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Tourism Declares Climate
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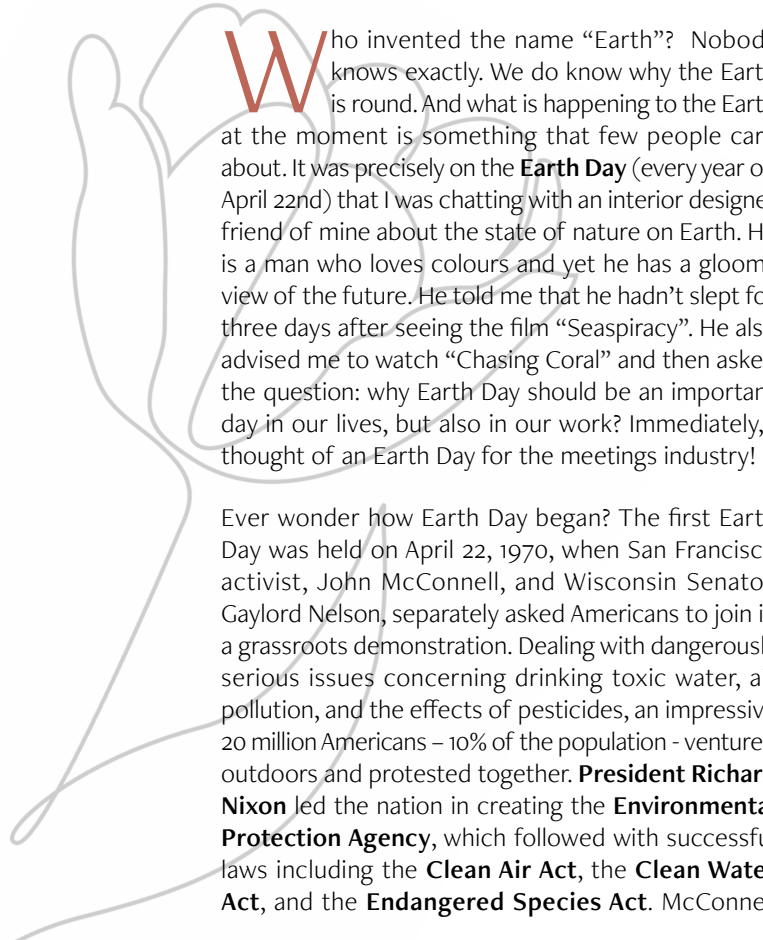


▲ Tulip Garden "Falling Drop" by Ronald van der Hilst

Tears for Mother Earth

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

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Who invented the name "Earth"? Nobody knows exactly. We do know why the Earth is round. And what is happening to the Earth at the moment is something that few people care about. It was precisely on the **Earth Day** (every year on April 22nd) that I was chatting with an interior designer friend of mine about the state of nature on Earth. He is a man who loves colours and yet he has a gloomy view of the future. He told me that he hadn't slept for three days after seeing the film "Seaspiracy". He also advised me to watch "Chasing Coral" and then asked the question: why Earth Day should be an important day in our lives, but also in our work? Immediately, I thought of an Earth Day for the meetings industry!

Ever wonder how Earth Day began? The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970, when San Francisco activist, John McConnell, and Wisconsin Senator, Gaylord Nelson, separately asked Americans to join in a grassroots demonstration. Dealing with dangerously serious issues concerning drinking toxic water, air pollution, and the effects of pesticides, an impressive 20 million Americans – 10% of the population - ventured outdoors and protested together. **President Richard Nixon** led the nation in creating the **Environmental Protection Agency**, which followed with successful laws including the **Clean Air Act**, the **Clean Water Act**, and the **Endangered Species Act**. McConnell

originally had chosen the spring equinox (March 20, 1970), but Nelson chose April 22nd, which ended up becoming the official celebration date.

Today, not only is Earth Day meant to increase awareness of environmental problems, but it is also becoming a popular day for many communities to gather together to clean up litter, plant trees, or simply reflect on the beauty of nature.

We also know by now that the meetings industry is a major polluter on the planet and we definitely need to do more about that in the future. In recent years, I have often thought that sustainability was a hackneyed concept but after reading more about Earth Day, I realise that we are just at the beginning of a battle... and I already know the victor!



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Red Alert Towards Green Events

It wasn't so long ago when it was still possible to hear some voices complaining about the "tedious and trendy" networking sessions on sustainability. 2019 seems to have been centuries ago, but at that time it was apparent that climate and environmental issues were playing second fiddle in the business engine of so many. We learned the hard way, didn't we? Nevertheless, saying that all this regenerative strategy and the principles of a circular economy have only surfaced in this pandemic crisis, would be unfair for so many destinations and venues – as our featured stories on **Auckland**, **Helsinki** and **Setia SPICE** demonstrate. The viral threat was definitely the spark that ignited a broader discussion, but let's not forget the leading examples that can guide us to a sustainable recovery.

We should now admit that a cycle in the MICE industry is drawing to a close. It would be naive to assume that this entire business events network was not linked to short-term profits and an insatiable maelstrom of prosperity that led to a non-return situation. As our guest in this issue, **Jeremy Smith** of **Tourism Declares Climate Emergency**, tells us: "we came at a timeframe when there was a lot of money, capacity and everyone was planning more growth (...). If you went to a conference on tourism, those were the conversations about sustainability." In fact, and contrary to what many people think, "sustaining" our climate actions is far from the perfect answer for a world that we all want to be a part of. It is necessary to regenerate and renew the raw materials, products and resources we use in a closed and self-sufficient loop. Or by the words of **Melissa Baird** of the **GDS Movement**, "we need to move on from a sustainability focus towards a holistic regenerative approach that works to restore communities rather than merely sustain conditions."

But if technology has been a lifeline for the industry's survival it also comes at a cost. "The production and use of our electronic devices are estimated to be responsible for some 12% of total greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 – 1,5 times more than the global transport sector," warns **Chloé Fayole**, **ECOS strategy director**, in our association interview. ECOS is also backing up the **EU's Sustainable Products Initiative** that aims to extend the principle of eco-design and other EU policies such as the single-use

plastic directive. The year 2021 is also the **United Nations' International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development**. The combination of two fundamental pillars in the pursuit of a more poised and responsible society: creative economies will play a significant role in tipping the balance for sustainable development and regeneration. Implementing innovative ways of doing business side by side with environmental awareness at all levels.

Finally, sustainability can also become a watertight concept when it speaks only of environmental actions. **Corporate social responsibility (CSR)** within associations is a key element in the response to the challenges of a modern world. A comprehensive approach that focuses on creating and maximising long-term economic, social and environmental value, through inclusion, equity and diversity. For the second year in a row, **HQ** joined **Interel** and several other partners in launching the **"Women Who Advance Associations"** campaign, which aims to celebrate female talent and diversity in the international associative community.

As you can see, an endless number of topics to read in the next pages of your HQ #99!



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MICE in the Time of the Finite World

AUTHOR:

TRISTAN HALLER, HQ'S EDITOR

No need to repeat what has already been said. As we all know, the MICE industry, being closely linked to travel and having ties with the tourism industry, has been tremendously impacted by the recent pandemics. Some state that business travel will recover by 2025, while others go as far as saying that MICE will never recover. As **Ralph Hollister, Travel & Tourism Analyst at GlobalData**, said: "MICE events are now taking place online, without the need for companies operating in the tourism sector. This is a worrying trend for all industries involved in travel and tourism – the longer restrictions and guidelines last around MICE tourism, while other national economies start to pick up, the more companies, attendees and event organisers may start to become accustomed to hosting and attending MICE events online, whilst appreciating the unseen benefits they bring." On the other hand, according to the **World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC)**, the impact of COVID-19 is much worse than that of the 2009 crisis – up to five times! The consequences are immense, as MICE is a large part of the economy of some of the biggest cities in the world – conventions even generated one sixth of Las Vegas' total tourism turnover – and we tend to disregard all those people who earn a living from this industry, from caterers to all the actors of the MICE economy up until the most "invisible", yet essential, workers.



The tourist age

Nevertheless, we cannot avoid the sinister truth: business travel, just like tourism in general, can and has contributed to the spread of the disease. It is no surprise that an industry focused on moving people around the globe would become the first target of political restrictions in times of pandemics...but as researchers **Stefan Gössling, Daniel Scott and Colin M. Hall** said, the responsibility might be even more inconspicuous: “there is much evidence that food production patterns are responsible for repeated outbreaks of the corona virus, including SARS, MERS and COVID-19 (...) While these originated in Asia, the case can be made against industrialised food production more generally, which has been linked to animal disease outbreaks (...). As many tourism businesses source their food from global markets, preferably at the lowest possible cost, and as there are high volumes of food waste involved in tourism operations, the sector supports industrialised food (...) Notably, climate change also exacerbates the risk of pathogen outbreaks (...) Tourism is a major source of emissions of greenhouse gases, and thus a factor increasing the risk of pandemics both directly and indirectly.”

As we gaze upon the disasters caused by a barbarically named pathogen, one thing clearly stands out: our lives have become completely dependent on tourism and travel. **Marco d’Eramo**, the author of “*The World in a Selfie*”, a must-read book on tourism, calls it the Age of tourism. Even though travelling and tourism precede the Industrial Revolution, it became a powerful industry after the II World War, growing more and more thanks to the globalisation, technological progress and deindustrialisation of the Western world. Its economic importance has become unbelievable, circulating billions of dollars and millions of people, employing numerous stakeholders from airplane agencies to food wholesalers, and “precisely because it involves [a] considerable infrastructure, tourism is the planet’s single most polluting industry”. It can also take credit for the rise of what the author calls “the tourist city”. A bizarre and very modern invention,

never-before-seen, that makes a city completely submissive to the power of tourists, to the detriment of the local population. “Locals are forced to become clandestine in their own cities”, he says, and as the city becomes unliveable economically, tourism “kills a city in subtler ways [than slums and smog], by hollowing it out from the inside and emptying it of life”, turning it into “a giant theme park” full of museums and luxury boutiques, zoning the city with districts exclusively created to satisfy the travellers. In this city, the food as well as shops are adapted to the tourists instead of the locals. Life is itself a parody with folklore produced in order to offer what tourists crave nowadays: *an authentic experience*.

What solutions?

You might ask indeed, amidst this catastrophic view of travelling, what can we do. Let’s start with what we shouldn’t do. One of the most spontaneous

reactions after events were cancelled all over the world, was to turn to the ICT and online tools. Following other segments of the economy which saw the explosion of digital economy in all its diversity (delivery services, online shopping, teleworking, etc.), “webinars, teleconferences, and virtual exhibits have become the norm in 2020” (Maria Arlene T. Disimulacion). With a

strong emphasis on new ways of delivering the MICE experience without travelling, cities and organisers have shifted to virtual events, often in a long-term process of hybridisation. And who can blame them? Some might even think it’s a progress in terms of decrease of pollution and unnecessary travels. Nevertheless, the devil lies in the details, and we shouldn’t underestimate the environmental impact of digitalisation. Not considering the problems of the virtual world and the fact that it will never replace face-to-face interactions, more and more studies show that the carbon footprint of the digital technologies is not to be neglected – and it keeps on growing. “The carbon footprint of our gadgets, the internet and the systems supporting them account for about 3.7% of global greenhouse emissions, according to some estimates. It is similar to the amount produced by the airline industry globally”, explains Mike

“As we gaze upon the disasters caused by a barbarically named pathogen, one thing clearly stands out: our lives have become completely dependent on tourism and travel.”

Hazas, a researcher at Lancaster University. “And these emissions are predicted to double by 2025.” On top of that, a recent study by researchers from Purdue, Yale and Massachusetts universities² has shown that for an hour of communication on programs like Zoom, around 150 to 1000g of CO2 is emitted depending on the quality of the video. It’s as much as 9km of car driving! And it’s mainly caused by the use of the Webcam.

Therefore, it would be more interesting to refocus our attention on more long-term solutions, and possibilities of modifying the way we travel as well as the way business is made!. Favouring domestic travel is a start, yet even this has its flaws during a pandemic, as we have seen with the debates in Japan surrounding its Go To Travel campaign, recently aborted. A lot of people in France also complained about how Paris’ residents fled to the countryside, importing with them the very same virus that had developed inside the boiling capital. Domestic travel is a good thing, and developing the domestic market is sure to help preventing the overdependence on the global economy, but it should always be developed with the local population’s opinion and interest in mind. As Hussain and Fusté-Forné developed in a paper about domestic tourism in Akaroa (New Zealand), more responsible tourism will have to substitute “slow domestic tourism” to “international mass tourism”, and “putting people first will help tourism stakeholders face the crisis from a sustainability and resilience perspective”. Only the inhabitants of a city can make it alive, and therefore “authentic” – when the city starts relying too much on tourism and tourists, whether they be for leisure or for business,

that’s when it loses the core of its soul, which is the people themselves.

But let’s face it, MICE’s actors cannot solve problems that are deeper and greater than its industry. In the end, it will all come down to political decisions and systemic solutions, as a lot of factors responsible for this crisis as well as for the state of the world lie in broader causes, be it intensive agriculture, unregulated exchanges, aggressive urbanisation of natural habitats, mass tourism, social inequalities, etc. **Paul Valery**, a French intellectual and poet, said famously in 1931 that the “the time of the finite world begins”. This was before mankind went to space, but it hasn’t lost its relevance: indeed, he said it to acknowledge the fact that the world had become completely intertwined, interconnected, and it was to be an observation as well as a warning. As men move items and people around in an often chaotic and disproportionate way – putting societies and their economy in a state of absolute competition – a local accident in one part of the world can have global repercussions. Events have unfortunately proven this theory in a bloody fashion. But will we learn from it?

¹Beon Worldwide has interesting advice to give to the MICE industry to be more sustainable – and as expected, they rely heavily on relocalisation, decrease of consumerism and recycling: <https://beonworldwide.com/en/how-can-the-mice-industry-contribute-to-more-sustainable-events/>

² <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.105389>





Today, there is little doubt that our socioeconomic impact is inseparable from climate action. However, when this alliance was created in January 2020, the label “climate emergency” was just a strong harbinger that we now associate with this pandemic crisis. **Tourism Declares Climate Emergency** is a global community that seeks a better future for the industry by acting sustainably for its regeneration. Sustainable tourism consultant **Jeremy Smith** (pictured left), co-founder of the movement, spoke to us via skype.

“What we need to be offering people is **a sense of regeneration**”

What was the great motivation behind the foundation of this networked community?

We formed this alliance in January last year, due to the frustration and a lack of consensus on how tourism was responding to climate change. Although there was an increasingly emerging agreement outside tourism – even more so now – on how we need to act, the framework we need to adopt and the targets we need to define, we felt that tourism continued to define its own goals and frameworks, in a somewhat confused and inconsistent way. Therefore, it has become difficult for companies in this industry to choose an appropriate direction without a specific framework. We had to stop “reinventing the wheel” and coming up with new ways to align what we were doing as an industry to find that consensus. That was the initial motivation.

How have the industry and the various stakeholders received your message and the

content of your initiative? Are they open to it?

If you think about the context of the launch of our community, we started with just 14 founding signatories, and at that time, no one was talking about the pandemic. We arrived at a timeframe when there was a lot of money, capacity and everyone was planning more growth, although a lot of people were also concerned about overcrowding and local communities resisting the growth of tourism. If you went to a conference on tourism, those were the conversations about sustainability. And then, of course, “March” happened and the situation changed drastically: just two months after our arrival and having a big pick up and a very positive response, we suddenly faced an industry that had never seen a crisis like this. Back in March/April last year, everyone was focused on bringing guests back home, but no one was able to talk about anything else. As soon as we settled down in the middle of the summer and the conversation started to focus

on the future, we went to speak to our members – around 65 at this point – and everyone told us that the experience of the pandemic in their businesses made them even more engaged in acting on sustainability and climate change. However, contrary to the situation in January, almost all of our members have lost their leeway – money, capacity, personnel – and despite their commitment, they definitely need some support now. For us, this triggered a change of identity where we initially presented ourselves as an awareness campaign to become a global community.

The Era of climate action is now: what can we do as an industry to really step into this global sustainable action as a whole?

In the MICE industry, there is much that can be done, as everything is on hold and there are many regulations and guidelines from high-end organisations, such as the **GDS Movement**. Let’s say we decided to hold our annual conference in Gothenburg and made sure that most of our guests came by train, reducing the number of flights. The business event industry can track these numbers in favour of a more sustainable destination, reversing old trends and encouraging change. We can choose the hotels we wish to partner with, recommending those that have a greater degree of commitment to the climate. Add to that the new hybridisation that we are seeing accelerated by the pandemic, and we’ll be able to fly-in half of last year’s speakers, inviting the other half via link up. This starts from something that was viewed as limiting to something that creative people use as an opportunity. In Helsinki, city that is at the heart of circular economies, you can really tick through all the various parts of the process – by commissioning the PCO, ensuring that 100% of the sets can be reused, allying with eco-friendly companies, etc. Ten years ago, you would struggle to find a company that would deliver a sustainable event, but now, destinations are competing not only in terms

of reduction, but also in the transformation into something regenerative. What if we really created an event in this city where the legacy is not a waste, but a beacon of regeneration? Where we support business, connect people and change the whole way we perceive the industry.

How can we drive positive change through this technological revolution of MICE?

Right at the top there is the level of pure emissions, in the sense that opting for virtual accounts for less transportation, waste or use of spaces. But there is also a very important social and inclusive part that we must never forget. We can’t talk about sustainability just as an environmental issue, we have to talk about an inclusive movement to engage the whole of society, and focus on people who don’t have the platforms and opportunities to speak and be heard. People like me and others who have the chance to talk about these topics with a lot of practice and confidence, are invited to come back all the time. Nowadays, if I’m invited to speak virtually it doesn’t matter where I live, so as long as I have a good internet connection, I can sit in any place and we will all become part of the course. Fortunately, this can also be used as a way to increase inclusion by getting different voices that we’ve never heard before. Making sure that we listen to someone who represents a community that is really affected by environmental issues.

Furthermore, I think what will change enormously is the working frame of business travel. I see the world of events quite closely as we spent this entire year talking with people on screens. Some of the virtual meetings that we inevitably started to attend changed the world for the better. I have had better opportunities and connections as a result of this. So, for me, social inclusion is the greatest strength.

“*What if we really created an event in this city where the legacy is not a waste, but a beacon of regeneration? Where we support business, connect people and change the whole way we perceive the industry.*”

How can we regenerate the transport industry so that it becomes aligned with these new requirements and principles?

I will separate transportation and aviation because when it comes to land base transport the opportunities are far more present. People see trains as part of the solution anyway, so supporting and financing the development of railways is the right path to follow. We need to shift our investment into focusing on these forms of transport that are by nature “greener”. The train is an obvious answer, but improving the quality of bicycle and electric infrastructure is also a factor. Especially in urban areas, investing in these networks means less pollution, a healthier population, fewer deaths from traffic accidents, etc. For this set of transports – trains, bicycles, buses, electric cars – there should be support for subsidies and investments in infrastructure, so the more complex and tight the network is, the better it gets. This, by nature, means shifting your investment away from aviation, especially when overland transport offers a viable and balanced option. When you start putting financial measures in place, you can encourage the speed of change in aviation. Last month, Sweden discussed a bill for two of its Swedish airports that intended to impose landing fees linked to aircraft emissions. Therefore, more polluting airplanes will pay more for landing than less polluting airplanes. Most certainly, we’ll see some bail outs post-COVID, and hopefully, there will be a chance to impose some green conditions. For example, if a national carrier needs to be saved that same company must commit to a set of sustainable measures for that to happen. Commit to change to push the collective movement forward.

How can we define a sustainable organisational culture in 2021?


I care very much about the language that we use, and I also worry a great deal about how language gets twisted, shifted and used for different reasons. The word “sustainability” and its concepts have always been difficult for people to grasp. They find it a jargon word, a sterile concept. The moment we reduce something down to a single word, it becomes a label and labels are divisive. What we need is to be able to have something much more inclusive, where you can find your way whoever you are. If your burning issue is to fix racism we can actually have a conversation about climate, and vice-versa. We can find common ground on these issues to move forward. If I had a wish about the results this year, it would be to change this conversation around sustainability to another around regeneration. It is not enough to just sustain or just maintain, what we need to offer people is a sense of recovery, of restoration. A sense of opportunity that brings us back to a more engaged relationship with the natural world, at the heart of regeneration. We can find ways not only to reduce the amount of carbon we create, but also to bring out a new mind-set. How can I leave the place I’m in better than when I went there? Better for all of us to feel part of something regenerative and more positive. This is the emerging conversation to be taken in 2021.


Editor’s Note

Shortly after this conversation, Glasgow, the host city of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, became the first convention bureau in the world to join the Tourism Declares Climate Emergency.

“We need to shift our investment into focusing on these forms of transport that are by nature “greener”.


TOURISM DECLARES CLIMATE EMERGENCY

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Hangzhou, inspiring new connections

Top Ten Scenes Of Hangzhou Digital Economy

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- ROBOT TOWN
- TURING TOWN
- supET
- CLOUD TOWN
- WASU
- DAHUA
- HIPARK
- INNO&ENTRE TOWN

Linked in Business Events Hangzhou

Exploring Your Destination's DMOJO

“Everything is in motion, while also at a standstill. Cities are reimagined. Work lives reprogrammed. Values reconsidered. Businesses remodelled. Communities rediscovered!”

Manuel Fernandes reports

...in this fashion, the **ECM president Petra Susek** unlocked the key takeaways of **ECM Online International Conference 2021**, stating the enormous challenges that the destination community is facing. During this second webinar organised by the **European Cities Marketing (ECM)**, the reshape of business travel and urban experiencing in Europe was at the centre of the discussion promoted by a well-rounded and carefully selected programme. In a broader sense, this educational meeting was able to awaken the lucky charm that cities still have in recovering and converting the role of tourism and the future of events.

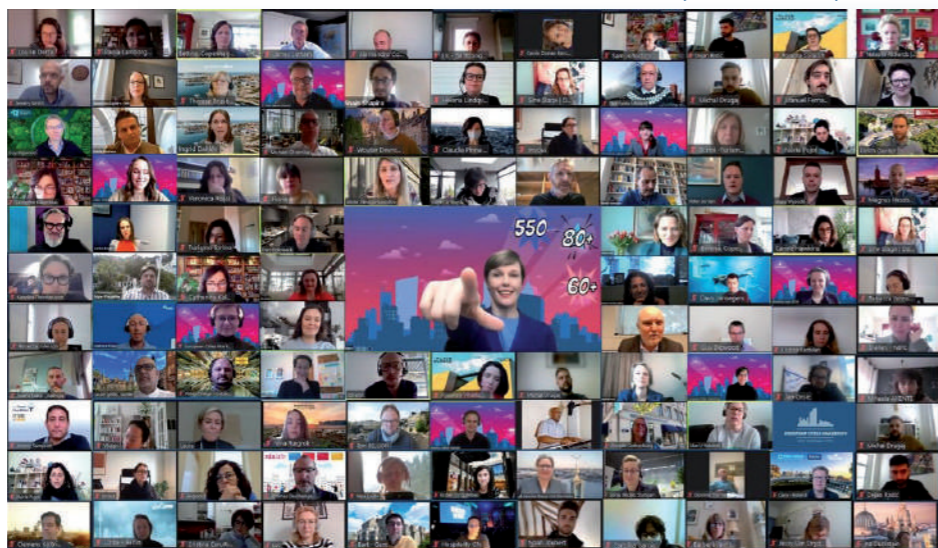
What kind of tourism do we want? How can we redesign the foundations of a new visitor economy? Finally, there is an opportunity and a moment to reconfigure a new urban model and move forward. On the bright side, the uncertainty instilled by this crisis is opening space for a strategic partnership in what is really worth betting and following as a reliable path. “Whether the event is physical or digital, we need to figure out its role in building the city’s assets, the stocks, the intellectual, the social, the natural, the financial, the cultural capital,” says **Genevieve Leclerc, president & CEO at #Meet4Impact**. This quest for legacy builds on the knowledge capacity and the social and intellectual repercussion that events manage to generate, rather than just a mere trade infusion in cities. For most speakers, destinations must claim a new narrative that includes their people and identities, the values of sustainability and CSR, and the virtues of a smart tech mind-set.

In the session that HQ sponsored, “Sustainable Moves” led to a discussion about why collaborative over competitive advantage is the way ahead, how to accelerate action, and why sustainability is no longer enough. “The destination in itself is really not that important, it’s not the end goal, it’s about what the destination

can do for its people, what it can offer its visitors,” argues **Anu Syrma, marketing director of Helsinki Marketing** (interview next page). In other words, how can we move from the “means” to the “meaning” of an entire industry. “It bothers me in some ways, we still are using the term sustainability. Do we want to sustain what we had before? We need a shift in a chain of systems, and one is tourism that is connected to the food, the energy or the building systems. So, we are talking about a transformational systemic shift that needs to happen,” blatantly put by **Guy Bigwood, managing director of GDS-Movement**.

And what happens after all that has happened? Two of Europe’s lead thinkers on strategic foresight and consumer behaviour, **Herman Konings** and **Mikkel Rasmussen**, painted some canvases on how to move from these temporary changes to long-term transformation, and how to reconcile a reality that seems to be collapsing around us. “This is a great time to rethink why and when people should come to our destination, because there will be new rituals for travel,” concludes the latter. In short, the ECM conference demonstrated once again why it is a reference in the debate for DMO’s with a progressive vision for event destinations, and echoing for new guidelines and practices in the associative space.

▼ Screenshot of ECM Online Conference 2021



Ecological thinking is strongly rooted in everyday life in Helsinki, and events can also spur a lot of positive social outcomes there. In line with a strong commitment to decarbonisation, the Finnish capital launched a global challenge competition, urging innovators to propose game-changing solutions for the future of urban. We asked **Vappu Mänty** (photo below), communications and PR director of **Helsinki Marketing**, why Helsinki is a perfect test-bed for the world’s megacities.

Think **Sustainably** in Helsinki

How did your city manage to bring together all businesses, associations and civil society around this sustainable framework?

We believe that in the future, the most pressing global challenges will be solved on a city level. Operating like a city-scale laboratory, Helsinki is eager to experiment with policies and initiatives that would not be possible elsewhere. The city is able to effect change in this way because of its compact size, well-functioning infrastructure and well-developed knowledge-economy cluster.

Helsinki Marketing has a built-in role of being a facilitator between the city organisation and the different stakeholders, which gives us a great possibility to engage different actors and to bring common goals from strategic to operational level. An atmosphere that motivates less consumption, construction efforts that consider sustainable development, and ambitious climate aims make Helsinki a model city of sustainable development.

What kind of benefits and gains can be freed to your community during a conference in Helsinki nowadays?

Legacy thinking runs deep in the way congresses are organised and has long been something that we strive for. We believe that events here have a responsibility in giving back to the community, by contributing to the environment or connecting with the local community.

Embedding sustainable practices will improve our sustainability performance by minimising

the environmental impacts and optimising the social and financial impacts. That’s why Helsinki Marketing created **Sustainable Meeting Guidelines** to help PCOs make more sustainable choices when organising conferences.

In addition, there are many activities available to enhance the congress experience, such as holding events as a way to raise money for charities. Also, open days and lectures at the congress venue, connecting with local talent and entrepreneurs, are important ways to share initiatives and reach out to the local community.

How important were benchmarking tools, collaborative design and intercity knowledge exchange to outline your city’s strategy?

The city’s strategy emphasises events and congresses, and after the pandemic, we further highlighted safeness, digitalisation and environmental procedures. It is crucial for the future to know how to position your destination in the post-corona era. Cities now have a better understanding of winning attributes, and a high level of trust between people and city administration is at the top end of this list.

Functional infrastructure is essential. Investment to well-being in housing, education and care contribute to the overall sense of security. Digital capabilities especially in data collection and analysis offer pathways to a more reliable, fact-based decision-making that promotes trust. We also believe customer behaviour will change radically in post-corona times. We need a stronger reason as to why we travel and visits will be more in line with who we are and what we stand for. In the future, the winners will be those who understand and meet the values of visitors and participants.



▼ Sauna in Lonna island © Julia Kivelä

If you want to find any positive upshots out of this pandemic, just stop for a second and look around. The way the world changed during these lockdowns, not only made us aware of the fragility of our roofs, but also led us back to our true "home": Planet Earth. The **Environmental Coalition On Standards (ECOS)** is an international NGO, established in 2001, that makes the voice of the environment heard within standardisation systems. **Chloé Fayole**, Programme & Strategy Director, explained why we shouldn't take that for granted.



“Organisations need to embed environmental considerations into all of their processes”

How did ECOS manage all the restrictions and setbacks caused by the pandemic this past year?

The COVID-19 pandemic shook the global economy in many ways. Of course, it impacted our working habits as we had to adapt to teleworking almost overnight, and it also created new challenges related to organising our policy outreach. Despite the challenges, we have continued defending the need for robust legislation and standards to protect our planet. Over the past year, many files that are key to our transition to a circular economy have gone through decisive steps. We have also achieved to deflect industry attempts to delay, or even weaken, hard-won political achievements on EU policies such as the **Single Use Plastics directive**, and **ecodesign** and **energy labelling rules** for home appliances.

What is the impact of the measures taken against the pandemic on the climate?

It is true that the pandemic has brought along a temporary drop in CO2 emissions. However, despite lockdowns in many countries, worldwide CO2 emissions have been cut by only 6.4%, and that is not enough

to prevent our planet from heating more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as UN estimations show. This is clear proof that, if we want to avoid the effects of climate change, decision-makers need to take serious actions and commitments – and do so as soon as possible. We hope that the COVID-19 pandemic will be a wake-up call for those who still try to avoid systemic change by putting forward empty pledges and greenwashing strategies.

What are the standards, bills and policies on the ECOS agenda that are presently being developed to share with political authorities?

Climate considerations need to be omnipresent if we are to stand a chance of preserving our planet for future generations. At the moment, there are plenty of policies and standards in the making that will be key to our future. One of the main issues on our agenda this year is the **EU’s Sustainable Products Initiative (SPI)**, a commitment by the European Commission that will extend the principle of **ecodesign** to all products, including construction materials, furniture and textiles. Today, many of our appliances need to comply with minimum requirements to be allowed on the

market. Thanks to the SPI, the same principle could be applied to more products, aiming to make them sustainable by default.

How can technology act as an environmental ally and help associations achieve their sustainable goals?

Technology brings a number of important solutions to our daily lives and that’s more evident today than ever. It can significantly reduce corporate travel and simplify information exchange, for instance. However, digitalisation also comes at a cost to our environment and climate, and tackling those impacts should be recognised as an urgent priority. The production and use of our electronic devices is estimated to be responsible for some 12% of total greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 – 1.5 times more than the global transport sector. Without urgent measures to reduce the number of devices we use, extend their useful lifetime as well as action to reduce their energy consumption, the environmental benefits of digitalisation will unfortunately be significantly outweighed by the pressure they pose on the environment.

How can education help people embrace this circular economy?

Every day, we are bombarded with claims on how products on the market supposedly help the planet. But many of these claims are not true, and often are not based on reliable information or calculation methods. We need to provide citizens and markets with clear information on environmental performance of products and activities so that they have the tools to make conscious choices to reduce their personal

environmental impact.

What kind of tips and advice does ECOS recommend for destinations to become more responsible for the ecological footprint of their events?

The best type of waste is the one that is not produced. As a first step, meeting organisers should try to cut on materials altogether, eliminating those that are not really needed; a good example is those small gadgets that end up in a forgotten drawer at home, but also at the office. Every year, each of us throws away 6.1 kg of electronic waste on an average, according to 2016 data. The best way to act responsibly when organising an event is not to add to this figure.

Another important source of waste during events are single-use plates and drinking cups. Implementing systems for refill and reuse in the venue can dramatically cut the generation of this kind of waste, and organisers should use their caterers with sustainable solutions in mind.

How can associations keep up with these changes and adjust to a new framework without losing focus on their members’ priorities?

In order to avoid the worst consequences of global warming, everyone needs to do their bit. If associations take the impacts of their activities into account, they will take better decisions, which, in turn, will result in sustainable long-term results. To do that, organisations need to embed environmental considerations into all of their processes and activities.



Coronavirus VS MICE

How to Make **Events Eco-friendly** & More **Sustainable** with **Tech Post-Pandemic**

BY **FELICIA ASIEDU**, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER FOR **CVENT EUROPE**.

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23 Cape Town International Convention Centre's local action



Over the past few years there has been an increased focus around the **sustainability of events** and how the industry can unite and support the **ecological drive**.

Many of us will remember that 2019 was the year of Greta Thunberg and major shifts toward **corporate responsibility**. The opportunity for change has never been more significant, and the **2020 ICE Benchmarking Research** – in association with **Cvent** – supports that green events are back on the planner's agenda, as “ensuring the sustainability of their events” was voted the second most important issue over the next three years by 70% of respondents.

Technology already plays an important role in helping planners reduce the environmental impact of their events. Paper consumption has been dramatically reduced as **email invitations, online registration and event check-ins** are handled via mobile devices, tablets, and computers. In addition, mobile devices paved the way for event-specific apps, which provide attendees with valuable information at their fingertips.

Here are a few other ideas to help you produce eco-friendly events:

- Use **online sourcing platforms** that offer filters to find venues with eco-policies such as CO2 offset and recycling and re-purpose initiatives for furniture and fabrics. Also, check for ISO 20121, ISO 14001 or LEED certifications – it means the venue has objectives to improve waste, carbon and water management, and is independently verified.
- Consider hosting a **hybrid event**,

as a virtual component can increase attendance while simultaneously lowering your overall carbon footprint.

- When it comes to transport and logistics, there's an **ever-growing number of apps** which support carpooling and green vehicles. Also, work with a local provider who can offer this to your event.
- **Smart (NFC-enabled) badges** allow the attendee journey to be tracked throughout the event. It's important that these are recycled and the best way is to create clearly marked stations at the venue where attendees can leave their badges as they exit the event.
- Consider **projection mapping** over print and signage to reduce the costs of creating one-use designs and materials.
- **Sustainable food and drink** should encompass everything from province to plate. So, opt for local suppliers and reusable or biodegradable cups and utensils. Donate excess food by working with local organisations.
- **Technology** (as part of an event management platform) can be used to measure waste, electricity and water consumption, as well as overall CO2 emissions, this data can be leveraged to identify opportunities and strategically improve future events.

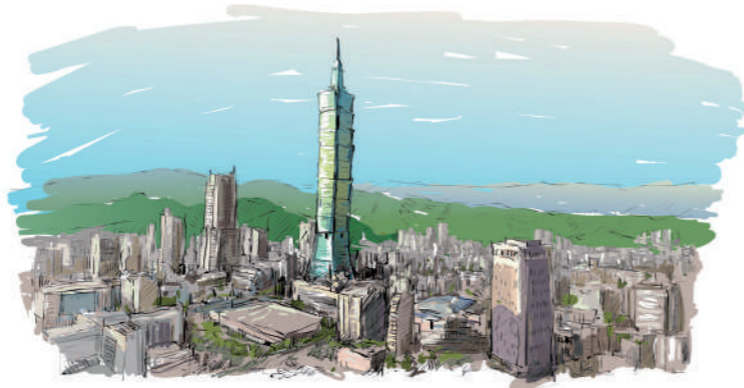
Going green not only helps reduce the **impact on the environment**, it makes savvy business sense by reducing the costs of utilities, fuel and catering. Don't hesitate, make your next event greener.





Taiwan: A Force to Be Reckoned With

Taiwan is one of the few places in the world where people continue to work and attend school normally, and which now seeks a balance between pandemic control and economic recovery.



Taiwan has been fighting COVID-19 and facing the global challenges that stem from it. One of the reasons why the island nation remained stable during the pandemic was the strict follow-up of prevention measures by its population. “The pandemic response has been outstanding due to our excellent resilience and timely policies, which have relied on the concerted teamwork of the government, enterprises and public,” says **Cynthia Kiang** who currently serves as **Director-General of Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs**. COVID-19 has postponed many international MICE events in the country, and, for this reason, Taiwan’s government consistently helped MICE companies to maintain their normal operations, while ensuring that professionals remain in the sector. As Kiang tells us, “fortunately, our MICE activities resumed in June 2020, and many international MICE events have since taken place in hybrid formats, such as **Bio-Asia**, **SEMICON TAIWAN 2020**, the **International Nursing Conference** and **IEEE Global Communications Conference**.”

Last year, **MEET TAIWAN** focused on helping the MICE industry address these challenges, making health and safety imperative for all event participants. “We have been working jointly with MICE professionals and venues to implement relevant policies and guidelines to enhance safety and get approval from Taiwan Centres for Disease Control.” Meanwhile, MICE activities have been conducted primarily with a combination of hybrid formats to bridge gaps due to pandemic restrictions. “We have also set up an online exhibition platform for domestic MICE organisers, providing online product display and meeting services to communicate and vie for foreign buyers,” says Kiang. Moreover, the country has upgraded MICE facilities and venues with smart technology and big data, such as the **Taipei International Convention Centre** which has established a new studio to attract meeting planners or the **Kaohsiung Exhibition Centre**, both serving as

5G demonstration fields, with AR and VR technologies. A research project on digital exhibition is also being planned, integrating virtual and physical exhibitions with digital technology. “In my opinion, this is definitely an opportunity to leverage new business. One goal is to make hybrid events more commercially viable,” adds Kiang.

“We have upheld Taiwan as the best MICE destination by integrating diversified marketing techniques and assisting event professionals and local NGOs in their bids.” Although the pandemic has disrupted the global industry, many international conferences have still been seized in Taiwan, such as the **hybrid 2020 ICCA Congress** that reached a record attendance. “We will continue to provide local support for association meetings, such as the **World News Media Congress & World Editors Forum**, which is scheduled to be hosted physically in September.” Following in the footsteps of this development, Taiwan is increasing its focus on hybrid meetings and Online-Merge-Offline exhibitions to incorporate advanced technologies. Based on the demands of the domestic industry, several courses related to online conferences, technology and digital marketing are also being formulated.

Taiwan’s MICE industry is also moving forward over time. “We’ve issued the Green MICE Guideline to encourage organisers to implement green practices in reducing, recycling and reusing waste during MICE activities.” A testament to this was the **Kaohsiung International Travel Fair 2019** which went fully paperless, donating also used materials in a regenerative approach. “We are really looking forward to Green MICE becoming a more significant aspect of this sustainable Taiwan,” ends Kiang.



RIGA: Giving a Pause for Thought

MEET RĪGA, the CVB of the Latvian capital is set to close its doors until the end of the Summer, when the new Riga Investment Agency will take over. In the meantime, the city is getting ready for **#Phyigital Events** with sustainable goals in mind.

Time flies and the Baltic destination needs a wind of change. The restructuring of Riga Tourism Development Bureau is covered by larger plans to remodel the city administration, merging under the same roof Investments, Tourism, PR and the city’s Marketing. How is it going to look? “We still don’t know, but hopefully synergy between various departments will benefit from the consolidation process,” says **Aigars Smiltans**, Riga’s **meetings & events ambassador**. March 2020 brought the industry to a big unknown: what to expect in upcoming months? However, **MEET RĪGA** was able to organise several webinars, as well as delivering further information for hotels and suppliers on health safety protocols. 2020 also showed which local suppliers were ready to change and those that have stagnated. “I would like to mirror this also towards associations. Destinations will begin to scrutinise what the real value of hosting associative events is and what kind of benefits it can bring to local society.” Smiltans is not the biggest advocate of luring association executives with incentive packages either. “Association boards need to reconsider how much do their members need to successfully host an event”, since, “in order

to obtain better ratings, CVBs usually forget the main reasons why they should host events in the first place.” However, by assessing the activities of other destinations, **MEET RĪGA**, in collaboration with the National Tourism Department, developed a support scheme for meetings and event organisers, but with a greater focus on local associations and suppliers.

Health safety protocols and regulations are quite different in several countries and even the entire EU has no common protocols to date. For that reason, Riga has prioritised its customers’ requirements when applying health safety protocols for hotels, venues, catering services and other service suppliers. “Event industry suppliers in Latvia are ready to receive first live event groups and to keep assembling hybrid events,” adds Smiltans. In fact, some local PCOs and DMCs started to offer various online meeting solutions, platforms and virtual studios to run live streaming. For example, **3K MANAGEMENT** in cooperation with **MITTO.me** created an online event platform, where one can organise sessions on various virtual stages. For Smiltans, Riga does not need to enter the private business and destinations can assist with innovative solutions and service promoting. Last year, the city was supposed to host **5G Techritory Forum**, which initially was planned as a **#Phyigital/hybrid event** but due to travel restrictions, the forum was transformed into a 100% digital event. “MEET RĪGA created a series of videos that were shown during the forum breaks, so that virtual participants could get a feel for the city as their next destination.” Finally, Riga sits very well into the frames of sustainability, heading to an almost carbon neutral destination up to 2030. The international airport is just 9 km from the city centre, and most hotels, venues and restaurants are within walking distance, which also helps to align local suppliers on the same wavelength. “We are slowly adapting and establishing procedures, behaviours and a mindset to leave a minimalist carbon footprint here.”





Auckland: Meet Aotearoa's Business Heart

Auckland is a dynamic and multicultural city which is reflected in its vibrant visitor economy. In New Zealand's most diverse region with over 220 cultures calling it home, this vibrancy has been halted but continues to fuel the plans of a premium event destination.

As the region's economic and cultural agency, **Auckland Unlimited** is committed to making this financial hub a desirable place to live, work, visit, and do business. No wonder that last year, Auckland was named the best MICE destination in Oceania at the inaugural World MICE Awards 2020. "Business and major events are incredibly important to Auckland's transition to a more resilient and sustainable destination, and this is reflected in our strategic planning," says **Richard Clarke** (pictured left), **Head of Major and Business Events at Auckland Unlimited**.

Over the past year, the work to support the recovery of Auckland's visitor economy has been guided by the **Destination AKL Recovery Plan**, which was developed in May 2020 on behalf of industry. This plan is

governed by the principles of kotahitanga (collaboration), kaitiakitanga (guardianship), manaakitanga (a warm welcome), and the strong foundations of the **Destination AKL 2025 strategy**, which set the direction in 2018 for a more sustainable future.

Since March 2020, Auckland has endured four lockdowns of varying scales, however, the events sector has shown incredible determination in navigating an ever-changing environment. "We partner with the **New Zealand Government, Tourism Industry Aotearoa, Business Events Industry Aotearoa** and **Tourism New Zealand** to support businesses through the Regional Business Partner Network," says Clarke. Through this, they have helped thousands of Auckland's small to medium sized enterprises, including businesses in the events sector, access nearly **NZ\$18 million** worth of support between March and October 2020. In this transition, Auckland has been focused on supporting the delivery of domestic conferences, incentives and events, and working with its international clients to postpone or reshape their conferences to hybrid or virtual formats. There has been significant positive growth in the sector around



the opening of several new hotels, restaurants, bars and attractions in the past six months, all boosting the region's world-class offer. Clarke confirmed that "the **Auckland Convention Bureau (ACB)** team has been pursuing bids for international conferences until 2028, securing to date, the Annual Conference of the **International Association of Women in Police** in 2023 and the **Coral Reef International Symposium of the Society** in mid-2026."

To this end, the initiative created by the New Zealand government, **Regional Events Fund**, will allow Auckland to receive NZ\$ 17 million to support major and business events over the next four years. "As one of three funding programs, fund will focus on attracting and developing hybrid events for international engagement through digital platforms." Meanwhile, rotating association conferences in the Asia-Pacific region are an important focus for Auckland Unlimited, with quarantine-free travel between New Zealand and Australia confirmed as of mid-April 2021. "Working alongside us we also have the **Auckland International Business Events Advisory Group**, a group of business event experts who provide strategic guidance, market intelligence and leadership," adds the Head of Business Events. Another strong support network is the **Auckland Advocate Alliance**, which brings together a group of leaders from diverse sectors and communities with more than 50 advocates and a series of success stories, including the **International Conference on Privacy, Security and Trust** secured for the second time in Auckland.

New Zealand's response to COVID-19 has seen a low transmission in the community, and the Australian Lowry Institute classified New Zealand as the **safest country in the pandemic**. "The health and safety of everyone remains our priority and we are working closely with our members on the safe delivery of events," says Clarke. Thanks to the assistance of the **Business Events Industry Aotearoa, AIPC, ICCA** and **UFI**, guidelines for convention and exhibition centres, and congress organisers were delivered for a smooth and safe reopening of business. "Whilst we have not been able to attend offshore events in person, Auckland continues to be part of international industry conversions, including the virtual MICE event at the end of 2020."

Several organisers are investing in the delivery of events in virtual formats to reshape their products. For example, the **Conference Company**, one of the most respected meeting planners in Australasia, has been exploring the opportunity to strengthen its capabilities in this hybrid formula, to continue operating. Another key example

was the **5th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity** which went fully virtual and managed to cover the registration fees of more than 100 participants from developing countries. "While meeting face-to-face is still the preferred way, it's important to acknowledge that hybrid events will offer strong opportunities to engage, share knowledge and create benefits for regions."

Finally, Auckland Unlimited recently released a report that aims to help the region's businesses and organisations understand environmental challenges and opportunities. The report, "Climate Change and Economic Recovery: Challenges Facing Auckland Businesses and Using Recovery to Support Resilience", complements the region's shared roadmap for transitioning to a net zero-carbon economy – **Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland Climate Plan**. This means repurposing the visitor economy to be in line with the Destination AKL 2025 strategy and focus on a more resilient ecosystem. "The industry recognises the importance of delivering carbon neutral and zero waste events, and the response from organisers and facilities has been positive," concludes Clarke. Many existing venues have several environmental initiatives underway, such as digital inventories and innovative waste management, with the **New Zealand International Convention Centre** expected to be completely carbon neutral. Auckland is also a part of the **C40 Cities of Climate Leadership Group**, a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change.

[AUCKLANDNZ.COM/MEET](https://aucklandnz.com/meet)





Setia SPICE: Revisiting an Iconic Landmark

Setia SPICE is rising in face of the pandemic with a new plan in place to guarantee its position in the sector. This event giant in Penang, which has undergone several renovations and rebranding, sees this challenge as another opportunity to innovate towards the future.

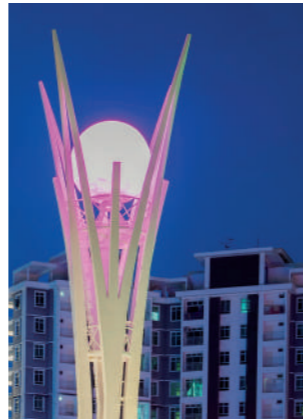
The **Setia SPICE Convention Centre** was, in many ways, a unique project built on the island of Penang, Malaysia. Not only for its unconventional architecture – evident in the 4,000-square meter pillarless ballroom or in the roof lighting structure that has become an icon in the country – but especially by displaying the first solar-powered hybrid convention centre in the world. With acres of community park, a solar PV Farm and sustainable resources throughout, Setia SPICE – the Subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition Centre – is also the largest convention venue certified by the green building index in Northern Malaysia. Well ahead of its time, this hybrid solar-powered convention centre is partly supplied from the national power grid and the solar panel itself. Some of its impressive sustainable features include expansive green spaces, eco-friendly technology, energy efficient systems, architectural redevelopment and social inclusive design. “We have been upgrading our centre in terms of technology applied to sustainability, moving towards a hybrid and balanced approach,” says **Mr. Francis Teo, Head of Convention Centres for Setia SPICE**, the company that owns SPICE. “We are also working closely with the authorities to ensure that compliance with **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** is at the highest level of hygiene, where safety becomes standard practice.”

Like many other venues, this past year has not been mild for the bottom line and influx of Setia SPICE. This is quite illustrative of the drop in business in this MICE complex compared to the normal pre-pandemic period, having affected the target revenue of Setia SPICE versus the actual revenue which fell by 47% in the year 2020. Due to lockdown, business events will be the first to be affected

and the last sector to be recovered. With all the SOPs in place they expect to “slowly catch up with previous numbers in this post-pandemic phase.”

However, together with **Amari SPICE Penang** earmarked for opening in Q1, 2022, they are in midst of repositioning the SPICE branding with more vibrant experience to all delegates. “Our strategic partnership with national and state convention bureaus, **Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureaus (MyCEB)** and **Penang Convention and Exhibition Bureaus (PCEB)**, add to a better activation package in the reopening of the international border, focusing on incentives, promotion, and other interesting solutions for local approach,” says Teo. Another issue raised was the business retransformation at a hybrid and virtual level, pledging commitment to the delegate safety in Penang and a new confidence booster for the events industry. To this end, Setia SPICE has partnered with Malaysian event tech provider, **meGo Event**, to provide a range of new digital services, such as pre-registration with contact tracing before the event and contactless registration on site.

In September 2020, Setia SPICE launched its “**Relax, We Got You!**” campaign, paving the road to recovery and combining a mix of smart tech solutions, enhanced health & safety protocols, and new hybrid event models. “Our venues were quickly equipped with the necessary technology and stringent procedures to ensure the safety and health of our employees and visitors,” said Teo. Lastly, the venue will act as a vaccination center in Penang. “The new business event market is coming and we are ready to explore it in cooperation with all industry partners,” closes Teo. Wherefore, embracing challenges together.



CTICC: Navigating an Ever-Changing Future

Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC)’s Annual General Meeting held in March 2021 was an inspiring stage to demonstrate how in these unprecedented times, CTICC adapted its business to serve the people of the Western Cape. So, what is the next step for them?

Like in most parts of the world, venues in South Africa were closed due to the national lockdowns imposed by national government, which prevented CTICC from hosting events. “We had to review our operations and see where we could reduce costs and have a long-term view for our future recovery,” says CTICC’s **CEO, Taubie Motlhabane**.

To ensure the resumption of safe events and to insulate a self-sufficient income, they adopted a four-part strategy: **a C-19 Care programme; the creation of their own events; an African regional focus; and, lastly, the expansion of their forward book.** “We did this by pivoting our business practices, transforming operations and reigniting our passion for innovation,” adds Motlhabane. The number of events held at the CTICC in the 2019/20 financial year was 397 with 224,734 attendees, compared to 560 and 417,070 in the previous one. On the other hand, the average event size has declined by 24.3%. “Fortunately, we achieved the same number of international conferences as the previous year, due to them occurring in the spring and summer period.” To date, their African-focused strategy has already attracted new events such as **Africa Energy Indaba**, the **Manufacturing Indaba**, **Africa Halal Week** and **MTN’s Global Connect Expo**.

CTICC’s focus now is on reducing costs, winning more bids and developing alternative revenue streams, through virtual and hybrid event solutions in this changed environment. In compliance with global guidelines, the venue has adopted stringent health and safety measures for Covid-19, to the point of earning the right to use the **WTTC Safe Travels Stamp**. One of the good examples

is the aforesaid **client-facing C-19 Care programme**, designed to create awareness, educate and align client expectations with CTICC protocols.

In the meantime, they are working on several international bids having sourced events as far as 2028. “We have won 11 new International bids since April 2020, while we continue to proactively work on ensuring that we secure all our repeat three-year deals. Associations will also be able to host hybrid events with the CTICC,” says Motlhabane.

On the social role, CTICC was also part of the solution by transforming its exhibition halls into an 862-bed Covid-19 field hospital – the affectionately called “**Hospital of Hope**” – providing support, security, and up to six meals a day for more than 1,500 patients. The CTICC also established a partnership with **NPO Ladles of Love**, and furthered its community support and activations through efforts to help their local community partners adapt to the pandemic. Digital and hybrid meetings are also part of the CTICC service package, as stated by Motlhabane: “By recognising that the hybrid format is likely to remain with us going forward, we have harnessed a range of digital experiences, a new app for screening, as well as implemented contact tracing to meet our clients’ needs.”

Finally, technology will play a big part in their future sustainable policies as well. “The CTICC has always sought ways to protect our environment by reducing our usage of water and energy, as well as minimising waste produced in the centre. Covid-19 is teaching us to collaborate more and find solutions together,” she concludes.

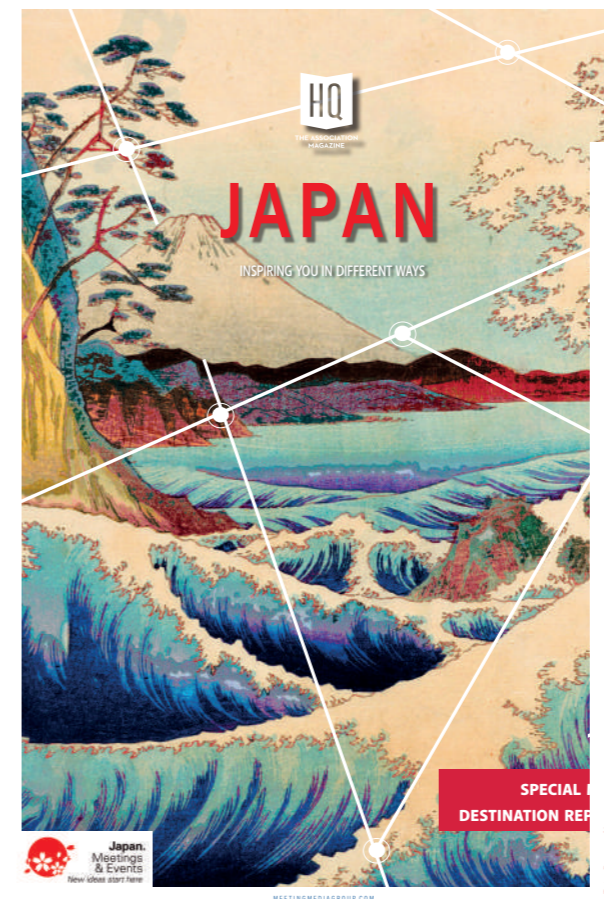


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In the frame of the **ECM Mentor Programme, European Cities Marketing (ECM)** offered the Mentees the opportunity to take part in a hackathon, where they worked on specific industry-related topics. The ECM Mentor Programme, industry supported initiative developed last August in close collaboration with IAPCO, IBTM, ICCA, IMEX and HQ has been created to contribute to the sustainability of the Meetings Industry by providing a platform to secure networking, relation building and knowledge exchange between newly appointed and advanced professionals.

A Hackathon for Meetings Industry Rookie Professionals...

...to contribute to the sustainability of the Meetings Industry sector

This 12-month free of charge ECM Mentor Programme was designed to help newcomers in the industry, who, due to the pandemic, have missed out on being introduced to the sector, thus lacking critical opportunities to build up their network, skills and knowledge.

“In these challenging times, this is also one more step to show the resilience of the meetings industry on the way to recovery. It is time for the established members of ECM and industry professionals to give back, to inspire, to share, and thus to make sure that our newly appointed professionals get the best start in what we hope will be a long and successful meetings industry career. In the meantime, we’re glad to give our Mentors the opportunity to share their visions, to contribute with their vast experiences and to strengthen their network despite the turbulent times,” said **Petra Stušek, ECM President**.

In the frame of the Mentor Programme, ECM decided to organise a friendly competition for the mentees: **The first Mentee Hackathon**.

“The purpose of this hackathon was to allow the Mentees (newcomers in the industry) to meet with

their peers and network through being part of a European team. They had to challenge and share their ideas and stimulate their creativity to learn together and convince a jury that their project was the best.” said **Sam Johnston, ECM Vice-President for the Meetings Industry** and jury member of this hackathon.

The Mentees had a week to meet online and send an executive summary and the final project to the judges. They also had to present their project live to the judges and other mentees.

Three different subjects were distributed to the groups:

- *How to promote destinations in online events?*
- *Hybrid events: how to maximise the value of having both an online and an in-person audience?*
- *New meeting formats at congresses: let’s innovate!*

The jury was composed of **Flavie de Bueil-Baudot, COO of European Cities Marketing, Patrick Delaney, Managing Partner of SoolNua, Barbara Jamison, Head of Business Development Europe at London & Partners, Sam Johnston, Manager**

of Dublin Convention Bureau, Bettina Reventlow-Mourier, Deputy Convention Director of Wonderful Copenhagen, Hagar Saad, Head of International Conferences of Tel Aviv Convention Bureau and Lesley Williams, Managing Director of BestCities Global Alliance.

Mentees also had their word and were able to vote for the best team – mentees’ votes counting for 25% of the final vote having the jury deliberated at length to decide who the winning team was.

Hands-on approach, solution-thinking and implementation... the jury had a lot to discuss on the four teams that submitted inspiring and well-structured presentations, and announced the winning team on the same day in front of all the Mentors and Mentees taking part in the programme. The big winners of this 1st edition of the Mentee Program Hackathon were **Laura Caprioli, Growth Programme Executive at VisitBritain, Éilis McNamee, Business Tourism at Fáilte Ireland, Maja Pančur, Head of Bled Convention Bureau, Ana Santos, International Promotion at Porto Convention & Visitors Bureau and María Teresa Yagüe Martín, Junior Consultant at ENITED Business Events in Austria.**

“The hackathon was a very nice initiative for Mentees to get to know each other while working together. The competition format was taken in a positive and healthy way so it was taken as an incentive to do our best in our project. I enjoyed the team work and the dynamic of sharing our ideas to bring together something that could actually be applied in a real case, in our daily jobs,” said **María Teresa Yagüe Martín** (in the photo).

“I’d like to heartily thank my wonderful teammates and

mentor, and the whole ECM team for this fantastic opportunity. And, finally, I’d also like to encourage all rookies in the business events industry to fight this “Covid-derived stagnation” and take that extra brave step, participate in these kind of programmes, embrace all opportunities and resources you have at hand and don’t be afraid to ask for help or orientation. You won’t regret it,” closed **María Teresa**.





Sustainability of an association has been at the core of its management strategies. The persisting topic proves, admitting unwillingly, the lack of it or unsuccessful efforts to reach it. Even the best performing associations may still face a plethora of challenges in times of changes, and recognise the need for adaptation.

Associations' New Paths to Sustainability: Not Just to Survive, But to **Thrive!**

AUTHOR: **MEG HSIEH** (PICTURED RIGHT), MARKETING SPECIALIST OF **GIS GROUP** (TAIWAN)

To start with, the internet brings about new ways in which people communicate and exchange information with each other. They have largely morphed into virtual ones, and this has also affected how associations, as a knowledge hub, will continue their work.

Then the pandemic has led to hard decisions for them, too. There have been postponements or cancellations of many public events. In response, many associations began to turn to the internet in search of a solution, holding a webinar or hybrid event instead of an in-person congress, for example.

Then a new challenge appears. Say that all associations in the same industry are shifting their events online; suddenly there are numerous similar virtual events, most of which are free of charge in this transition period. Viewers can now watch it in any place, at any given time of their choice. If the content does not promise uniqueness or the answers they seek, participants can simply jump to other events. This means an association will face higher competition from similar events than ever before in attracting attendance.

To increase financial stability, associations can get creative with their sources of revenue. When pivoting events online, they can explore opportunities that open up non-due revenue streams. As most programmes can be recorded and requested on-demand by the participants, they can be packaged and sold to non-participants. A series of recorded materials can further be organised and integrated into an online course or ebook. With an online course, the content can be combined with the training resources you are already proving, and become a training programme that creates value for both members and the association.

While new sources of revenue are important, attendance at meeting events is also valuable to an association. However, as the risk of being physically present at a meeting increases, the expected return for a participant also rises. It is ever more vital for an organisation to understand what objectives attendees truly intend to accomplish at an event: what do I have that they cannot get anywhere else and therefore, cannot afford to be absent? This can be a rare opportunity to meet a key person relevant in the field or industry, efficient networking activities, or the possibility of getting inspired. This means that programmes need to be planned much more meticulously than before.

Once associations retain the capability of attracting physical attendance, they are more likely to be eligible for sponsorships from a destination. International conferences are significant in destination development, especially when attendees get to know a city in a more in-depth way. Associations harness great opportunities to create chances for a higher degree of involvement and connection with a place. This may lead to a symbiotic relationship with a destination and a resulting win-win situation for everyone.

In trying times, organisations might find themselves struggling with corner-cutting measures. However, in the long run, they might lose the opportunity to transform and grow. It all boils back down to the core value of an association. What is the situation that it is trying to improve? What is the initial mission it set out to accomplish at the very beginning? Let that passion take the lead as associations gain a new foothold in these changing times.



This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. IAPCO represents today 137 companies from 40 countries, including over 9900 professional congress organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events.

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As people-centred organisations, associations depend on diversity to fulfil their mission, to ensure their continued relevance and to increase their long-term impact. If member engagement was the topic of the 2010's, tackling questions of diversity, inclusion and equity will be the watershed for successful associations in the 2020's. In this article, ten global association leaders share their insights on why your association should care about diversity.

Why Your **Association** Should Care About **Diversity**

AUTHOR: **BENITA LIPPS**, HEAD OF INTEREL ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

Diversity is nothing new to the association world, in fact, diversity is part of the very DNA of the association business model. "I think a truly global organisation has to include voices and experience from around the world, which in itself will help with the inclusion of previously marginalised or unheard voices or constituents," says **Colleen Eubanks**, CEO of **International Association for the Study of Pain**. "The association sector is a professional community where sharing and collaborating brings positive change", confirms **Tracy Bury**, Deputy CEO of **World Physiotherapy** and **President of AC Forum**. Many corporations are also realising that investing in diversity is not just ethical, but also provides a competitive advantage. Research has shown that culturally diverse boards worldwide make 43% higher profits than homogeneous boards, and more diversity within a company leads to more popular and relevant brands.

It should therefore come as no surprise that investing in diversity means investing in the long-term future of our associations:

- 1. Diversity ensures that we remain relevant:** "Associations need to stay relevant for their members and sector, which means they need a deep understanding of the diversity and needs within their membership," explains Tracy.
- 2. Diversity helps us to attract and retain talent:** "Diverse and inclusive workplaces earn deeper trust and more commitment from their employees," reveals **Jeanette Fava**, **Finance and HR Manager of European Social Network**. "These are competitive advantages in a market where we are all looking for intelligence and talent willing to work for non-profit salaries."
- 3. Diversity allows us to innovate:** "Diverse contributions from different perspectives lead to better decision making and unique problem-solving opportunities for associations," says **Jenny Faucher**, **President & CEO of Managing Matters**.



Seven Steps to Towards Diversity

While becoming a bit of a buzz word, diversity is often more nuanced than first meets the eye. It is more than avoiding "manels" (all-male panels) or about making millennials join our events. In order to be more than a CSR campaign, we have to once again embed diversity in all key areas of our associations. "There is a tremendous need for developing a meaningful action plan for accelerating equity, diversity, and inclusion in the association arena," says **Tina Wehmeir**, **President & CEO of AMC Institute**. "To move beyond statements and infuse a new perspective throughout an association, one must approach the workforce, mission, and vision, and the board of directors through an EDI lens."

Here are seven ideas of how to get started:

1. Remember Your "Why"

Ask yourselves: what does "diversity" mean to you? Why does it matter? "Start by examining your vision, mission, and values: are diversity, equity, and inclusion part of this equation? If the association is to maintain its relevancy into the future, this will be a key piece," advises Faucher. There is no single right answer, and every association community will have to find its own reason why they want invest in diversity. "With all of these noses pointing in the same direction and working towards the common goal, association governance structures, policies and procedures should be empowering instead of limiting," adds **Caroline Teugels**, **CEO of PodiatryInternational** and **ESAE Treasurer**.

2. Talk Openly with Your Members

Any authentic push for diversity has to be built on an open and inclusive dialogue with our members. "To truly innovate and change, you need to have people on board," adds **Maria Rosa Gibellini**, **Director General of European Internet Forum**. "They need to understand where you are going and why, or they will be lost or won't follow." Opening up the discourse to new voices and opinions is a great opportunity for innovation, yet it requires effort, time and a deep willingness to adapt. "Just because an organisation wants to or needs to change, doesn't mean that transformation will go smoothly", **Gulnaz Tariq**, **President of World Union of Wound Healing Societies**, reminds us. Be open, transparent and know that change never happens

EDI: Making Sense of Diversity

While it is evident that diversity is so important, it may be less clear what "diversity" actually means in the context of association strategy. Is "diversity" the same thing as "gender equality"? How do "inclusion" and "equity" play into the mix?

Diversity is the presence of difference within a given setting. Hence, teams can be diverse, people cannot. Diversity goes beyond physical aspects such as age, gender and race, and includes cognitive aspects such as education, experience and attitudes. Diversity is just the starting point on our EDI journey: "Most companies have got used to the idea that we need the mixed workforce," says **Andrés Tapia**, **author of "The Inclusion Paradox"**, "but they have not been ready for making the mix work, or how difficult it is. Because the more diverse a workforce is, the more difficult it is to manage."

Inclusion is about people being and feeling welcome and valued. It isn't a natural consequence of diversity, and it takes effort to understand how everyone, from team members to volunteers, can feel valued. Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance. "Everyone has a voice and, thus, the right to speak and be heard", says **Antonella Cardone**, **Director of European Cancer Patient Coalition**, when taking about advocating for patient rights, "if we act together, we are stronger."

Equity means designing systems and processes that make inclusion possible. Equity asks us to take into consideration that everyone has different needs and different contributions to add. While equality means treating everyone the same, treating everyone equitably means giving them what they need as individuals. How can we create equity for our association members and staff? "Ask them - they will tell you what they want." says **Lindsey Mancini**, **Head of Secretary General's Office at UITP**. For instance, "we are learning that women want shorter, more focused events, are less interested in networking but more interested in techniques such as small breakout sessions."

overnight.

3. Be Patient, Positive and Creative

While acknowledging diversity is an important first step, inclusion is built on dialogue and consensus – often with people outside the traditional “core circle”. This requires flexibility and creativity, according to **Lynette Tan, Chief Executive of Singapore Space & Technology**: “In order to make change happen, we have to be willing to adopt different strategies and take different paths.” This also means finding a language that doesn’t alienate members of the community. “Words and branding do matter”, confirms **Julie Nazerali, President of INSEAD Inclusive Leadership Initiative**, “change the narrative to something positive and find programmes that put EDI into practice without preaching.”

4. Diversify Your Governance

While your board composition should ideally reflect that of your membership, research indicates that improving just the cognitive diversity can already significantly enhance the performance of a board. “I am an advocate for talent-based boards in associations,” says **Teugels**. “By looking at the skills and expertise needed to advance the mission of the association, diversity will more naturally find its way into the structures of the association. Being aware of unconscious bias and building up awareness are the first steps towards real change.”

5. Create an Inclusive Work Environment

By truly investing in your secretariat team, your association can become a place that attracts the talent needed for long-term sustainability. “I think that associations are unique environments where everyone’s skills can be put to use and developed further,” states **Nathalie Moll, Director General at EFPIA**. “[A strong focus on HR], coupled with the capacity to adapt to our workforce’s needs, gives the best possible level of teamwork and, ultimately, results. Successful associations have understood that it is not only about giving equal opportunities but also about

offering adapted opportunities.”

6. Lead... and Listen... by Example

Equity and inclusion are not theoretical concepts, they can only be implemented through daily practice. Here, association executives play a key role and need to lead by example. “Getting to know different people and organisations and then serving as a conduit or connector can be one of the most powerful aspects of being an association executive,” says **Eubanks**. Bringing inclusiveness to life starts with small everyday gestures: “Always give a great welcome to those joining your circle: personal connections and regular touch points for support do make a difference. We tend to forget how attending a European meeting may seem daunting to newcomers at national level,” reminds us **Laure Alexandre, Executive Director at Seldia**.

7. Build A Support Network

“Change is not an easy thing to do, there are often tremendous barriers that we need to overcome,” admits **Tariq**. “Support systems play a vital role in implementing change and ensuring we are all moving in the right direction together.” If you believe in advocating for more diversity, equity and inclusion at your association, know that you are not alone. There is a growing community of association professionals willing to tackle this challenge. “In today’s globalised world, communication and inclusive dialogue are essential,” reminds us **Cardone**. “Sometimes, the smallest partners can have the greatest solutions. It is all about cooperation and coordination within a democratic and resilient system.”



Tackling Diversity Together

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are integral aspects of association success – only by speaking with and for all members can we truly claim to be “the voice” of our sector and make an impact. Members, policy-makers and partners alike, expect associations to lead the way when it comes to building consensus, collaboration and synergies across gender, generational and sectorial divides. While many of us are realising the critical importance of diversity, few tools and resources exist that could help association leaders to successfully implement diversity and inclusion policies. Short in guidance and resources, international associations are therefore often struggling with a topic where they could be acting as role models and thought leaders for their sectors.

Fortunately, we are not alone when it comes to the association EDI journey. The voices of passionate association leaders that are heard throughout this article are proof that knowhow, experience and best practice is out there. All we have to do is to build on these insights and inspire each other to innovate. “The associational sector coalesces around agreed priorities together,” suggests **Rachel Barlow, Convergence Coordinator at Dafne-EFC**, and “these should address the core of the rationale behind associations.” Why not make a start by tackling diversity together? Building on the insights gained over the last two years of showcasing **Women Who Advance Associations**, a coalition of association players is aiming to do just that by working towards a diversity charter for international associations. We believe that the act of developing, launching and signing a charter can create visibility, as well as a sense of motivation and momentum to all those willing to invest in diversity. Developed by the sector for the sector,

“ I say this loud and clear: Let us be our own disruptors! Let us not wait until someone else starts changing the rules. Let us dare to implement new ways of serving our members not only through new technology but also by challenging the rigidity of governance or leadership that can be found in some associations.

- Caroline Teugels

The association leaders quoted in this article were featured as **Women Who Advance Associations**, a global initiative by **Interel Association Management**, visit.brussels, **FAIB**, **ASSOCIATIONWORLD**, **GAHP**, **HQ Magazine** and **Kadrant Law** to celebrate the great talent and diversity of the international association community and to promote an association sector where diversity and inclusion are taken as necessary prerequisites for change.

Find out more at: womenwhoadvance.eu



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Long gone are the days where sustainability at a convention centre meant switching off the lights at night. In many cases, convention centres have become drivers for sustainability, impacting both the venue itself and the local ecosystem in which it is embedded. The next step will be to use convention centres as platforms for the development of innovative, long-term sustainability – also for the event industry itself.

Mission Sustainability

AUTHOR: SVEN BOSSU (PICTURED BELOW) – AIPC'S CEO

Large scale organised events, attracting thousands of delegates from across the globe, might not be the most sustainable of activities, but these meetings are needed to address what is indeed a global challenge. A clear example is the upcoming **UN Climate Change Conference** (or COP26¹ as it is better known), which will take place in Glasgow in November. There will be two key focus areas: addressing what has and has not been achieved since the previous conference, and, more importantly, how to rebuild economies in the wake of the pandemic, but to do so through a green recovery. Or to quote President Biden: “building back better”.

Convention centres will play an important role in making this happen on different levels: both locally and globally. On a local level, convention centres have been leading the way when it comes to making organised events more sustainable. Green power is used (e.g. Geneva's **PALEXPO** only use hydraulic energy), waste levels have dropped dramatically and the remaining waste is recycled as much as possible (e.g. London's **EXCEL** fully recycles any F&B leftovers). What's more convention centres capitalise on city infrastructure to offer a wide range of facilities to organisers to help reduce the ecological footprint of

events: for example, improved public transport, and the creation of bicycle lanes, etc. And in turn, organisers have become far more sensitive to these aspects when selecting a venue. This collaboration and integration of venue, organiser and destination is ensuring that events are becoming more sustainable. But so much more still needs to be done.

So, what options do venues have to improve their carbon footprint in the future? **Billy McFadyen** (pictured on the right page), **director of Finance and Development** at the **Scottish Event Campus**, has some interesting insights: “In terms of energy use, in the UK for example, the grid is decarbonising which will reduce the carbon footprint to a certain degree. Further reductions in a venue's carbon footprint will be delivered through less reliance on fossil fuels such as gas and oil. Exploring venue surroundings for energy generation offers great potential for being part of a larger low carbon area”. McFadyen continues: “a comprehensive venue energy strategy will consider energy provision from different resources and use different technologies to deliver and manage the use. Venues have different heating, cooling and electrical demands depending on their location, use and time of year. Therefore, a venue energy solution needs to respond to the different circumstances.” A reduction in carbon generating energy will provide substantial benefits for venues. It can be easily measured and reported, and whilst the level of capital investment is a key consideration, the cost of energy can be reduced and improve the bottom line. A low carbon venue will be in a stronger position to attract events and increase the economic benefits that support other businesses.



As well as considering future energy strategies, in the immediate future, learnings from the pandemic might actually be the next game changer when it comes to making events more sustainable.

First of all, events will become even more “low touch”. For example, badges are likely to be replaced by mobile technology, allowing for an end-to-end contactless delegate experience. Mobile phones will provide delegate access to hotels, public transport, the venue, and the entrance to the organised event. No need any more for wasteful printing of tickets and badges, etc. This evolution had already started before the pandemic, and future safety protocols will drastically accelerate implementation.

Secondly, event organisers have discovered the merits of digital. While we all agree nothing can replace a face-to-face meeting, the purpose and reason to attend a live event will need to be more compelling and “travel efficient” than ever before. It is unlikely we will see attendees travel far and wide to attend a two-hour general assembly that, we now know, is simply unnecessary.

Most events, however, need to be in-person to meet the core objectives of the organisers. A trade show needs to be on-site in order to be meaningful. The same goes for most annual congresses organised by associations: it is the networking and spontaneous exchange of ideas which result in the medical, financial, scientific and environmental breakthroughs. Yet, even in some of these instances digital will allow for more sustainability by creating hub and spoke meetings.

Let's take the example of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC), which took place in Guatemala in early March. 260 scientists discussed the impact of global warming on poor countries,

trying to come up with tangible solutions. Not all scientists were actually in Guatemala, but by creating clusters of people coming together physically across the globe, which in turn provided their input to the full group, scientists could work together efficiently on specific topics in a face-to-face environment and help meet the objectives of the panel. In certain cases, it is indeed not necessary that all of the participants are in one place and convention centres now have the know-how and capacity to create a network of interconnected venues to make this happen.

Which brings us from local to global. First of all, the sharing of best practices around sustainability will allow the convention centre community to reduce the ecological footprint of organised events worldwide. Secondly, by providing event organisers with products and services which support the need to reach the in-person and digital attendee, convention centres will ensure organisers can meet their objectives and in tandem, grow audiences without necessarily growing the carbon footprint of the event. And thirdly, hub and spoke meetings can provide a model, whereby face-to-face and digital are combined in order to achieve objectives as efficiently as possible.

All of this will take time and a lot needs to be learnt. And learning requires the humility to realise one has something to learn. Fortunately, it did not take a pandemic for convention centre managers to realise this – it did however accelerate the learning curve. We do believe the future of convention centres is bright... and sustainable.

¹ COP stands for Conference of Parties. The UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) isn't the only convention to have a COP either; other treaties like the UN Convention against Corruption also have a COP.



So much has changed in the past year that it is hard to remember what was “norma” before. It looks as if it might well be late in 2021 before we are approaching anything close to pre-pandemic normalcy. Of course, there is no way that the global health crisis can really be considered as having a positive effect on anything. However, some interesting (and perhaps valuable) trends that this crisis created has begun to show some signs of a positive impact in the near future.

Confronting Your Organisation’s Sustainability Has Never Been a Bigger Challenge – or Opportunity!

Without exception, associations spent the last year dealing with some major challenges: reduced resources, both financial and human, change management, meeting and convention chaos and cancellations, remote staff and “virtual” everything... and many other challenges unique to the association environment. It is this commonality of concerns that also provides opportunities for the future.

As we slowly, but hopefully, begin to emerge from the global pandemic, it is a critical time for all associations to confront the realities of the post-COVID world. For some organisations, the past year has been a disastrous period, with membership losses, meetings and conference cancellations, and financial strains.

Even organisations that were not impacted too badly in those areas, now must ascertain what the “new” expectations of their members, sponsors, exhibitors, and other stakeholders will be. For example: will meetings continue to have a virtual/hybrid component when in-person meetings resume? Will educational offerings be accessible in all three ways – in-person, virtual/streaming, and on-demand? Will association staff be required to start going into an office again? Will there ever be a need for in-person committee or board meetings again?

These are not just issues related to operations or policies. These are issues related to the long-term

sustainability of your organisation. Every organisation needs to focus on several key actions to assure its sustainability and viability in the future.

Here are some of those actions:

- 1. Review and revise your organisation’s strategic plan to assure that it is reflective of what has happened this past year.** Remember that some interim changes made in the last year to accommodate the pandemic, will likely become permanent changes. That will probably affect many projections and assumptions made when the original plan was developed.
- 2. Look at your benchmarking metrics and update them.** To begin with, do not worry about accountability issues as much right now. Many groups were (are) just trying to hold on until this crisis is officially over. Secondly, see if there are any new metrics that make sense in the post-COVID world – e.g. percentage of conference attendees who attended pre-pandemic events, versus those who come back in-person to your post-pandemic events.
- 3. Reconnect with ALL your stakeholders.** I realise many organisations have stayed in touch with sponsors, exhibitors, meeting venues, during the pandemic. These stakeholders are (were) all dealing with it too, so they were very

understanding and ready to work with you. However, going forward, they will also be changing in a lot of ways. Examples:

- Destinations and venues may be no longer hosting in-person client events the way they used to.
- Many hotels and conference centres have had a reduction in staff. Does your pre-covid contact still work there?
- Exhibitors may have got used to sending fewer people to staff booths, or not sponsoring events.
- You may have fallen out of the consciousness of influencers in your industry, profession or community, due to lack of personal contact

Start thinking NOW of how you are going to re-confirm these relationships in a mutually beneficial way.

4. Start preparing your messaging for former members. There are members of almost every organisation who let their membership lapse or drop in the past year, especially in professional societies. This was due to personal financial constraints, employers not paying dues anymore (at least temporarily), no in-person networking opportunities, etc. Stay in touch with these former members now, so that you do not have reintroduced your organisation to them a year from now. Put former members on a “thought you’d be interested” or “in case you missed it” communications list, but do not ask them to rejoin every time you contact them. Let them know you have not forgotten them, and that your organisation is still doing great things, just maybe a little differently for a while.

When you do want to reach out and ask them to join again, be sure to start with *what is new or different* since they were members. They may have got used to getting along without your organisation for this period. Remind them of what they are missing. Be sure to offer exemption of any additional fees normally paid by new members.


Going forward, sustainability for associations and societies will be an all-encompassing aspect of effective leadership input and staff management. It is no longer just about sustaining the existence of the organisation: it is also about sustaining the *value* of the organisation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The **GDS-Movement** celebrates the joining of its seventieth destination committed to a regenerative future.

Seventy and Counting – Championing a Regenerative Future

Paris joins Washington, Lima, Berlin, Prague, Zurich, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, Bangkok and other global capitals committed to measuring and improving on its sustainability strategy year on year using the **GDS-Index**.

The GDS-Index was inspired by the **International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) Scandinavian chapter** and **MCI in 2012** when fifteen pioneering cities created and launched the **Scandinavian Destination Sustainability Index**. In 2015 the project evolved into a collaborative partnership between **ICCA, IMEX Exhibitions, European Cities Marketing** and **MCI Group**, and the GDS-Index was born. By 2019, 50 destinations were benchmarking, and that has increased through the COVID-19 period to 70 participating Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and Convention & Visitors Bureaux (CVBs), with more growth projected not only in Europe but particularly in the Americas and Asia Pacific.

Over the years the DMOs that participate in the GDS-Index are showing great results for their efforts. Sustainable destination performance as measured by the GDS-index has increased 14% – before COVID it was 21%. The top ten GDS-Leaders demonstrate a performance increase of 23% – 33% before COVID. Despite an understandable decrease due to the pandemic effects on the supply chain, the annual figures clearly demonstrate how benchmarking combined with a focus on improving strategy, capacity building and inter-city collaboration is enabling DMOs and municipalities to better identify sustainability challenges and opportunities, and act upon them to drive improved performance.

From sustainability to regeneration

Our pioneering 2020 report “the Regenerative Revolution” conducted with **IMEX** and **Marriott**, explored and asserted that for the global meetings and events industry to recover and thrive in a future world, we need to rethink, reimagine and redesign a new resilient, inclusive and zero-carbon growth model.

This deep cultural and systemic transformation requires a paradigm shift in beliefs, values and business models. We need to move on from a “sustainability” focus of making small incremental improvements, towards a holistic regenerative approach that works to restore and rejuvenate communities and ecosystems rather than degrade or merely sustain conditions.

What is regenerative leadership?

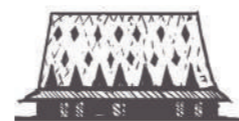
At the GDS-Movement, we have been using the principles of biomimicry to observe nature and to inspire learning about how both associations and DMOs can better design and manage their communities. Here are four of the key insights gained from our **Regenerative Destination Management Framework**, which will be shared in our forthcoming **2021 GDS-Whitepaper**:

1. **Mindset:** Regenerative leadership is about implementing a change of mindset in your organisation. About moving from a linear to a living system approach, and understanding that everything is interconnected and interdependent. It’s about exploring and understanding the relationships and patterns that exist between



all the different stakeholders in your unique ecosystem. Then it’s about challenging the status quo, and facilitating a process to rethink the future, redefine purpose, and reimagine growth holistically for the visitor economy. **Wonderful Copenhagen** are shining examples of regeneration: first with their pioneering strategy to define tourism and events as a catalyst for sustainable urban development, then with their excellent foresight research into the “**Future of Congresses**”, and now with their **Legacy Lab** approach to catalysing long term positive impact from congresses.

2. **Collaborative Design:** From nature we can see that healthy ecosystems are enabled by all the different flora and fauna working together in harmony. Regenerative leaders build expertise in stakeholder engagement, collaboration and alignment. They excel at designing intentional processes to listen to all voices in a destination’s ecosystem, and to facilitate a process around key stakeholders in order to inclusively co-design the future so that everyone thrives within the societal and natural boundaries of the place. **Geneva Tourism** has been using the COVID-19 period to consult extensively and listen to its stakeholders through interviews, hosting meetings and online surveys. The culmination of which has been the development of an effective cross community taskforce of industry players, the municipality, clients and social leaders, who have met regularly through 2020 to co-create its regenerative visitor economy strategy.



Storytelling: “Regen Leaders” excel at taking



a co-created strategy, and then communicating a bold vision of success encapsulated with a powerful and inspiring narrative. They realise that for this new story of purpose, human stories of trial, success and failure build credibility within the system, so that they don’t have to have “all the answers right now”. **Glasgow** has been on a major journey of rethinking and rejuvenating the city and its communities. The “**People Make Glasgow Greener**” campaign has inspired and empowered the DMO and its stakeholders to be one of the first globally to declare a climate emergency, to develop collective climate action plans, and to use sustainability to win major events about sustainable development (**COP26**).

4. **From KPIs to Impact.** Developing a flourishing destination requires a different set of metrics, tools and skill sets. Cities that participate in the GDS-Index develop insights, practices, and processes in non-financial measurement of activities, but most importantly on outcomes and impact. **Göteborg & Co** (the leading destination in the GDS-index for the last 4 years), is developing a digital data hub that brings together the multitude of data about tourism and events, and then offers access to that cleaned and organised data via an open portal. This will help them to develop a powerful dashboard of financial, social and environmental impact indicators, and to enable others to benefit from this data.

The GDS-Movement and its 70 cities are making great progress at developing action and impact based on the concepts of regeneration. The GDS-Index opens for benchmarking on the 1st of June 2021 and represents the most comprehensive and far-reaching assessment of sustainable and regenerative destinations. This is a powerful tool for both associations looking for better destinations and for the DMOs who wish to step up their performance.





Associations & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

An attitude that can change the world

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as a universal commitment to end poverty, protect the planet, and provide people everywhere with the possibility to achieve a better and more sustainable future by 2030 – towards a global society that “Leaves No One Behind.”

While the importance of SDGs is obvious, how are associations valuing and implementing those very SDGs? Partners of the **World PCO Alliance** share some of the trends they are observing in terms of associations’ responses to the SDGs.

Overall, Alliance partners are noticing an increase in general awareness among associations. This awareness is often displayed in the relationships built between an association and the host destination/country of that association’s conference. As **André Vietor, Managing Director of Bco Congressos**, says: “Rather than concentrating only on SDGs, associations want to leave a legacy in the destination or country where the conference is held, although most associations prefer the term ‘impact’ over legacy.”

The creation of such legacy programmes is usually a joint effort of the host country and the association/local organisers, though Vietor has also seen many cases of a legacy programme integrated into the criteria of a Request for Proposal. In these cases, the submission of a legacy project becomes another measuring stick in how these countries are evaluated and scored, and it may even favourably influence the final selection. Vietor continues: “In the case of **The European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO)**, for example, the weight of legacy projects in the bid proposals presented by destinations represents 60% of the overall scoring system, which is quite unusual, but other European Associations do incorporate this aspect in their evaluation process.”

But what does leaving a “legacy” or an “impact” in a destination mean to an association? It is about implementing measurable actions or projects in order to:

- increase awareness of a specific issue within the local community;
- improve prevention measures and treatments in public healthcare;

- increase professionals’ overall knowledge base;
- involve local governments in the effort to raise awareness of those factors in which the country is poorly rated, in relation to neighboring countries.

Finally, there must be a commitment from the host country not only to implement but also to continue with the legacy project long after the conference ends, which often means a duration of several years, depending on the goals.

On a more basic level, Alliance partners are noticing more and more associations addressing SDGs with their membership and stakeholders, and seeing how SDGs align with the association’s vision and mission. **Gregg Talley of Talley Management Group Inc.** encourages organisations to challenge themselves. “Every organisation’s leadership should be asking itself, how can our organisation better support/integrate the SDGs into our communications and strategy?”

In terms of which associations are demonstrating the greatest effort in recognising and incorporating SDGs, Talley finds it depends largely on an organisation’s priorities. “The difference in awareness and understanding is factored by two things: global vision/relevance and leadership.” While the numbers vary, Talley sees the strongest tendency among social and philanthropic organisations.

Having said that, Alliance partners maintain that every organisation can benefit from a proactive and enthusiastic response to SDGs. “If we are going to improve or impact the world, we need to align goals and effort,” says Talley. “The UN SDGs are a framework to do that: to have the conversation,

connect, collaborate and take action. The more we can ‘get on message’ and connect over these goals the greater our impact is likely to be. That amplification throughout our stakeholder set radiates the message and, ultimately, aligned action.”

The World PCO Alliance partners are also playing their part, in collaboration with the associations with whom they are engaged, as well as in facility management, which is one aspect of a PCO’s business portfolio in various countries, such as Japan.

Congrès Inc. undertakes environmental preservation activities as the manager of conference venues around Japan, to ensure sustainable meetings & events, including ecologically friendly procurement, progressing locally-produced, locally-consumed and universally recognisable design for venue guidance, and utilisation of IT to save natural resources. **Congrès’ Kaoru Shibuta** explains that “these kinds of initiatives, especially IT-related, were accelerated in light of COVID-19 and are here to stay.”

Also, through self-produced events related to the SDGs at these facilities, a PCO can raise awareness of the SDGs, not only among stakeholders, but also in the local community. A “**Buoy Art Project**” launched at the **Hamagin Space Science Center** in Yokohama provided opportunities for children to learn about marine pollution while encouraging artistic creativity.

In short, associations can leverage their PCOs when organising their meetings to have that impact, not only in terms of the value of the meeting’s programme content *vis-à-vis* the academic field in the destination country, but in terms of raising awareness and inspiring the entire community, bringing rewards for both the association and the local society far into the future.

“Every organisation’s leadership should be asking itself, how can our organisation better support/integrate the SDGs into our communications and strategy?”



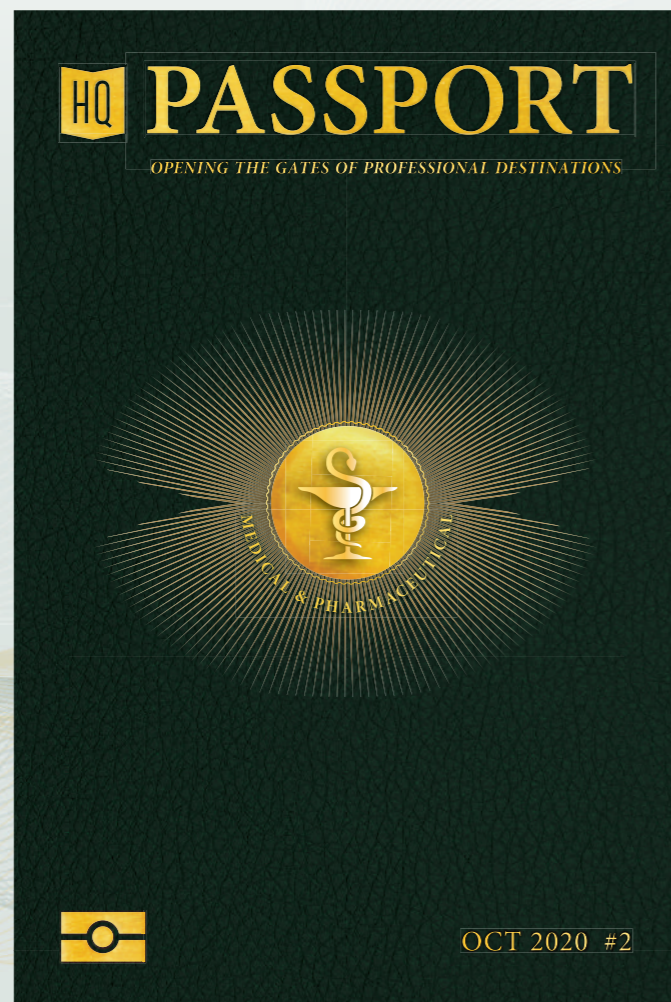
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In the **Wake of COVID-19**: **Where** do we go from here?

Over the years, the success of large international conferences has been determined primarily by the number of participants. Undoubtedly, this measure of success came with an excessive carbon footprint and it was a challenge to find solutions without affecting the integrity of congresses.

Then the pandemic began, and immediately imposed an extreme change in the events industry. As public gatherings were banned, most congress organisers were forced to move their meetings online. However, despite the many challenges event planners were faced with, this time also served as a window of opportunity to address long-standing issues. One such great concern was sustainability associated with traditional conference formats. The entire world saw an immediate improvement in the air and water quality once travel was restricted, and no one wants to see these enhancements go to waste by simply returning to the *status quo* post-pandemic. Conference organisers have a duty to make meetings more environmentally friendly. It is imperative to use this time to research, reflect, and promote changes that are to continue once the crisis is over. Now is the time to examine how online meeting formats can be leveraged to increase sustainable practices.

Virtual events, often praised for their lower environmental impact, have the advantage of reaching wider audiences and provide affordable ways to share knowledge and research. Digital communication and the optimisation of mass travel are just two examples of actions we can take that would have a colossal impact, despite never

being considered on a large-scale pre-pandemic. This additionally gives a greater push to have more initiatives planned for in-person events. Such can be having reusable giveaways or even leaving the swag bag and its items altogether optional or modifying dining practices to be eco-friendlier – all while integrating options for donation and collaboration with organisations, with the aim to leave a positive legacy to locals.

Since it will most likely take time to break the habit of social distancing, attendees may prefer smaller events. The conference industry can also benefit from this slow return to “normal” as a transition that provides time to implement new, better practices, and experiment at a scale.

There is a risk that once the pandemic is over, many will forget these lessons rushing to their pre-COVID lives. We need to act now. Plan new digital methods. Assess how we can improve knowledge sharing and research online and offline. This will help make conferences environmentally friendly in a way that can last. Adapting in-person conferences to virtual is an inspiration, and vital steppingstone to have better working practices for the future and to start fresh rather than worry over *status quo*.

What will in-person events look like after the pandemic? One thing is certain – there will be long-lasting impacts. As the industry emerges from a global shutdown, we need to ensure that whatever the future holds, it is first and foremost more sustainable.

ABOUT KENES GROUP

For over fifty years, Kenes Group has been creating success stories with associations around the world. We're experts in helping associations reach their true potential by strategically building awareness, loyalty and satisfaction among current and potential members, as well as stakeholders. We harness the power of community, strengthening your association's brand through unforgettable experiences – fostering change, inspiring members, educating, and improving your association's business performance.

Membership Engagement: Coaching the World to Thrive

Members are the lifeblood of an association. Fully engaged, they make our associations thrive, have impact and offer a meaningful experience. But having active involvement can be hard – and when it dips, so do membership, morale, finances & results. So, how to boost engagement?

We're investigating engagement strategies – what's your association doing to ensure members grasp your **purpose** and are able to **participate** in your causes? Do you have a **platform** in place that makes collaboration easy? Are your members making **progress** together? How do you **promote** their contribution?

Magdalena Nowicka Mook speaks with **Jeffer London** about being a platform for member's success. As CEO at the **International Coaching Federation (ICF)**, Magda nurtures a system that serves the world by empowering members – it's a beautiful ripple effect felt by millions, including any of us who have ever been coached.



PURPOSE How do members make sense of your *raison d'être*?

We decided to have a very specific and explicit role for our members in our vision statement – “coaching is becoming an integral part of a thriving society and ICF members represent the highest quality in professional coaching.” We exist for them to be the best professionals in the marketplace. It is their work that brings about the empowering of people, organisations, nations and the planet to be at their highest potential and create a better place for all of us. We empower our members, so they can empower their clients.

PARTICIPATION How do your members get involved?

With over 40,000 members around the globe, it is not easy to seek an input from each and every one of them. However, we have several mechanisms that we use to get their voice. We survey new members and newly credentialed coaches every month. Once a year we conduct professional development needs survey as well. And whenever there is an important issue - such as our recent re-branding – we conduct

focus groups, snap-shot surveys and seek input from our board members around the globe to be sure we are representing the interests and sentiments of our members in the most accurate manner. We also ask members about their top reasons for optimism and, equally, of concern, so we can best address them as an organisation.

PLATFORM How do your members connect and collaborate?

Most of our members belong to their local chapters and the chapters are the best way for them to collaborate and be in community. We also host eleven communities of practice, where coaches connect through similar interests or market segments – great places to share and learn. Technology is improving just about every day and we have ways for them to interact. From zoom platforms, to blogs, to basecamp or teams, we utilise what is accessible and available to keep our members engaged. As our members reside in just about every time zone there is, the availability of on-demand material and ability to interact outside of the actual meeting are very important.

PROGRESS How do your members move things forward?

Coaching is still a relatively new profession, so one of the ways that we measure progress is the growing awareness of coaching around the globe. It is impressive how fast it is spreading, based on the study conducted every couple of years by **PricewaterhouseCoopers**. One initiative we are very proud of is the **IGNITE programme**, which offers pro-bono coaching to the leaders of non-profit organisations. Coaching the leaders of these organisations, has enabled them to inspire and lead their employees to deliver even greater results for the populations they are working with. Through over 60 projects around the globe, we managed to touch lives of over 16 million people over the past two years. That is just heart-warming.

PROMOTE How do you recognise member's talents?

It is so important to recognise our volunteers and it is also not as easy as one may think! How can we repay for endless hours of time, talent, and commitment? At ICF, we have several awards programmes that

celebrate chapters that do amazing things. We have programmes that celebrate Young Leaders in our organisations and those who contributed for many years – we call them the **Circle of Distinction**. We also recognise our committee leaders, board members – at every level – chapter leaders and others who serve at the *ad hoc* capacity. We know they are not doing what they are doing for recognition and yet it is the very least we can do to appreciate them.

POSTSCRIPT Any other advice for creating engagement?

People engage when they align with the mission and vision of the organisation. They make themselves available when they believe they can make a difference, and their dedication in fact moves the organisation closer to its desired outcomes. Some may come to you. Some you may need to invite as they do not see themselves as leaders, although they have every quality it takes. Being open, inviting, building your pipeline and looking for unusual talent, is what will land you with the leadership that cannot be stopped from dreaming and delivering – in other words, keeping your organisation relevant and evolving to meet the needs of your stakeholders.

“Coaching becoming integral part of a thriving society and ICF members representing the highest quality in professional coaching.”

ABOUT AUTHOR

Jeffer London is on the board to the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) and hosts the Facilitation Impact Awards.

More info at jefferlondon.com or @jefferlondon.

The IAF promotes facilitators and all who use facilitation to help people work together effectively. Looking for better facilitation? Check out IAF-world.org or talk to Jeffer directly about facilitating leadership teams and association-wide engagement initiatives.



ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Magdalena Nowicka Mook is the CEO of the International Coaching Federation (ICF). ICF is the leading global organisation dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification and building a worldwide network of trained coaching professionals. See how ICF connects its member coaches with what they need to succeed in their careers, at coachingfederation.org.



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