10,000 guests.

How do you intend to highlight this Scandinavian model within the axes of your programme during the congress?

We considered the city itself as part of the congress programme,

with tours to experience how local solutions can work. We have also partnered with the City of Copenhagen, the City & Port management company *By og Havn*, Danish architects and many others to build a series of experimental pavilions along the port, open to both guests and the general public. In the guided tours and pavilions, visitors will be able to experience 1:1 architecture that addresses, among other things, the need to create inclusive environments and increase accessibility, provide low-cost housing, minimise CO₂ emissions, and building with bio-based and recycled materials. Within the congress venue, guests will find an inspiring range of Nordic speakers in dialogue with others from the rest of the world. We have also invited influential and innovative profiles from science, business, arts and politics, as well as students and young voices.

What common features can be found between a sustainable convention city such as Copenhagen, and the UIA global congress that advocates these values in its strategic plan?

The focus on sustainable development is absolutely crucial as both the city and the congress share the same goals. We saw the city itself as a fundamental part of the congress experience. The city has been named World Capital of Architecture 2023 by UNESCO-UIA as a result of the Nordic Architectural Associations winning the bid for the world congress, and Copenhagen has embraced the title with an extensive programme around architecture and sustainability throughout the year. Following the congress, we hope that the many meetings, exchanges and collaborations have sparked new ideas and ways of designing and building, providing an ongoing dialogue as we work to create more sustainable, equitable and inclusive futures in the architecture of our cities and communities.



Bettina Reventlow-Mourier, Deputy Convention Director - Head of Congress at Wonderful Copenhagen

Do you want to talk about the first steps of the bidding, how the application was put together and what factors and criteria stood out?

It was clear from the outset that the requirements were ambitious and that financial security was essential. We brought together a group of 60 stakeholders representing architects, planners, designers, public authorities, relevant trade associations, organisations

and industry, playing a consistent role as advisors and contributors throughout the tender phase. It took us almost a year to come up with the right proposal. The focus areas in the selection phase were not only the search for an attractive and liveable city with a strong relevance for architects, but also a clear and universal theme with an intellectual and philosophical focus. In many ways, Copenhagen is like a living outdoor laboratory with a wide range of architectural solutions, projects and buildings that delegates can come and experience, so the sector and the city were perfectly aligned. At the same time, Copenhagen has a great tradition of teamwork between public sector institutions, universities and the business community, which means that holding a complex congress like UIA 2023 in Copenhagen can be managed in a professional manner.

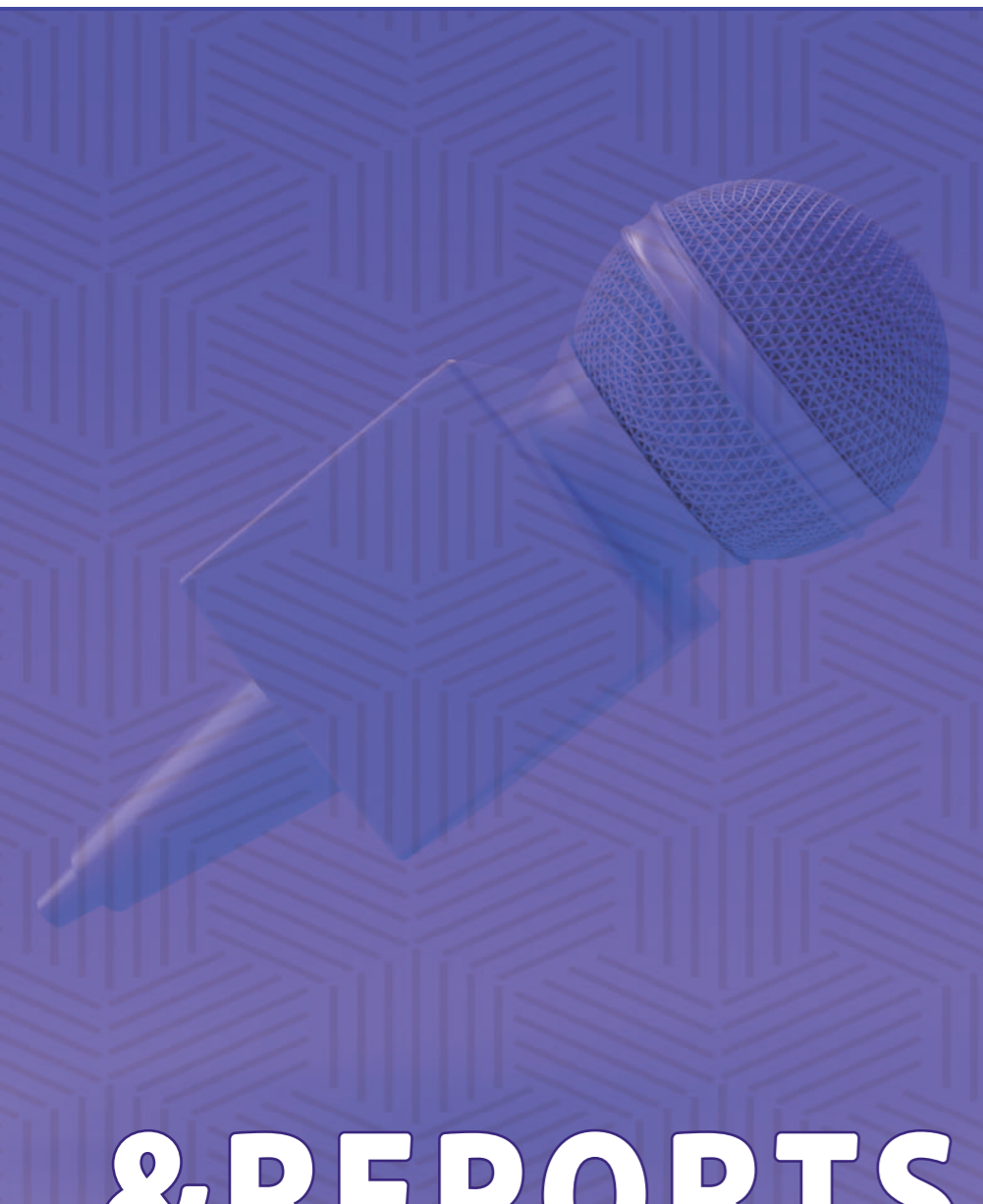
The chosen theme was “Sustainable futures – Leaving no one behind”, as 2023 is halfway to the roadmap for the SDGs 2030. It seemed to us an excellent opportunity to assess the role of the architect and architecture as a contributor to the achievement of these goals by 2030. It is the first time that there is such a direct link between the theme of the congress and the SDGs.

How do you intend this major event to impact the lives of your co-citizens? How will you try to converge the topics of discussion with the challenges of everyday life in Copenhagen?

The congress will address the global challenges we face – both environmental and human – such as climate change and accessibility which are also relevant for the inhabitants of Copenhagen. How can Copenhagen become more resilient to flooding? How can architecture create spaces that encourage better social interaction and inclusion? Challenges to which architecture could provide answers.

Furthermore, the **World Capital of Architecture (WCA)** is the link between the congress and the citizens of Copenhagen and, naturally, our ambition is not only to highlight the fundamental role of architecture, urban planning and culture in sustainable urban development, but also to have a positive impact on the lives of those who live here. The theme of the WCA, “Copenhagen in Common”, and the educational programme co-created between the Municipality and various local partners, continue to focus on the role of architecture in our lives. In addition, the programme also pays attention to inclusive and accessible activities for people with disabilities – an area we hope to continue working on long after the congress and the WCA have ended.

HO DESTINATION INTERVIEWS



&REPORTS

- 22** Aboriginal Australia
A guide to New Indigenous Experiences
- 26** Christchurch
A city in pursuit of balance
- 30** London and ExCel
A unifying value chain for high class delegates!
- 32** FIEXPO 2023
A celebration of LATAM meetings industry in Panama!



STRAWBERRY. BUTTERSCOTCH. CHOCOLATE.

Like ice cream, events come in all flavours.

Whether you run one event or one hundred, Intimate dinners or large scale conferences, Whatever your event needs, we've got you covered.

Get a taste of Cvent's solutions

www.cvent.co.uk



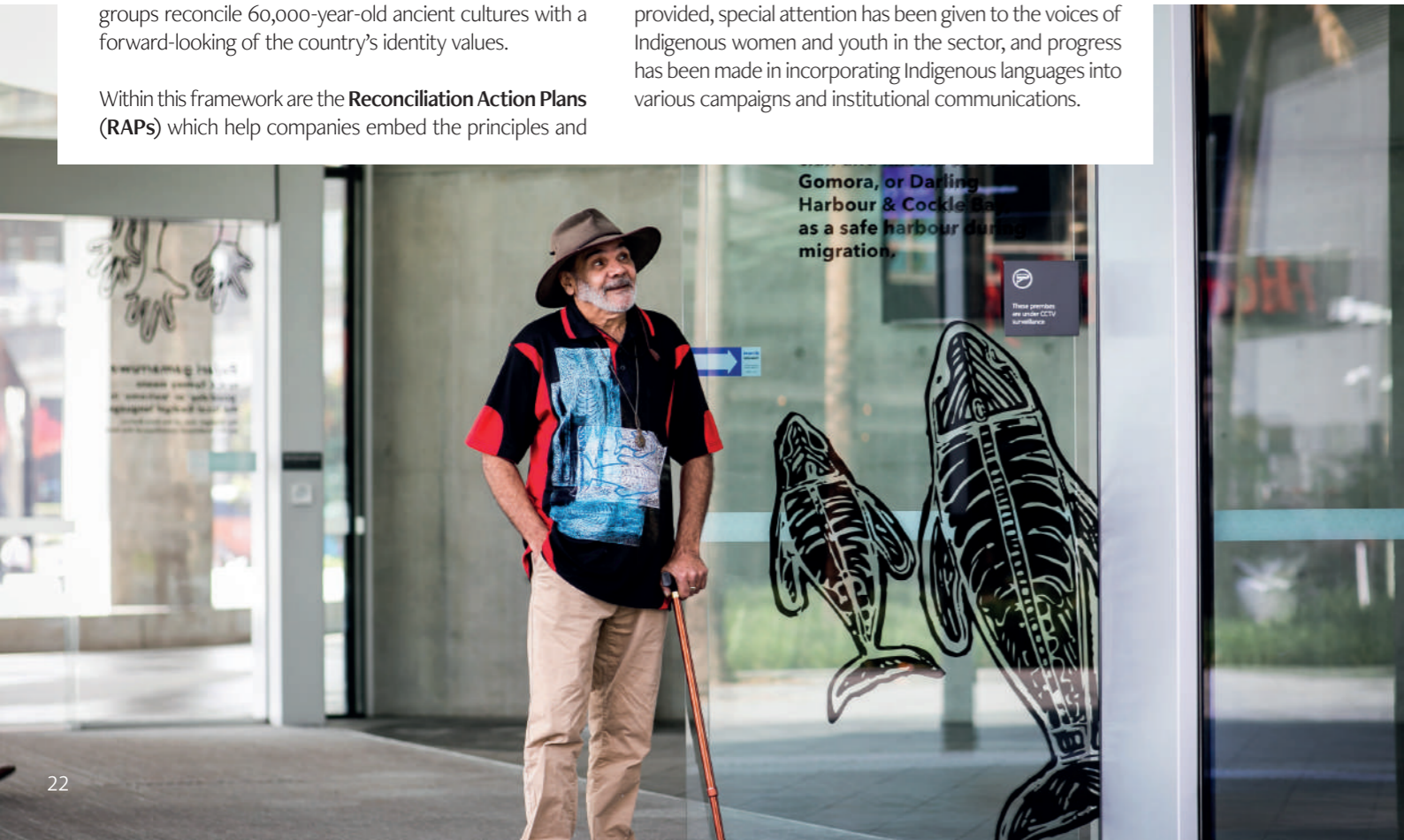
Aboriginal Australia: A Guide to New Indigenous Australian Experiences!

Exquisite art, unique accommodation, ancient pilgrimages and culinary scripts that span the ages: Aboriginal travel experiences are revitalising Australia's incentive map and its conference scene continues to capitalise on the world's oldest continuous living culture. But how are some convention centres making their events more inclusive for First Nations people and all visitors? Come find out in this feature:

Diversity and inclusion of various communities have come into the concerns of event organisers and, therefore, making events accessible and inclusive will lead to both wider participation by stretching the scope of the audience and a more extensive package of offerings. Australia is home to some of the oldest living cultures in the world and by incorporating them into professional events, they end up being fundamental to how Australia's story is told. **Business Events Australia** acknowledges “the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Owners of the land, sea and waters of the Australian continent, and recognises their custodianship of culture and Country for over 60,000 years.” From an immersive light and sound show at Uluru to a time-travelling walking tour of Hobart, these new indigenous experiences for corporate event groups reconcile 60,000-year-old ancient cultures with a forward-looking of the country's identity values.

Within this framework are the **Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)** which help companies embed the principles and

purpose of reconciliation. Since 2006, RAPs have enabled organisations to take meaningful action in a sustainable and strategic way to promote reconciliation based on fundamental pillars of relationships, respect and opportunity, increasing economic equity in these communities and supporting First Nations self-determination. Meanwhile, Tourism Australia has launched its fifth RAP for 2023-2026 responding to travellers' demand for Indigenous experiences and providing tangible opportunities for Indigenous people, and narrowing stronger pathways to reconciliation through partnerships and relationships with businesses owned and managed by these communities. The **Discover Aboriginal Experiences Program** has amassed over 160 Aboriginal-guided experiences across Australia, supports to emerging Indigenous tour operators have been provided, special attention has been given to the voices of Indigenous women and youth in the sector, and progress has been made in incorporating Indigenous languages into various campaigns and institutional communications.



How to be diverse and inclusive in a world-class convention centre?

Hosting some of the world's most important events, the **International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney)** takes on the opportunity to introduce people from around the world to a wealth of knowledge, culture and understanding embedded in this ancient culture. “Our RAP provides us with a framework and network of connections to guide our efforts to celebrate, amplify and respect First Nations people and culture,” **Samantha Glass, Director of Corporate Affairs, Communication and Sustainability at ICC Sydney** tells us. “Our goal is to support First Nations people in celebrating their culture with the hundreds of thousands of visitors we welcome each year.” Their **Legacy Programme** plays an important role in fulfilling some of the RAP's goals, connecting customers with First Nations companies that can enrich their event and enhance the delegate experience. While holding events and activities to recognise First Nations culture and peoples throughout the year, ICC Sydney also holds team activities each **National Reconciliation Week** and **National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week** to mark these special occasions. “In this NAIDOC Week, whose theme is ‘For Our Elders’, we will launch a campfire-style Elders Storytelling series in partnership with **KARI**, a non-profit community organisation committed to improving the lives of First Nations people.”

ICC Sydney has also launched an *Accessible and Inclusive Events Guide* that provides guidance and best practice for organisers to activate welcoming events that serve people of all abilities, cultures and identities from a diversity perspective. “The guide reflects our considerations on inclusive language, how to create inclusive marketing

and communications, and spaces and facilities available for people with physical and/or hidden disabilities,” adds Glass. Eighty-two languages are spoken in the halls of the convention centre and this deep multicultural understanding enables them to detail inclusive amenities and applications through customer experiences and interactions. “Acknowledging the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the Country on which ICC Sydney stands, and leaning into the deep knowledge and history of First Nations Peoples is not only the right thing to do – it builds on a unique layer of event content and inclusive programmes. Through our partnership with Supply Nation, event organisers are also invited to use First Nations suppliers.”

According to advocacy groups, up to 20% of Australians identify as having a disability, 11% identify as having a diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity, and 4% of Australians register as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. “Simply put, our goal is for everyone to feel respected when they walk through our doors. ICC Sydney works to create a culture of diversity by welcoming people from under-represented communities both within our team and as site visitors.” The venue has re-established its partnership with Pride in Diversity, Australia's only national employer support programme for all aspects of workplace inclusion. “Our LGBTQIA+ stream is assessed against the Australian Workplace Equity Index and supported internally by our internal employee group, the Same Same Collective. In addition, our management team is made up of equal male and female representation.” During the last financial year, they also added 16 new First Nations companies to their supplier list, and teamed up again with a local education partner to attract First Nations youth for career opportunities.

Host events while helping marine life!

Following the completion of a refurbishment in 2021, the **Cairns Convention Centre** will open the \$176 million expansion in the coming months increasing capacity to host multiple or larger events, with conventions and exhibitions up to 2,500 guests now able to be accommodated across the venue. One of the strongest elements of the centre’s community engagement is its communion with the biodiversity of the region and the many partnerships with foundations such as **Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef (CGBR)** or the **Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre**. The venue sponsored the rehabilitation costs of an injured turtle at the latter organisation which appeared with sunburn all over its shell after floating adrift. ‘Sharon’ has been at the Rehabilitation Centre for two years, and this is an example of helping marine life and sustainability legacies for those hosting events in Cairns. “Events have the opportunity to create a lasting impact on our local environment and marine life when they come to our region, and we wanted to show them first-hand an organisation that they can get involved with,” **Janet Hamilton, Cairns Convention Centre General Manager** tells us. The centre is a founding partner of CGBR – the world’s first collaborative movement united for reef conservation – with the goals being measurable actions for the reef, sharing knowledge about its true state, facilitating practical solutions and publicising the projects and organisations leading the charge.



The centre’s flagship events for this year include the **3rd International Conference on Indigenous Health and Wellbeing 2023** and the **International First Nations Symposium on Space Science and Environment**. And so, we also asked how RAP has contributed positively to their calendar: “We recently hosted the 3rd International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2023 and have in the pipeline the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and the **Far North Queensland Reconciliation Conference 2023** (25 August). We believe it is important to support the promotion of Indigenous culture and provide opportunities to improve the lives of all Australians.” The RAP has enabled the centre to take meaningful action in a sustainable and strategic way to promote First Nations experiences for delegates, employment opportunities for all cultures, and investigate opportunities to incorporate bush food on the menu. “We are excited to work through these opportunities and provide positive change in the lives of First Nations people.”

Cairns Convention Centre became a mass vaccination hub for the city with Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service using the centre for over five months to assist with boosting the regions vaccination numbers. “We were

keen to get involved to provide a central destination for the community to get their vaccination and to support the local tourism industry get back on its feet.” Cairns pulled together during the pandemic to help educate the community, help businesses stay afloat and look at other opportunities during the down time which made their local community stronger. Moreover, **Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef** has also launched a new **Reforest** programme calculating the high-level carbon footprint of an event and then determining how event organisers can offset this through local tree planting and revegetation programmes, like the endangered Mabi rainforest which is the home of the Lumholtz tree kangaroo on the Atherton Tablelands. **Reef Connect** is another programme where delegates can contribute to the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. “We are very fortunate that our region offers a lot of unique legacy opportunities for events. It is important for events to find something that is relevant to them and supports their objectives,” concludes Hamilton.



Walking down the ancient path in Adelaide

Next to the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, a guide from the Aboriginal-owned **Bookabee** tours the gardens and provides information on the area’s indigenous history and traditional uses of native plants for food, medicine and utensils. Just a 5-minute walk away, you can find the **Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute**, Australia’s oldest Aboriginal-owned and managed multi-arts centre. A Kurna expression meaning ‘*place of the red kangaroo*’, Tandanya offers guests an insight into contemporary and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and art. And just 40 minutes from the city, **Gentree Wines** partners with local Ngarrindjeri elder, Mark Koolmatrie, to provide the **Wuldi Cultural Experience**, sharing ancient stories of the Traditional Owners and how they cared for the land, waters and ecosystem. These are just some of the incentive activities that South Australia’s capital city provides to reconnect with its past and illustrate it to its visitors. “Our international business development team, has seen an increase in requests for corporate event proposals that include references to First Nations peoples. Event organisers are keen not only to show respect for the traditional owners of the land, but also to recognise the unique language, history and culture that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders provide,” **Damien Kitto, CEO of Business Events Adelaide (BE Adelaide)** tells us.

BE Adelaide has also been working with The Circle – **First Nations Entrepreneur Hub**, which was established in partnership with the Australian and South Australian governments under the **Adelaide City Deal** to help the Aboriginal business sector build and cement businesses, start-ups and tailored business support. In terms of events, the **World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Education (WIPCE)**, held in Adelaide in September 2022, is an international gathering that takes place every three years that attracts highly regarded experts and scholars in Indigenous education from Canada’s First Nations, North America’s Natives, Australia’s Aborigines, Maori (New Zealand), Ainu (Japan), Sami (Norway) and more. WIPCE is the largest and most diverse Indigenous education venue in the world,

leading the discussion on contemporary movements in education that support Indigenous worldviews. A final report indicated that 2,845 delegates attended the event, and of these 742 were international. “WIPCE provided Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the opportunity to celebrate their place in the world as the oldest living culture of humanity, and also strongly aligned with a number of the State Government’s key economic priorities including: The Knowledge State, Growth in the Visitor Economy, and International Connections and Engagement,” adds Kitto.

Going forward, BE Adelaide members and partners – including the Adelaide Convention Centre and most hotels – are committed to ensuring that a range of accessibility options and facilities are available at all their venues, with accessible parking, access ramps and facilities for people with sensory disabilities. The DMO has also been working with **The Equality Project** for more than 6 years, a group who’s primary focus is LGBTQIA+ communities. “Adelaide hosted the 2021 and 2023 ‘Better Together’ conference, a key outcome of which was making hotels in Adelaide LGBTQIA+ friendly and a number of our hotel partners worked on this initiative.” Finally, sustainability has become a focal point in many of the proposals for business events that Adelaide has won in recent years. South Australia is at the forefront of clean energy production, with over 70% of its energy generated by wind and solar power, and stakeholders have also put climate measures in place. One of these strategic partners – Adelaide Convention Centre – was the first in the world to receive Earthcheck Platinum certification in 2018, recognising 10 years of dedication to sustainability best practices, while another key partner – Adelaide Airport Ltd – was the first in the region to obtain the Airport Carbon Accreditation for its efforts to reduce carbon emissions. “Our State Government’s strategic focus on environmental factors – detailed in the Government of South Australia’s Climate Change Action Plan 2021-25 – makes it easy for us to demonstrate our sustainability credentials. This leadership in renewable energy has been acknowledged with the designation of Adelaide as host city for the **International Conference on Renewable Energy**, to be held in April 2024,” concludes Kitto.



Ōtautahi **Christchurch:** A City in Pursuit of Balance

The New Zealand city is building a new identity through economic growth based on its international reputation in different professional sectors, a comprehensive new visitor offering and a close connection to its diverse community. No wonder that Christchurch has returned to the business events stage with a bang.

The South Island's untouched landscapes, combined with the unique Maori culture and exclusive visitor experiences define a city that is once again capturing the imagination of visitors. Its hospitality, security, political stability and ease of access in today's climate help explain the rest.

Meet Ōtautahi Christchurch

Surrounded by some of the world's most spectacular natural landscapes, the city boasts a highly collaborative business events community within its academic, corporate and association dimensions. The city is a social events dream – from restored heritage gems to rooftop bars, hailed sports grounds to vintage plane hangars and classic theatres. To top it off, over 2,500 hotel rooms and all city highlights are within a five-minute walk through the tree-lined riverside avenues and laneways. A short drive from the city, you will be immersed in incredible scenery and adventure from lush vineyards and wild coastlines to the snow-laden Southern Alps, Australasia's highest peak Aoraki Mt Cook and pristine glacial lakes.

As New Zealand's newest city, they are purpose-built for positive outcomes. "There's a real heart and soul to our city that comes from a collaborative approach, putting people and planet first. We have experiences of our heritage, our regeneration, our stunning South

Island environment, and our exciting future to share," tells us **Megan Crum, head of Business Events, ChristchurchNZ**. Major milestones in recent years have given Christchurch even greater international recognition. Opened in 2022, **Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre** has brought the global MICE community to the heart of the city, quickly becoming New Zealand's most sought-after conference and exhibition space hosting 234 events and more than 129,700 delegates in its first year of operation. "The centre was designed with space flexibility in mind, with state-of-the-art technology and the highest standards of sustainability and zero-carbon initiatives." Te Pae Christchurch features 24 meeting rooms, including a 1,000-seat riverside banquet hall, up to 3,300 square meters of exhibition space and a 1,400-seat auditorium that can be configured into two self-contained spaces. Upon arrival, Christchurch Airport – just 10km from the centre – is New Zealand's second largest international gateway, facilitating flights from across the country, Australia, North America, Asia amongst others, with over 100 direct flights weekly between Christchurch and Australia and a welcoming lounge with interchangeable branding to suit your event.

For many associations today, the two main challenges seem to be financial



Events to keep an eye on:

- APSA Asian Seed Congress – November 2023
- Extreme Solar Systems V Conference – March 2024
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons – May 2024
- International Association for Media and Communication and Research Conference – July 2024

resources and membership levels. Consequently, many are seeking financial support from the destination to bring their conferences to the city and are interested in providing as much value as possible to their members. "Others are also placing more emphasis on sustainability and creating a lasting impact or legacy, and we are looking to partner and collaborate on initiatives to help achieve the associations' objectives," adds Crum. In that sense, the convention bureau's priority is to attract businesses with economic, social and environmental impacts to the region, and events that are aligned with their city's sector priorities – **health tech, future food, agritech, aerospace** and **future transport**. "We have a robust framework for legacy investment targeted at these sectors, and we can already accurately measure the economic benefits to our region. However, we are also working with **Tourism New Zealand** and **Business Events Industry Aotearoa** to measure the non-economic benefits of business events."

Tūwhana is the city's new **Business Event Advocacy Programme** bringing together local experts, industry leaders and academics to connect with the world in Christchurch. The city is also home to three world-class universities, an institute of technology and a developed public sector, enhancing a knowledge and experience hub well-suited for events and a progressive business sector. "We take a targeted approach to seeking out opportunities that align with our advocates' passions, our industry strength areas and our long-term ambition. For example, working closely with cultural consultants to invite clients to include Māori cultural elements in their conference programmes. There is a huge appetite to experience our cultural diversity and this is one element that sets us apart from some other destinations," says Crum. On the digital front, the city's core conference infrastructure has been fully revamped and enhanced in

digital capacity, and its suite of local AV and technology providers will also support all technical aspects of event production. "We are fortunate to have a new purpose-built convention centre in Christchurch, which offers guests state-of-the-art facilities, including digital and hybrid technologies. In combination with existing and renovated buildings such as the the Christchurch Town Hall, we also have a wide range of venues suitable for all types of events."

ChristchurchNZ Business Events is helping to highlight the city's achievements towards sustainability by welcoming visitors through *manaakitanga* (warm welcome) and commitment to protecting their natural environment (*kaitiakitanga*). "We are the connector for a wide range of passionate and purposeful providers of business events. We help clients achieve their goals, especially by sharing a role in Christchurch's aspiration to reduce climate change." In this line, Christchurch Airport was the first airport in the world to receive the Level 4 Airport Carbon Accreditation. Meanwhile, Te Pae Christchurch has taken the next step in its sustainability journey, entering into an agreement with **Toitū Envirocare** to reduce its environmental footprint to zero carbon. Therefore, the city's business events community is very focused on prioritising sustainability and general well-being with significant results. At a recent event, contributions were made to the "Tui Corridor", a planting that aims to help bring native birds back to the region. "Legacy impact options are as diverse as wildlife conservation, wetland restoration and building equipment for schools, all making a difference to the community and the environment. We can help event organisers create a sense of balance for their delegates, learning from experts and giving back to the community they are gathering in," concludes Crum.



London and ExCel: A Unifying Value Chain for High Class Delegates!

The professional impact of congresses has always been valued within our sector, but their general understanding and demand has never been so strong in associations' purposes. **London & Partners** and its leading venue, **ExCel London**, describe below the reasons for the galloping growth of their business with several notable events.

London is a city that boasts connectivity between education, entrepreneurship and key sectors with strong links to the medical, life sciences, FinTech, AI and creative industries. A recent example would be the **Chatbot Summit**, which moved from Berlin because of this influence and also the strength of the London AI sector. With four of the world's best universities and five teaching hospitals as well as some of the largest start-up companies, this close connection makes the UK capital a rich hub for R&D, ambassadorship and innovation as part of an events programme. London is also the ideal gateway to the rest of the UK with six major airports and rail links such as Eurostar. "The opening of the new Elizabeth Line has increased overall travel capacity by over 10%, with a direct route from Heathrow Airport to Central London in just 25 minutes. The line also offers a more sustainable and efficient way to travel from east to west, and connects directly to our largest congress venue – **ExCel London** – in just under 45 minutes," says **Suzanne Singleton, Head of Associations and Citywide Bids at London & Partners**.

MICE activity has come back with a vengeance, with North American incentives particularly strong and record numbers of delegates attending congresses, such as the recent **International Conference on Robotics and Automation** at ExCel London. In turn, hotels are registering high occupancy and flight capacity is increasing to meet demand with new routes, confirming its status as the most booked

destination and top European city for meetings by Cvent. "London is forecast to welcome 18.6 million international visitors this year – 3 million more than last year – so we are definitely seeing a steady return to pre-pandemic levels. We are also seeing an intriguing shift towards combined leisure and business visits, with over a quarter of consumers opting for 'flexcation' travel in the next 12 months." Events and congresses can truly incite change, whether it's educating local communities, encouraging policy change or making a change for good, and the London & Partners takes an important role in this: "We act as conveners, connecting London's ecosystem to congresses and their objectives. However, being able to demonstrate and measure the impact of an event is now a 'must have' rather than a 'nice to have', just as sustainability is now an imperative part of the congress programme."

The city has set ambitious targets to achieve zero net carbon emissions by 2030 and become a zero-waste city by 2050, with the tourism and MICE sector playing a key role in achieving these goals. With 59 hotels and venues with Green Tourism accreditation, revolutionary new carbon neutral event spaces such as **Oceandiva**, and the aforementioned ExCel at the forefront, the local industry has embraced green initiatives that have pulled forward sustainability experiences once you set foot off the plane. "Becoming a world leader in sustainability is one of the big goals within the new London Tourism Vision 2030, set

The International Liver Congress 2022 Case Study

The results of the 2022 edition of the International Liver Congress were a true demonstration of local community involvement, education and social awareness. Following the congress, The Home of Hepatology implemented the recommendations of the Lancet Commission Report to enable a significant change in the treatment of liver disease and cancer in Europe. Furthermore, during the congress, the organisers of the European Academy for the Study of the Liver worked with the site and the city on two very special projects: first, they visited a primary school in Newham (site of the ExCel), to educate children about the importance of liver health; secondly, a liver scanning machine was put in place and participants and staff working at the venue were invited to have liver scans. Outcome measurements are compelling and will continue long after the London conference.



to outline the city's plans from infrastructure and offer improvements to our success and impact reporting," Singleton adds. London is also one of the most multicultural places in the world, welcoming people from all walks of life into an exciting melting pot with over 233 different languages spoken and an unrivalled food scene. "We're home to a thriving LGBTQ+ community and a huge range of international events, from the UK's largest and most diverse Pride, to the **Major League Baseball London** series, which returned to the city this year. We are also excited to be hosting new kinds of events, such as the recent Riot Games e-sports tournament **MSI League of Legends** at the **Copperbox Arena**." For the time being, the holding of the **European Society of Cardiology Congress** next year is also guaranteed.

in five main areas: Climate Action, Resource Efficiency, Customer Engagement, Community Engagement and People. "ExCel's vision has always been to be a leader in the industry and help shape the future of events into one that is net zero, resource efficient and equitable. For our expansion project, this will be built to exceed industry standards in sustainability, as well as use 100% renewable energy and also provide green spaces for the local community to enjoy. We will shortly be publishing our ESG strategy which is all part of our collective journey towards net zero in 2030."

DEI is something that the staff continues to improve by committing to new 'ways of working' with transparency. "That thinking informs everything we do, from being the first venue to join the **Women In Exhibitions** programme to providing organisers with gender-neutral restrooms like we do for events such as **DragCon**," says Rees. Recruiting talent has been a challenge for the UK events industry and at ExCel, key to this is providing a diverse and inclusive workplace, but also opportunities to learn new skills and experience different roles. Last but not least, technology at ExCel plays a key role in shaping how content is consumed and this has required an investment ranging from a global studio for hybrid events to the in-house AV team. "It's important to note that work has also become more adapted and flexible after the pandemic, and that means that as meetings reflect this way of life, every organiser needs to incorporate that personalisation as well. People want to feel as though they are a mini-VIP, and organisers need to think about how they can make delegates feel more valued," concludes Rees.

Works and renovations in the city's venue of excellence!

ExCel London is executing a major expansion plan that will open in October 2024 a state-of-the-art ICC convention centre with new exhibition halls and conference rooms in an extension of 25,000m², complying with sustainability standards. London has always been a world-class event destination, but even after everything we've been through, the city isn't just back, it's booming. "From an ExCel perspective, our data shows that we are 10% above the previous record set pre-pandemic in 2019, which speaks volumes for our local event industry," **Executive Director, James Rees** tells us. Within their framework, the space has been operating



FIEXPO 2023: A Celebration of LATAM Meetings Industry in Panama!

Consolidating Panama as a leading reference in the region's meetings industry, FIEXPO once again brought together a large part of the Latin American countries around a common ground for the MICE industry, highlighting the commitment, growth and development of LATAM's associative sector to the entire world. *Manuel Fernandes Reports*

Arriving at **Tocumen International Airport** and under the tropical climate of Panama City, it was time to check-in at the hotel where the first chapters of the MICE tradeshow would take place. Many surprises were in store for us in what was a very comprehensive and diversified programme with diverse perspectives on the various angles of the industry, both at an international and regional level. Located in the heart of Panama City's financial district, the **Sortis Hotel, Spa and Casino** had already hosted the **ICCASkills** that weekend – a global certification provided by the leading meetings industry association, which offers customised learning paths and advanced course content for suppliers of all levels. These educational sessions brought together industry professionals from the region during two days of intense and productive interaction led by **Patrick Delaney, Managing Partner of SoolNua** and **Christian Mutschlechner, Consultant and Board Member of CONGREX Switzerland**. With the support of strategic allies like PROMTUR, ProColombia, Uruguay's Ministry of Tourism, or Costa Rica's Tourism Institute, and the collaboration of prominent international sustainability and legacy professionals such as **GDS-Movement** and **#Meet4Impact**, this year's edition focused on the "Transformative Power of Meetings" – at a crucial time when their philosophy has slowly shifted to something that can condition new economic, scientific, and educational models and outcomes.

In fact, FIEXPO was much more than a tradeshow serving exhibitors and hosted buyers, but rather a space where visitors from all areas could keep abreast of consumer trends, in-depth impacts, new resources and tools for associative events, and the promotion of international alliances. "Those who have seen a regional trade show like ours go from a few square meters of exhibitors to this international-sized show with the participation of associations and companies from all over the region, can also attest to the rampant growth and importance we exert to the LATAM events industry," **Arnaldo Nardone, director of FIEXPO**, tells us. Around 1,800 professionals

from 80 destinations, including buyers, specialised suppliers, speakers and representatives of international organisations met in the country, generating some 11,610 business meetings. In addition, it is estimated that the event left \$8.2 million in direct impact, between the main event and the activities held within its framework, and some \$787 million in future business obtained among participants.

The first two days of the programme were filled with sharing experiences from other latitudes, first-class educational opportunities provided by organisations such as ICCA, and numerous opportunities to establish valuable networking and generate further business meetings and contacts among the participants. The **Next Generation Summit**, driven by ICCA and PCMA LATAM, implemented efforts towards the training of new professional industry leaders, where young tourism students had the opportunity to network, learn from veterans and be mentored by various influential figures in the meetings industry. In turn, **Connecting Minds** was one of the most emblematic sessions of this edition starred by international guests who shared with the audience several of their case studies and work focuses in each area. This year, under the theme "Sustainable Events towards Regeneration", our old acquaintances **Guy Bigwood, CEO of GDS Movement**, and **Genevieve Leclerc CEO of #Meet4Impact**, shared with attendees the insights needed to act sustainably (or beyond mere resource sustainability) in 2023 and beyond. Also on this educational panel was **Senthil Gopinath, ICCA CEO**, **Martin Boyle, IAPCO CEO**, **Patrick Delaney**, and **Mateo Nicolás Salvatto, Founder of Asteroid**. For its part, **ICCA Panama Insights** was a space designed to update attendees on the latest trends and needs in the associative meetings market – brainstorming about changes and challenges in order to make more informed and strategic decisions. The **Panama Convention Centre** was the setting for the Panama Meetings Hub, which connected professionals from various disciplines through conferences and panels, showcasing their experiences and many strategic partnerships. Finally, as part of the 10th edition of the Political Forum of Meeting Tourism, key topics such as



effective leadership, strategic planning and the economic and social impact on destinations were addressed.

Panama as a hub for Latin American Associations

One of the most representative milestones of this FIEXPO, was the official launch of the **Panama Association Hub**, a pioneering project in the region, which seeks to attract international associations and organisations to establish their operations in the country. This concept is a model present in four places in the world: Brussels, Washington DC, Singapore and Dubai, driven by the DMOs or CVBs of these places. The public-private entities involved in the hub will support these organisations in setting up offices in the country, help with licensing, registrations and visas, and commercial advice to boost their business. The Ministry of the Presidency, PROPANAMA, *la Ciudad del Saber* (City of Knowledge) and ICCA are among the public-private actors supporting this initiative that will accelerate the establishment of international associations and organisations in the country.

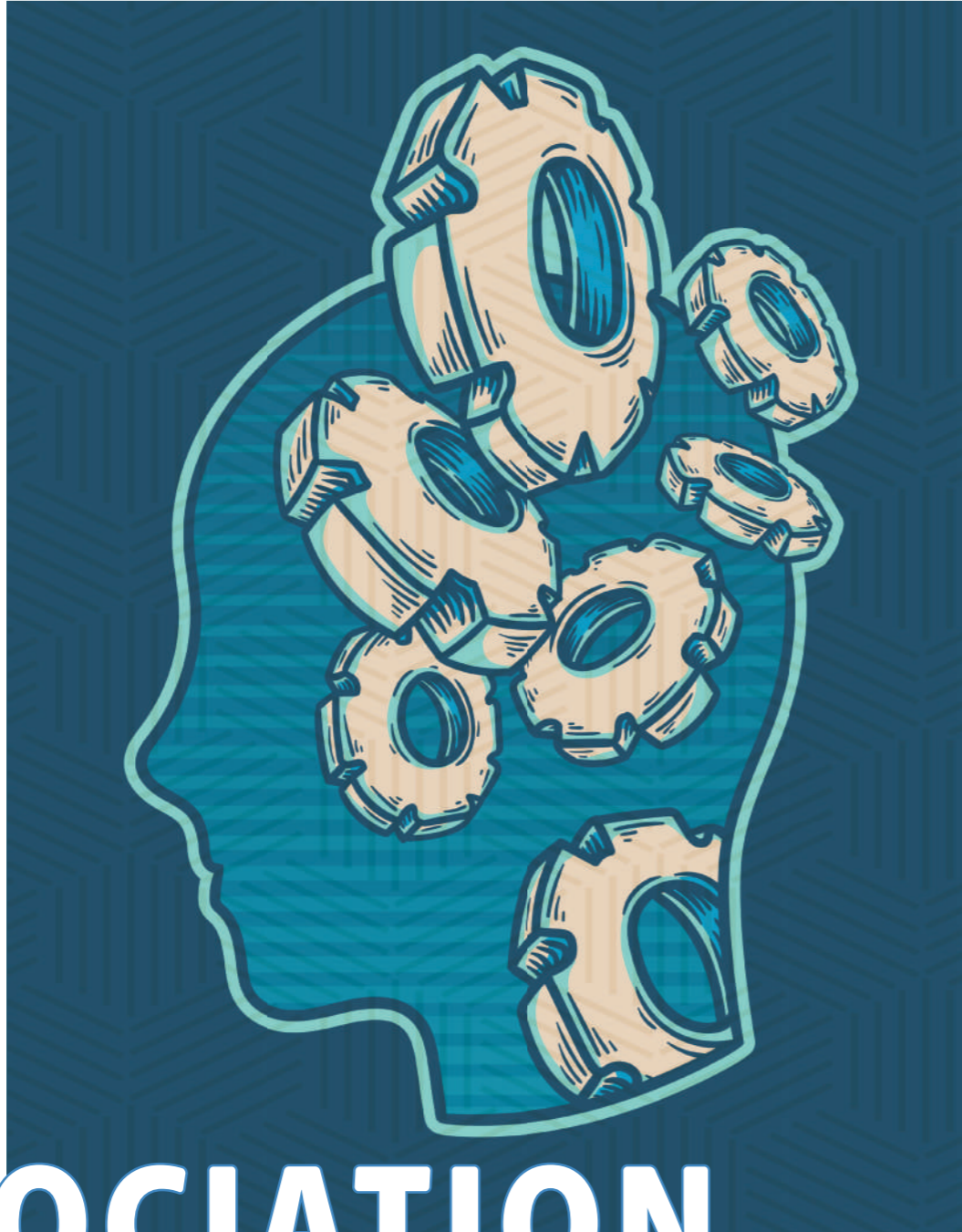
Panama is currently home to 22 international associations and is developing policies to attract some of the 542 academic, medical and scientific associations that already have headquarters in Latin America and others that never had. Over the past 3 years, **Promtur Panama** has led actions to position the country as the epicentre of the meetings and conventions industry in the LATAM region: these include an **Incentive Plan** and the recent launch of an **Associative Leaders Programme**, through which national leaders will be trained in different specialties. With this launch, a Pilot Plan is scheduled to be implemented which will include the participation of the **Latin American Diabetes Association**.

And since we are talking about Diversity and Inclusion in this edition, a final mention for the recognition in the social area granted to the **Grupo Centinela**. A foundation that works in the academic, artistic and social areas, encouraging greater integration, promotion and social interaction for people with intellectual disabilities in Panamanian society.



HO INSIGHTS

- 33** World PCO Alliance
Event website: The must-have elements
- 36** KENES Group
DEI reflections
- 38** Congrex Americas
Associations are both subtle and powerful
- 40** ESAE
A path to inclusive excellence for all associations
- 42** IAPCO
An overview on DEI in events industry
- 44** CityDNA
Future of regenerative and inclusive tourism
- 46** AIPC
It's about values
- 47** Cvent
How to make your events accessible



Event Websites: The Must-have Elements

While social media has increasingly become a staple in marketing an event, nothing replaces a website – social media platforms (and their algorithms) are always changing, but a website is that piece of web real estate that you own and can control. But you don't want just *any* website, and in 2023 a sub-par website just doesn't cut it.

In this article, some World PCO Alliance partners share their tips for optimising your event website, as they share the must and the must-nots of event website design.

Event Website Musts

Let's begin with an overview of the key elements that make for an excellent event website design:

- Clear event details
- Compelling visuals
- User-friendly navigation
- Responsive design
- Engaging content
- Social proof
- Visible calls-to-action
- Continued learning opportunities

Clear Event Details

Make sure that you display event name, date, and location in a prominent spot to grab visitors' attention. It's a shame to make a visitor scroll to the bottom of the home page to get such basic information. Instead, place all these details at the very top, ideally with a visually appealing backdrop. Think: a nice banner on the altogether that even includes a photo of the host city.

Compelling Visuals

Photos and videos are so powerful that every event website should include them. These memories from past events are the social proof that will encourage potential attendees to register. Use high-quality imagery and videos that convey the event's atmosphere and theme, and that leave a lasting impression.

Some examples include highlights from past events, unique venues, and key influencers in your national/international community that have attended previous editions of your event or that will be attending.

User-friendly Navigation

Ensure easy navigation through intuitive menus, allowing visitors to find information effortlessly. If you have a general menu tab such as "About", break up the information into sub-menu items, and list the sub-menu tabs so that the most vital information is at the top. For example, most people clicking on "About" are looking primarily for essential details such as the dates and location

ASSOCIATION & PCO

of the event as well as the preliminary programme, so make sure this information is at the very top.

Responsive Design

Today, it can no longer be assumed that everyone is viewing your website on their computer. Many people use their smartphones, so make sure your website is responsive – meaning, it can be easily viewed across different devices and screen sizes. How to tell if your website is responsive? If your website layout looks exactly the same on a phone or tablet as it does on a computer, only much, much smaller, your website is not responsive.

Engaging Content

Provide captivating descriptions of sessions, workshops, and speakers to generate interest and anticipation. If you have booked a thought leader in your field to speak at your event, promote this. If you have a new feature in your programme, mention it. Make sure all your website copy portrays every element of your event in the best way possible.

Another thing to keep in mind is to find ways to regularly stay in touch with your potential and confirmed attendees. While social media seems to be the obvious platform for keeping your event top of mind, don't underestimate the power of a website. A blog, for example, is still an effective way to share news about your event. A "News" tab in your menu can also be a great spot to reveal the latest and must-know information.

Social Proof

While an enticing programme and a sublime venue are good draws to your event, nothing can sell your event quite like a testimonial can. Gather testimonials from past attendees, prioritising influencers and better-known figures from your community. As much as possible, include their photos (though do ask for their permission first). Along with building interest in your event, such testimonials also lend credibility to your event.

Clear Calls-to-Action

The most common actions your website visitors will want to take are, typically, registering for the event and contacting you for more information. Don't make it difficult to perform either. Strategically place registration buttons throughout the website, on different pages, to guide visitors towards taking the desired action. Make sure a "Contact" button is at the very top of your website

home page, and also featured on other pages.

Continued Learning Opportunities

Your event is important, of course, but it is also short-lived. Consider giving your attendees opportunities to extend the event experience. Provide post-event resources, such as recorded sessions, presentation slides, or curated content related to the event's themes.

Event Website Design Trends

While we have covered all the essentials of a robust event website, there is always room for going beyond. World PCO Alliance partners have noticed certain trends, including:

One-page Websites: While this might seem to contradict the main purpose of this article, there are still ways of incorporating all the features mentioned in a one-page website. Moreover, one-page websites offer certain advantages:

- Simple navigation: Without a menu sending visitors to different pages, a simple scroll allows them to see all the information they need.
- Non-cluttered information: Because one-page websites offer limited space, you will likely only include essential content, thus avoiding overwhelming your visitors with unnecessary information.

Interactive and Immersive Experiences: Websites are incorporating interactive elements like virtual tours and 360-degree videos to engage visitors and create a sense of excitement about the event.

Mobile-First Design: With the prevalence of mobile browsing, some event websites are prioritising mobile responsiveness and designing with mobile users in mind.

Bold Typography and Colour Palettes: Websites are embracing eye-catching typography and vibrant colour schemes to make a strong visual impact.

A Spotlight on Sustainability and Green Initiatives: Websites are showcasing eco-friendly practices and promoting sustainability efforts, aligned with the growing focus on environmental consciousness.

What Not to Do

Now that we have explored all the musts of a robust event website, let's take a moment to identify the things to avoid:

- Poor quality pictures
- Outdated information: Make sure your website doesn't have deadlines that have expired. If the abstract submission process is closed, it should not still be open and accessible. If you are past the early bird registration rate, delete it. If your programme has been updated, make sure to only feature the latest version.
- Non-functional links: The last thing you want is to have a vital button like "Contact" not working.

How to Make Your Website More Inclusive

When optimising your event website, keep inclusivity in mind so that your site meets the needs of a diverse membership. There are numerous ways to make your website more welcoming to all:

1. **Prioritising Accessibility:** Placing accessibility at the forefront of website design involves considering aspects such as colour contrast, font sizes, and keyboard navigation. This ensures that individuals with visual or motor impairments can access and interact with the website easily.
2. **Clear and Descriptive Headings:** Using clear and descriptive headings that accurately represent the content beneath them helps users navigate the website more efficiently. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who rely on screen readers or other assistive technologies.
3. **Alternative Text for Images:** Providing alternative text (alt text) for images, describing their content and

purpose, enables individuals with visual impairments to understand the context and meaning of the images through screen readers.

4. **Captions and Transcripts for Multimedia:** Including captions or transcripts for videos and audio files makes them accessible to individuals with hearing impairments. This ensures that the content is fully comprehensible to all users.
5. **Readability and Plain Language:** Enhancing legibility through readable fonts, appropriate font sizes, and sufficient line spacing is important. Using plain language and avoiding complex jargon helps ensure that the content is understandable to a diverse audience.
6. **Flexible Forms and Inputs:** Designing forms and input fields that are adaptable to different user needs is crucial. Allowing for input validation and providing clear and concise error messages assists users in completing forms accurately.
7. **Consistent and Predictable Navigation:** Maintaining a consistent navigation structure throughout the website and using standard design patterns, helps users predict the location of information and navigate with ease. This is especially beneficial for individuals with cognitive disabilities.
8. **Testing and User Feedback:** Regularly testing the website's accessibility with real users, including individuals with disabilities, and gathering feedback are essential steps. This allows for necessary adjustments to improve the user experience for all visitors.
9. **Using Gender-Inclusive Language:** Consider opting for neutral language on your website to ensure inclusivity and respect for individuals of all gender identities.

At the end of the day, there is no excuse for having a sub-par website for your event. By leveraging the tools and ideas that the World PCO Alliance partners share in this article, your event can boast a site that highlights the very best of your event and make it a not-to-be missed for attendees.





DEI Reflections by Kenes Association Management Team

We are always happy to bring our PCO Insights to the forefront of the conversation among association executives through HQ. This time, collecting information about what we do at Kenes Group in terms of **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)** proved to be an exercise of reflection, acknowledgement, rediscovery and sharing among colleagues. While we have DEI initiatives in place at our congresses, we decided to turn to our **Kenes Association Management Associate Vice President, Louise Gorrige**, and her team to find out where we are successful at being inclusive and where we can work harder all year-long within our partner societies.



As part of this gathering of experiences and perspectives, Louise Gorrige encouraged her team to recognise what we are already doing without feeling daunted by the thought of what needs to be done, to celebrate what we are accomplishing already and to think about inclusion beyond just representation but ask whether all groups have equitable opportunities to participate within the communities.

BY ESTEFANÍA ZÁRATE ANGARITA, MARCOM MANAGER AT KENES GROUP

Celebrate where we are!

Before getting into the specifics of initiatives carried out by some of the associations managed by Kenes Groups, I would like to share/highlight three key conclusions drawn by the Kenes Association team:

As mission-driven organisations, all the societies we work with have core aims and objectives to level the playing field, proactively supporting grassroots, under-served and/or marginalised populations.

- Many already ensure representation from geographic regions, sub-specialities, disciplines, and career stages, among others, regarding membership, delegates, conference speakers, board positions and committee members.
- Low and Lower-Middle Income Countries and career-stage preferential membership rates, as well as regional-specific webinars and educational activities, and grants, scholarships and awards are set in place across our associations.

Louise Gorrige has been working closely with the associative sector for 13 years. In her view “diversity, equity and inclusion start and end with culture and organisational values; it needs to be made a priority from a strategic standpoint by identifying why is it important for the organisation, formalising the commitments, making

it a standing agenda item, having DEI ambassadors and appointing a role within the Board exclusively for these matters”.

She emphasised how critical it is to track, measure and review progress periodically as a form of transparency and accountability: “Sharing ongoing progress means DEI feel like standard work rather than a one-off project.”

Looking ahead

The Kenes Association Management team also identified some of the challenges faced when implementing DEI initiatives. For example: how in some cases, there are only one or a few people on the Board that advocate for inclusivity and it is not as critical for all the leadership; how a significant gap in the field’s research between some regions of the world compared to others makes it difficult to ensure representation in certain areas; how lack of prioritising DEI initiatives in the association’s agenda, as well as a clear rationale for implementation, create much more resistance.

As organisations welcome perspectives from as many places of the social spectrum as possible, DEI increasingly become a core value and part of the DNA of their culture. At Kenes Group, we will continue to drive the conversation, ensuring inclusivity remains front and centre for our partner associations, highlighting the great value we see in opening spaces for everyone, ultimately impacting society as a whole.

Success stories

“Since we are an international society, we observe that we have a balanced representation in terms of gender, location, ethnicity, age and expertise, and also speciality when we choose speakers for all our educational programmes as well as events, too. We implement the same principle when we choose members for our Board and also in all Working Groups of the society.”

Gergana Georgieva, Assistant Association Manager at the International Society of Endocrinology - ISE

“IPVS is rolling out Country Ambassador programmes to grow participation in the society’s activities in LLMICs. Membership fees have been reduced drastically to lower the economic barrier to join the society. Webinars and other events are organised with a view to being inclusive in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and other under-represented communities.”

Chris Amsinger, Campaign and Communications Specialist at the International Papillomavirus Society - IPVS

“When assigning grants, our society aims at having an even amount of male and female acceptances, as well as providing similar opportunities in developing countries.”

Ester Zoraa, Association Manager at the European Society for Clinical Virology - ESCV

“The World Stroke Organization recognises the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in its operations and initiatives. Currently, half of the WSO Executive Committee members are women, led by a first-ever woman President Sheila Martins, who is also from a lower-middle income country. Another aspect is engaging people with lived experience of stroke, actively involved in the World Stroke Campaign, the World Stroke Congress and other initiatives. This is one of the ways the WSO ensures that the voices and perspectives of those affected by stroke are heard. Also, through initiatives such as the Future Leaders program, the organisation actively promotes inclusivity and encourages participation from diverse countries and backgrounds.”

Gergana Raleneikova, Assistant Association Manager at the World Stroke Organization - WSO

“The society created a Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee a few years ago, which was responsible for promoting diversity and inclusiveness throughout the organisation, including in its membership, governance, and education programming. Each member was Ambassador within another Working Committee to ensure all activities adhere to the Association’s commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI). A few years later and all committees are naturally integrating JEDI topics into their activities and reaching out to the JEDI committee for input as needed, so the need to have JEDI committee ambassadors on every committee ceased, although they still have an ambassador on the meeting planning committee. The society has also included several demographic questions (pronouns, ethnicity, various identity questions and language) when people sign up as members or register for the Annual Meeting.”

Evelyn Zuberbuhler, Association Manager at the Collaborative Group of the Americas Inherited Gastrointestinal Cancer - CQA-IGC



"Associations are both subtle and powerful"



During some sessions at **FIEXPO** (see report on page 30), HQ got the opportunity to meet some of the speakers who made this event a dynamic space for sharing knowledge and experiences. **Javier Montilla Q.** is **Managing Director of Congrex Americas**, a full-service provider of meetings, conferences, events and association management solutions for the corporate, government and association sectors in the Americas. Javier is a professional conference organiser with more than 30 years of experience, having directly organised more than 400 events in Latin America. Strategic planning in the meetings industry is also one of Congrex's key principles, and the FIEXPO Policy Forum addressed this around matters such as effective leadership, association relevance and economic and social impact on destinations.

HQ took the opportunity to brainstorm how to harness the potential of association leadership, managing partnerships that lead to social legacies, and how the tradeshow's educational programme contributed to their thinking on sustainability, new bidding and destination marketing.

Could you describe in a few words the mission of your organisation?

Our mission is to provide comprehensive online and in-person meetings, conferences, events and association management solutions for the corporate, government and association sector in the Americas. This mission is accompanied by our brand promise to "create opportunities for communication, collaboration, education and growth" for our employees, clients, business and institutional partners. Not forgetting the community that moves our industry and participates in the events we organise or the associations we manage.

How do you assess the overall picture of the events sector in this post-pandemic period with all these new requirements and criteria in place?

The outlook is promising, positive and encouraging. The demands are not so new; what is new are the applications to meet those demands. The need for innovation, technology, immediacy of communication and sustainability over time are not new. What is new is that the tools are available at little or no cost to a wider range of audiences. Our customers are also much more informed and connected to each other. We live in fast-moving times where immediacy and putting people at the centre of the strategy is no longer an option.

During our conversation in Panama we also talked a lot about the barriers and hurdles of Latin American

associations and how they can best represent their members and sectors today.

I have used several times a quote from Jim Rhon (an American entrepreneur and author) who assures that "associations are both subtle and powerful" because we humans, as the social beings we are, naturally come together and these associations influence us in subtle ways. Carried forward into formal associative life (entities called "associations"), they influence their members in subtle ways through knowledge, experiences and information, having a powerful impact on their environments. For this reason, associations need to create that influence and positive impact, always using an inclusive and participatory approach.

You also recently collaborated with #Meet4Impact on how to harness the potential of association work for social legacies and long-term impacts, using the Pan American League of Associations of Rheumatology (PANLAR) and its congress as a case study. Tell me more about this experience...

We saw Geneviève's (Leclerc) presentation at FIEXPO 2022, and were surprised to learn that we were so aligned without knowing each other. The alliance came naturally at a time when the PANLAR's Development and Impact Plan was rushing to its end (2016 to 2022), so we decided to present this option to this very important client of ours. As we delved into the specifics of their work, we and our client decided to move forward and redefine



the future with an even more inclusive angle (patients, physicians, undergraduate students and the community at large), keeping people at the centre, and seeking sustainability for the association. Creating respect for the environment, creating a practical and achievable legacy and aiming to incorporate the destinations where the events (sustainable and purposeful) would take place as a tool for dissemination and implementation.

Our first challenge is the **PANLAR Congress in Barranquilla 2024** where the alignment between the Mayor's Office, the investment promotion agency ProBarranquilla, suppliers, ICCA (as facilitator), the event organiser MCI Argentina and us will use this implementation to set a milestone in establishing a legacy in public health by bringing rheumatology to the streets and anticipating the diagnosis of musculoskeletal diseases. This action aims to improve the quality of life of people who do not know they suffer from rheumatology and aspires to encourage more young people to study medicine and specialise in rheumatology.

How can a destination, as a centre of science, academia, development and research, attract more valuable events and social dissemination to Latin America?

I think the question answers itself. Through science and academia, research and development projects are leveraged, which can benefit the communities of a destination. All these projects start in meetings of different sizes and are disseminated to communities through purposeful events. Having a hub of

professional associations in the region will put Latin America on the map, showing the quality of the professionals who make life on this side of the world and the value of meetings in our region. The creation of this hub – like the **Panama Association Hub** launched in the framework of FIEXPO – can foster innovative, scientific and technical development spaces, attracting interest to generate large meetings with purpose and socio-economic relevance that positively impact our industry and the destinations where they take place.

Finally, on a professional level, what did you see and bring with you that was new and relevant from this edition of FIEXPO 2023?

What is new and relevant is that FIEXPO served to consolidate the teamwork of different professional associations in our industry in favour of generational networking, allowing in a unified way many young people to have access to information and training relevant to their future in the meetings industry. The International Associations Forum (i.e. our clients) allowed for a series of practical exercises where the knowledge of colleagues in the meetings industry could facilitate working together in teams with real problems that they can now solve with a fresh and renewed angle. These association professionals of diverse interests (doctors, engineers, consultants, managers, etc.) took home challenges and concerns that they will be able to solve in terms of sustainability (not only environmental), institutional marketing, strategic alliances and management of their associations; ideally through the contracting of companies in our sector.



Unlocking Potential Through DEI: **ESAE's** Path to **Inclusive Excellence** for all Associations



Liesbeth Switten is **Secretary General of Association of Issuing Bodies**, the association that guarantees the origin of European energy, **vice-president of the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE)** and also the Board member responsible for **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**. Challenged by *HQ* to shed light on ESAE's DEI strategy, Liesbeth set out the steps being taken to promote inclusion in the association and the wider community.

What drove ESAE's engagement with DEI and sparked the discussion?

As the leading organisation in Europe for bringing together association professionals, ESAE recognises the evolving global landscape and the importance of fostering an inclusive environment for associations. During the 2022 Board strategy meeting, we voiced the desire to align ESAE's values with the diverse perspectives and needs of our members and stakeholders.

ESAE's engagement with DEI was also sparked by a panel session at IMEX Frankfurt and a subsequent joint webinar we organised with our colleagues at **American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)**. They have made remarkable progress in this field over the past years. The webinar showcased their efforts and sparked meaningful discussions within our association, prompting us to explore DEI further.

Can you tell us about the process of developing the DEI strategy and who was involved?

The development of the DEI strategy primarily involved the Board and a number of ESAE members, association executives who have been actively working on DEI in their own organisations. We also reached out to DEI experts within the association community. The strategy was

drafted, discussed, and reviewed by the board to ensure its alignment with ESAE's mission and values.

Please provide an overview of the DEI strategy and its main components, as well as the next steps for ESAE.

ESAE strongly believes that embracing and promoting DEI is essential in order to make associations thrive. Beyond being more inclusive, organisations who apply DEI perform better, grow their reputation and have a stronger employer's brand. Our DEI strategy aims to assist our members in their DEI efforts while leveraging ESAE's resources effectively. The strategy includes several key components. Firstly, we have drafted an ESAE Board Charter on DEI, inspired by ASAE's approach. We have also set up a Community of Practice for members on DEI. Furthermore, we plan to organise a series of events focused on DEI, establish collaborations with organisations like **European Women on Boards** and deepen the collaboration with ASAE. Further down the road, we will develop a DEI toolkit for international associations, which will provide assessment tools, template policies, and training resources. These initiatives will advance our DEI goals and contribute to the inclusivity of our association and the wider community. We will continue to review and refine the strategy as needed to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

How does ESAE plan to influence the dialogue among European associations regarding DEI?

ESAE aims to lead by example and actively influence the dialogue among European associations when it comes to DEI. For example, we are happy that our board is gender balanced. We also recently presented the first ESAE award for DEI and our remuneration survey included questions on DEI. We intend to organise events around the theme and collaborate with other associations and industry stakeholders, sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in implementing DEI initiatives. In our newly set up Governance and DEI Community for ESAE members, we can engage in constructive discussions and advocate for the importance of DEI within the association community. Through these collaborative efforts, we can collectively drive positive change and create a more inclusive association landscape in Europe.

Any final thoughts you would like to share?

I would like to emphasise that a comprehensive and sustained effort is required to achieve meaningful change. ESAE remains fully committed to continuously improving our DEI efforts and creating an inclusive environment where all members can thrive. We are excited about the next steps outlined in our strategy and we look forward to working closely with our members and partners to make a lasting impact. We hope that our commitment to driving positive change and our comprehensive strategy will

inspire other associations to follow suit, ultimately creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive landscape for all.

DEI Charter approved by the ESAE Board of Directors on 9 December 2022

ESAE strongly believes that embracing and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion is essential in order to make associations thrive. Beyond being more inclusive, organisations who apply DEI perform better, grow their reputation and have a stronger employer's brand.

ESAE aims to assist association leaders and executives, as well as associations themselves, in their efforts to be inclusive and lead by example, by:

- promoting and practicing inclusion.
- providing assessment tools, template policies and training.
- offering a discussion forum.

ESAE especially wants to provide a safe environment for sharing experiences and shaping opinions on DEI, in order to develop guiding principles that are relevant for the framework of associations and their leaders and executives. In doing so, we advance ESAE's mission while also providing added value to our members and the society as a whole.

ABOUT ESAE

The European Society of Association Executives (ESAE) is the leading organisation in Europe for bringing together Association professionals. We facilitate the exchange of best practices among peers and ensure that current and future leaders understand the Association business and strategy.



ESAE's resources and networks enable members to grow by offering a platform to exchange best practices and advance their professional development. ESAE members enjoy varied opportunities to learn and swap insights with other association executives across the continent, through a range of events, seminars, our Leadership Circle and Communities of Practice.

An Overview on **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** in the Events Industry

The events industry understands the importance of diversity and inclusion when organising an event. Actions have been taken in order to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all attendees. This can be achieved by incorporating diverse speakers, inclusive policies, and offering scholarships, so as to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds have access as well. Conferences are a great place for people from different age groups, backgrounds, and overall statuses to interact and exchange opinions and views.

Diversity is an important consideration in the workplace as it helps improve creativity, innovation, and cultivate problem-solving abilities, and can help to create a more inclusive work environment.

Diverse Workforce Characteristics

Diversity of colleagues in the workplace helps everyone involved to get to know different cultures and values which in turn can improve many aspects of day-to-day work needs. For example, people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds bring different perspectives, experiences, and cultures to the workplace. This can include differences in language, customs, beliefs, and values. Gender and sexual orientation diversity also contributes to the workplace. For example, having a diverse range of gender identities and sexual orientations can expose colleagues to different perspectives and ideas.

People from different age groups bring different levels of experience, knowledge, and perspective to the workplace. Having a diverse range of ages can also help bridge generational gaps and promote cross-generational collaboration. People with disabilities may have different perspectives and ways of approaching problems. In addition, providing accommodations for people with disabilities can help to create a more inclusive workplace. People from different socioeconomic backgrounds may have different levels of education, income, and access to resources. Having a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds can lead to different perspectives and ideas.

People with different levels of education and experience can bring different skills, knowledge, and perspectives to the workplace. Having a diverse range of educational and professional backgrounds can also lead to cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation.

Diversity in the Events Industry

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are crucial components of a healthy and successful workplace. In Greece, there has been increasing attention paid to DEI issues in recent years, with businesses and organisations taking steps to promote diversity and create more inclusive workplaces.

One of the key challenges in promoting DEI in the workplace of the events and meetings industry is addressing biases and stereotypes that can lead to discrimination against certain groups. This can be particularly challenging in a country with a strong sense of national identity and a history of homogeneity. However, there have been efforts to increase awareness of DEI issues and provide training to help employees recognise and overcome biases.

Another important factor in promoting DEI is ensuring that all employees have access to the same opportunities for professional development and advancement. This can involve policies such as providing mentoring and coaching programmes, creating leadership development opportunities and establishing clear pathways for promotion and advancement.

Finally, it is very important to create a workplace culture that is welcoming and inclusive for all employees. This can involve initiatives such as celebrating diversity through cultural events, promoting employee resource groups that provide support and advocacy for marginalised groups, and establishing clear expectations around respectful communication and behaviour.



One of the key challenges in promoting DEI in the workplace is addressing biases and stereotypes that can lead to discrimination against certain groups.

Diversity management involves creating a culture of inclusion, ensuring fair treatment for all, and respecting the values and differences among employees. It also means that everyone has the same access to tools, training and opportunities as their colleagues.

Diversity Strategies Tools

Education and Training: Provide education and training on diversity and inclusion to all employees, including managers and supervisors. This can include topics such as cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and respectful communication.

Recruitment and Hiring: Develop recruitment and hiring practices that attract a diverse pool of candidates. This can include job postings that specifically target underrepresented groups, using blinded resumes with little or no personal information to reduce bias, and ensuring that job requirements are not discriminatory.

Employee Resource Groups: Establish Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) that provide support and advocacy for marginalised groups. ERGs can help create a sense of community within the workplace and provide a platform for employees to share their experiences and ideas.

Mentoring and Coaching: Provide mentoring and coaching programmes that support the professional development of employees from diverse backgrounds. This can help ensure that all employees have access to the same opportunities for advancement.

Policies and Procedures: Establishing policies and procedures that promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. This can include anti-discrimination policies, accommodations for employees with disabilities, and flexible work arrangements that support work-life balance.

Celebrate Diversity: Through cultural events and activities that promote a sense of community and inclusiveness. This can include celebrations of different holidays and cultural heritage months.

Leadership Commitment: Ensure that leaders and managers are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. This can involve establishing goals and metrics for diversity and inclusion, holding managers accountable for creating an inclusive workplace culture, and providing resources and support to help them achieve these goals.

The Benefits

One of the most significant benefits of diversity in the meetings industry is the ability to cater to a broader range of clients. With a diverse team, event planners can better understand the needs and expectations of different cultures and communities. This enables them to plan events that are more inclusive and welcoming to all attendees. For example, a PCO with a diverse team may be more equipped to plan an event that accommodates different dietary restrictions or religious practices.

Diversity also helps to create a more dynamic and engaging event experience. When planning events, a diverse team can provide a variety of perspectives and ideas that help to create unique and engaging event experiences. This can lead to more successful events that leave a lasting impression on attendees.

Additionally, having a diverse team can help PCOs to attract a wider range of clients. As more businesses and organisations prioritise diversity and inclusion, they are likely to seek out event planners who share these values. A diverse team can help to position a PCO as an inclusive and progressive organisation, which may make them more appealing to potential clients.

By embracing diversity, event planners can better understand the needs and expectations of their clients, create more engaging event experiences, and attract a wider range of clients. As the industry continues to evolve, diversity will undoubtedly play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of event planning.

This article was originally published in issue no. 105 of The PCO – the official magazine of IAPCO. Four professionals from the Greek PCO, CONVIN, contributed to this article: Charoula Laina – Association Management Assistant; Maria Priniotaki – Sponsorship and Exhibition Management; Vicky Denaxa – E-Publishing & Scientific Papers Coordinator; Dimitra Baltouna – Marketing Manager.

Unveiling the **Future of Regenerative** and **Inclusive Tourism**

On October 3-7, 2023, destination professionals will enjoy an extraordinary event week, as **City Destinations Alliance (CityDNA)**, the **Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-Movement)**, and **Visit València** partner to bring two incredible, back-to-back events, and to jointly announce and celebrate the new home of the prestigious, annual GDS-Awards Ceremony.

The GDS-Awards: towards a more inclusive approach for DMOs

For 2023, based on feedback from destinations, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and GDS-Movement decided to make minimal updates to the 69 criteria and focus on four significant improvements. One notable addition is the inclusion of new questions designed to evaluate the **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)** programmes implemented by DMOs.

As part of the GDS-Index's commitment to facilitating a benchmarking programme that supports regenerative destination management, 2024 will witness a major update. This update will specifically address areas such as DEI, measurement, and climate. The process of developing these criteria started in April 2023, ensuring that the GDS-Index remains at the forefront of promoting sustainable and responsible destination practices.

City Destinations Alliance's commitment to inclusive conference programming

In its relentless pursuit of delivering exceptional conference, City Destinations Alliance places a strong emphasis on diversity in their speaker lineups. CityDNA firmly believe in representing a wide range of perspectives, encompassing gender, cultural background, geography, experience, and more! As long as speakers are aligned with the conference theme and have valuable insights to share, CityDNA wholeheartedly welcomes and encourages submissions from individuals of all backgrounds. Our goal is to foster an inclusive platform that amplifies diverse voices and facilitates meaningful exchanges of knowledge and ideas. This conference makes no exception as attendees will get to learn from speakers from different walks of life.

In April 2023, City Destinations Alliance launched **Welcoming Wegeneration** as its new mission towards net positive tourism as a meaningful model of progress for Europe's city destinations. On October 3-7, in Valencia, tourism professionals will meet to explore the work of

Wegeneration in progress – a collective and shared mission for positive impact and transformation. What shapes the foundation of better cities if not people, community and culture – and can we create cities, places, events and experiences that are truly welcoming to all? As we discuss the risks of new technologies, what are the people-positive possibilities of supercharging our cities, events and organisations with advanced algorithms and AI technologies?

These are days not to be missed, to join in a collaborative DIY towards Destination Positive. Attendees will be stacking **Lookout Towers** for new inspiration and supercharged thinking and explore how best to **Build the Foundation** of a truly Destination Positive future. In the spirit of CityDNA's community of sharing and learning, there will be a prioritisation of progress over perfection in sharing **WIP – Wegeneration in Progress** and join forces in designated **Destination Maker Labs** in serious play for positive impact.

Henry Ford famously said: *"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you are right."* Attendees will start by daring to think that they can – and shift from the dreamy idea of Destination Positive to laying the grounds and building towards Destination Possible.

Registration is open on CityDNA's Website: citydestinationsalliance.eu



Building Blocks for
DESTINATION POSITIVE

GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY FORUM

Valencia October 3-7, 2023

CITY DNA AUTUMN CONFERENCE



CityDNA Summer School: **Sustainability, Legacy, and DEI** in the Meetings Industry

The meetings industry is undergoing a transformative shift, with a growing emphasis on Sustainability, Legacy, and DEI practices. In response to these evolving trends, the highly regarded CityDNA Summer School, which has been a cornerstone of industry education since 1987, is aligning its curriculum with the City Destinations Alliance strategy to promote better meetings.

Recognising the significant impact of conferences and events on the environment, economy, and society, the industry is now prioritising sustainability and the creation of positive legacies for destinations and communities. Additionally, addressing DEI issues has become crucial to

fostering an inclusive environment where all participants, regardless of their background or identity, feel welcome.

The revamped CityDNA Summer School aims to offer delegates a comprehensive understanding of the industry's structure and functioning, while also exploring the pressing topics of Sustainability, Legacy, and DEI. By equipping professionals with the knowledge and skills to embrace these principles, the meetings industry can create more responsible and impactful experiences for everyone involved.

Registration for the upcoming CityDNA Summer School, scheduled in Gdansk on August 26-30, 2023, is available on the CityDNA website. This is an excellent opportunity for industry practitioners to stay up-to-date of the latest developments and enhance their careers. Don't miss your chance to be a part of this transformative educational event.

Registration is open on CityDNA's Website: citydestinationsalliance.eu



It's About Values

As a global association, AIPC faces a number of practical challenges – ranging from time zone troubles to stretched resources. But as the late Queen Elisabeth used to say, we just need to get on with it. Values however are a different matter altogether, especially in a non-aligned world. Defining and respecting a value framework will be a very different type of challenge for any global association.

AUTHORS: SVEN BOSSU, CEO AIPC

Being a global association comes with a lot of benefits. You get to work with interesting people across the globe, each with their own views, embedded in their own reality, enriching the conversations held at the level of the association. You find out that the likelihood that a challenge faced by one member at one side of the world has already been addressed by another member at the other side of the world is very high, demonstrating the value of an association as a platform to exchange knowledge. And you get to work with business partners who have – similar to the association – a global reach.

There are some challenges as well, especially for smaller associations such as AIPC. Resources get stretched, because you're serving a global audience (time-zones can indeed be a hassle). A second challenge is related to cultural and language barriers. Fortunately, the very nature of the business our members are in – international exhibitions & conferences – makes this perhaps easier than for other associations. Nevertheless, it remains an important point of attention when organising events, especially when it comes to interactive formats such as workshops or discussion groups. Additionally, there are the financial constraints at the level of the members and of the association. Our summits and flagship educational activity – the Academy – all take place in Europe. For the summits, this is related to the fact that we organise them just before major industry events (IMEX Europe and IBTM), leveraging the presence of our members at those events. However, a number of our members do not attend these events and/or do not have the budget to attend. This has resulted in the roll-out of a set of regional summits (Africa, APAC and South-America), having a positive impact on engagement levels but stretching our resources (both human and financial). Nonetheless, all these hurdles can be addressed.

The big challenge global associations are now facing is not about practical matters – it is about values. And it is impacting associations on multiple levels. First of all, having a clear value framework in place is a “minimum service level” if an association wants to attract members belonging to any generation younger than millennials. For them, before



joining any organisation – for work or for leisure – it is very important to know what the organisation stands for in terms of values. Secondly, having a value framework in place is one thing, defining the impact for the association and its members is another one. For example: if one of the values is DEI, does that mean that any member organisation needs to sign up to a charter ensuring that it has a DEI policy? Do you need to check this? Will there be sanctions – also if the member organisation was already a member long before the value framework was put in place? And thirdly: is it limited to the level of the member organisation or do we consider the country in which the member is located also as a criterium – which might lead to excluding quite a number of countries?

For AIPC and its members – and this is the case for many other associations – the rise of the importance of values is a complex question to address, as it is often beyond the control of our members. Let's take the case of DEI. At member level, we find that a growing number of countries and/or states are questioning DEI and therefore associations decide not to take their events to those countries/states anymore, independently of the efforts done by our members in the country/state concerned to be fully compliant with the DEI principles. Does this mean we have to do the same at association level and expel members due to political circumstances?

AIPC has always been a non-political association, but in a world which – as Foreign Affairs puts it – is non-aligned, this is a position that needs to be redefined. To be frank, I do not have the answers... yet. But it is clear that it will be necessary to define a response, clarifying what our values are, what the impact is for the association and for its members.

About AIPC: AIPC is a global network of more than 190 convention centres across 64 countries. Their goal is to promote the best in convention centre management by providing education, research and networking opportunities to management-level events professionals worldwide.



How to Make Your Events Accessible

AUTHOR: FELICIA ASIEDU, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER AT CVENT EUROPE

Accessibility matters. It's not only a moral imperative, but it's a legal obligation (under the Equality Act 2010). According to the World Health Organisation, approximately 16% of people worldwide have a disability. In the European Union, the average is even higher at 24% and in the UK it's nearly 22% of the population (equivalent to 14.1 million people). By prioritising accessibility – in both the in-person and online environments, event organisers can create a more welcoming, inclusive experience for all participants. To help make your events (whether virtual, face-to-face, or hybrid) more accessible, let's look at some of the considerations and practical tips you can take.

Internal conversations: first and foremost, it's important to initiate dialogue about accessibility within your organisations. *Tip:* Conversations with the event team can encourage employees to think critically about accessibility needs and actively seek solutions. With education and training, team members can become advocates for accessibility and champions for change.

The event website and registration: this is the first chance to find out what needs your attendees may have. *Tip:* Make sure your event website is accessible (for example, think high contrast colour schemes) and that content can be easily read by a screen reader. The registration process is the perfect time to ask more detailed questions: do you require captions? a sign language interpreter? wheelchair access? will you be accompanied by a Personal Care Assistant or service/ emotional support animal? Also include a field where attendees can input their specific requirements.

Mobility impairments: visitors with restricted movement may use wheelchairs or mobility scooters. *Tip:* A barrier-free environment ensures that individuals with mobility challenges can navigate the space comfortably. Consider event spaces that understand and already factor in ramps, lifts, wide doorways and aisles, accessible restroom facilities and parking. In other words, choose partners and venues that are open to understanding the need for varied accessibility concerns.

Visual impairments: attendees with restricted visibility may require solutions such as braille signage, audio description, large print options and specific colour contrast ratios. *Tip:* Ask presenters to explain visual content, as not everyone can see or interpret the content on a screen.

Hearing impairments: provide attendees with caption services and audio amplification devices. *Tip:* If you can provide a sign language interpreter ensure they're always on all screen presentations (onsite as well as virtually) and at an appropriate size to be legible.

Cognitive disabilities: attendees may face challenges understanding or interpreting information and sensory stimuli. *Tip:* Keep text-based language simple on signage, flyers and agendas. Provide visual cues and sensory-friendly spaces to enhance accessibility.

Neurodiversity: conditions like autism, ADHD and dyslexia can impact an individual's ability to engage with traditional event design. *Tip:* Create sensory friendly environments, consider removing audio-visual elements that trigger epilepsy, offer quiet break-out spaces and provide ample advance notice of changes to schedules or agenda. Strive for integration by involving individuals with disabilities in decision-making and implementing universal design principles from the outset.

Mental health conditions: conditions like depression, PTSD and anxiety can significantly impact an individual's emotional and psychological state. *Tip:* Be understanding if they need to take a break or leave a session early. Provide as much information in advance regarding travel, sessions, who else they could meet on-site and where quiet rooms are located. Allow them to set their own pace and prioritise their well-being.

Technology: the right event tech can help enrich the overall event experience for attendees with diverse access needs. *Tip:* Request Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) from your tech provider. VPATs contain details about the accessibility features of a product and are considered the industry standard for customers looking to use solutions that meet the highest levels of accessibility compliance. Cvent currently has VPATs for our Event Registration, Attendee Hub and Event Diagramming products. Additional VPATs for other solutions are in development.

Accessibility is a fundamental aspect of more responsible and inclusive event planning. By understanding and addressing diverse accessibility needs, you can foster a greater sense of belonging (and encourage deeper, more meaningful engagement) for all attendees.

wide

open

for
meetings

Kraków: when can we expect you?

A business event in a state-of-the-art facility, in a city with a thousand years of history in the background? A "wow" effect guaranteed! However, the MICE industry is not only about spectacular settings - it is also about professional organisation, state-of-the-art technology, comfortable accommodation and, last but not least, a range of leisure activities. Kraków offers all this - and much more.

The former capital of Poland, located in the southern part of the country, successfully combines the challenges of today with its centuries-old heritage. The infrastructure dedicated to events here, woven into the historic fabric of the city, impresses with both its modern design and functionality. It makes it possible to organise a wide variety of events: trade fairs, conferences, congresses, symposia or business meetings, all of which have high quality as their common denominator.

Venues such as the TAURON Arena Kraków, the EXPO Kraków International Trade Fair and Congress Centre, the CKF_13 Fabryczna Conference Centre or the ICE Kraków Congress Centre can host events with thousands of participants, as well as more intimate ones. ICE Kraków boasts excellent recommendations: in 2017, it hosted the 41st session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, and in 2022, it was selected as the location for the 61st ICCA Congress. Event organisers can count on the support of the city's Kraków Convention Bureau.

The city's extensive range of hotels and its accessibility is an important asset: more than 12,500 rooms in almost 190 hotels, many of which are boutique, and air links to all major European cities. Enthusiasts of active leisure and wellness, lovers of culture and art, but also foodies - there is something for everyone and you will only be left with regret having spent too little time here.

Experience

Kraków.
Visit Małopolska.

