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# Cultural Diversity



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# Where will your **Next Event** in **England** Take You

It is the largest and most populous of the four nations of the UK and home to one of the leading cities of the world, London. It has the spirit, confidence and facilities to host the largest of international events, with a natural agility for excellence. It is infused with history and heritage that make it an unmissable destination for global events, known for its cultural depth that ranges from its royal legacy to radical cultural innovations. Easily accessible, it offers an impressive and continuously growing portfolio of business events facilities including over 43 leading business events destinations and 20 high-quality, purpose-built international convention centres. This is England in a nutshell.



▲ Harewood House, Yorkshire, England  
© VisitBritain/Thomas Heaton

## South East England

*Known as the Garden of England, the South East is recognisable for its gentle rolling countryside and vibrant, welcoming cities. The region is also rich in cultural attractions, from Windsor Castle in Berkshire to Canterbury Cathedral in Kent. Home to six international convention centres, it offers the perfect setting for your next event.*

### Brighton

- Famed for its creative and alternative vibe, a famously coastal city with a long beachfront setting adorned with historic architecture and modern facilities, elegant walkways, narrow passageways and energetic nightlife
- Easy reach of two international airports – London Gatwick (30-minute drive) and London Heathrow (90-minute drive)
- There are 10,000 bedrooms available across the city to suit every budget
- Home to one of the largest residential and non-residential conference venues in the South East of England, with over 60 unique and affordable options that offers extraordinary delegate experiences such as the Brighton Centre that

has the capacity to host up to 4,500 delegates and Brighton Dome that can accommodate 1,700 people

### Bournemouth

- Bournemouth has all the character and magic of a classic British seaside resort, from the flashy lights of the old-school amusements to the vinegary scent of fish and chips in the air
- An active member of the Sustainable Food Cities Partnership, making healthy eating, local suppliers and provenance a defining characteristic of the town

- Home to one of the south-coast's largest purpose-built conference centres, it is located on seven miles of golden sands
- Easy to access thanks to its close proximity to airports such as Bournemouth International and Southampton Airport
- Quality accommodation is in abundance, with 7,000 bedrooms available across the town
- Bournemouth has hundreds of indoor and outdoor venues for staging events of all shapes and sizes such as Bournemouth International Centre (with an overall capacity of 4,012 delegates) and Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre and Ballroom (for 1,028 attendees)

▼ British Airways i360, Brighton - © British Airways i360



## South West England

*It's a place of ancient legend and folklore, home to Stonehenge and the Jurassic Coast UNESCO World Heritage Site. The region's major cities include Bristol and Bath, which are just 12-minute train journey from each other. Bursting with exciting venues, both cities are home to major conference centres, boutique hotels, visitor attractions and rural retreats, easily accessed with an international airport in Bristol.*

### Bristol

- England's largest city in the South West and a UNESCO City of FilmWarwick, it has much to discover
- Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this thriving metropolis has developed strong roots in engineering and today is brimming with creativity
- Awarded the European Green Capital Award in 2015
- With a major international airport on its doorstep and direct flights from 107 destinations, it is an easy to reach city
- More than 13,000 bedrooms are available within the city centre
- Bursting with exciting venues, Bristol is home to major conference centres including Ashton Gate Stadium (that has the capacity to host up to 1,000 delegates) and Brunel's SS Great Britain (250 people)



▲ Roman Baths in Bath - © Barbara Evripidou

### Bath

- One of England's most unique cities, infused with history and offering the world's best preserved Roman bathhouses
- It takes just 45-minute drive from city centre to Bristol Airport
- Offers well-equipped and centrally located venues such as the Assembly Rooms (host up to 500 theatre style) and Bath Pavilion (host up to 1,000)

## Central England

*Central England includes the major economic centre of Birmingham, the renowned university city of Cambridge as well as ancient counties such as Warwick and Nottinghamshire, plus William Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-Upon-Avon. It's a region steeped in art, history, industry and culture. Well-located to the rest of England and a short distance from London, the region is a hub for the automotive industry and advanced manufacturing. There's something to inspire every group with modern facilities, unique event venues, fine dining and imaginative incentives.*

### Birmingham and the West Midlands

- Birmingham and the West Midlands provide truly world-class convention facilities, accommodating thousands of conferences and exhibitions annually
- Located at the heart of England's transport infrastructure, it is easy to reach thanks to Birmingham International Airport welcoming flights from over 142 destinations around the world
- The West Midlands region boasts over 36,000 bedrooms
- From sports to music, convention centres to centres of academic excellence, Birmingham has a venue to suit

▼ Clifton Suspension Bridge, Bristol, South West England - © VisitBritain/Eric Nathan ▼ ICC Birmingham, Birmingham, Midlands - © ICC Birmingham





▲ Newcastle Upon Tyne, North of England - © VisitBritain/NG/Michael Baister



▲ Manchester Central, Manchester, North of England - © Manchester Central

every event requirement. It is home to two large venues: its city centre ICC Birmingham (with a capacity to host up to 15,700 attendees) and the UK's largest venue the NEC Birmingham (hosting over 125 major exhibitions annually)

## Cambridge

- Home to the world-famous University of Cambridge, its colleges, stunning architecture, superb venues and a vibrant cultural scene
- Centrally located with great access and close to several international airports including London Stansted airport, located at a 30 minutes distance
- Over 9,000 bedrooms available across the city centre
- Choose from contemporary venues or properties steeped in academic history where famous names, such as Sir Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt, have roamed. These include Queens' College (capacity to host up to 350 delegates) and Churchill College (capacity to host up to 300 delegates)

## Northern England

*The north of England was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, when cities like Manchester led the world with mechanisation and a move to industry. But revolution in these cities do not stand still, as they continue to advance how the world works with leading research and innovation. The northern cities of Liverpool, Leeds, NewcastleGateshead and York are famous for their world-class conference and meeting facilities, thriving business,*

*technological, research and academia. Exciting incentive options in quintessential English countryside such as the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales. Discover six UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Durham Cathedral and Hadrian's Wall – the Roman border between England and Scotland. This region is home to over five international convention centres.*

## NewcastleGateshead

- 2,000 years of history, this vibrant northern city refuses to stand still, offering delegates a warm Geordie welcome to its 'Toon' with a vibrant cultural scene
- NewcastleGateshead offers great global connectivity with the nearby Newcastle International Airport and flights from over 80 destinations
- Over 9,000 city-centre bedrooms, all within a 20-minute walk from the major venues
- From trusted hotel-brands to a world-class convention centre, NewcastleGateshead provides a huge range of options that can accommodate anything from 10 to 1,500 people. These venues include Sage Gateshead (offering an overall capacity of 1,640 delegates) and St James' Park (that can host up to 500 attendees in theatre-style)

## Manchester

- Known as the Gateway to the North and recognised as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, Manchester is an edgy city where innovation never stands still
- Manchester is one of the most accessible cities in the UK thanks to its international airport. More than 70 airlines ensure Manchester is directly connected to over 200 global destinations, including almost every major European city
- There are 10,065 bedrooms within Manchester city centre
- Manchester's venues range from historic landmarks to a first class convention centre, conference hotels and a raft of unique and unusual options such as Manchester Central (for over 10,000 delegates, including a 804 seat auditorium) and Emirates Old Trafford (with the capacity to host up to 1,200 delegates in a theatre-style space)

*VisitEngland's Business Events team offers expert, impartial advice on events and incentives in England. We are the gateway to finding the right destination, connecting you to the right contacts in the best cities, helping you find the perfect solution for your next event*



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Cultural Diversity  
Isn't a Challenge,  
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HQ

# A Passport for the World of Meetings

Being able to work in a company with young people gives you such a good feeling! Here, new ideas can suddenly materialise, free from restrictions or any feeling that you are not being included.

Giving our database some thought, we discovered something brilliant. Our files contain many addresses of associations that are active in the agricultural sector or products derived from this. This was, in fact, triggered by the World Potato Congress in Adelaide, South-Australia, to be held in 2023 and a visit to the newest destination in South Africa, Limpopo, where the fruit of the marula tree is undergoing new developments.

We decided to flip the question around. Should we continue putting the destinations first – or would it be better to shed light on the associations in the promotional process?

Following further analysis of the HQ readership database, we calculated that around 19,3% of European and international associations that are specialised in agriculture – in the broadest sense of the word.

The ultimate thinking process led to the creation of the first 'HQ Passport'. What we wish to give our readers is really a document for opening the gates of professional destinations.

We hope to help associations go through the right passage to a leading destination in their field. Every branch of industry is a gateway and there are thousands of them in the world of associations. We will be opening many of these gateways for organisers of conferences to show the way, with regard to how congresses and specialised conferences can be the beginning of a brand new economic asset.

After all, you must not forget that we are entering an era where the number of associations and destinations are expanding rapidly.

A fascinating future! Time to hand out passports.



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

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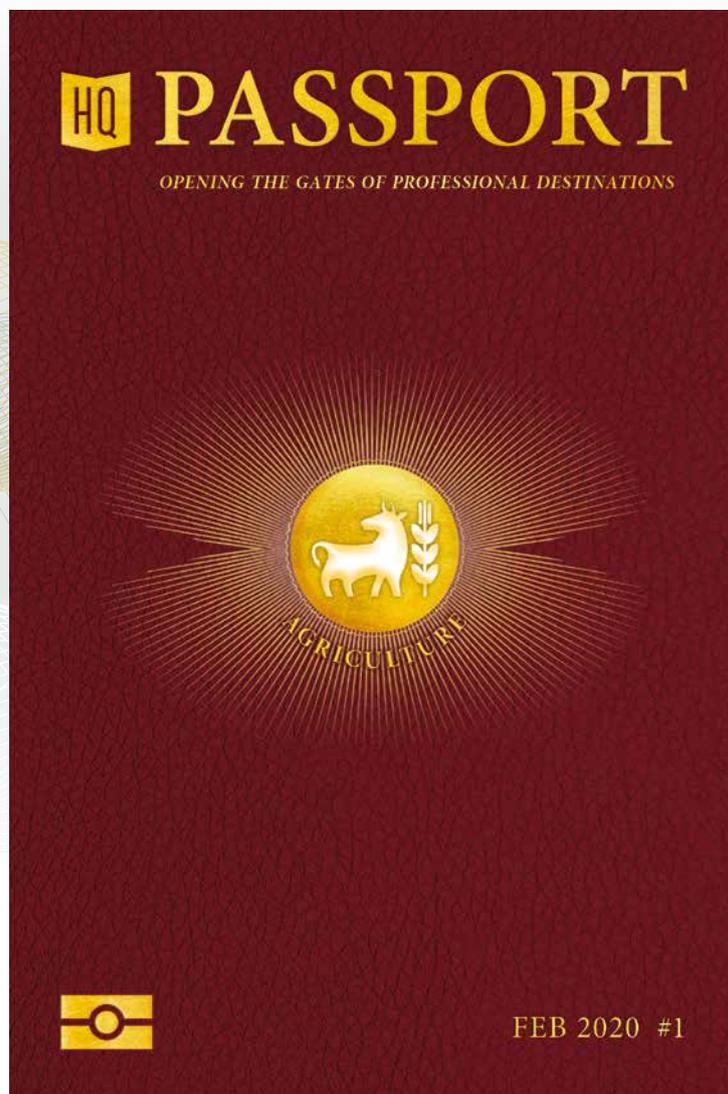


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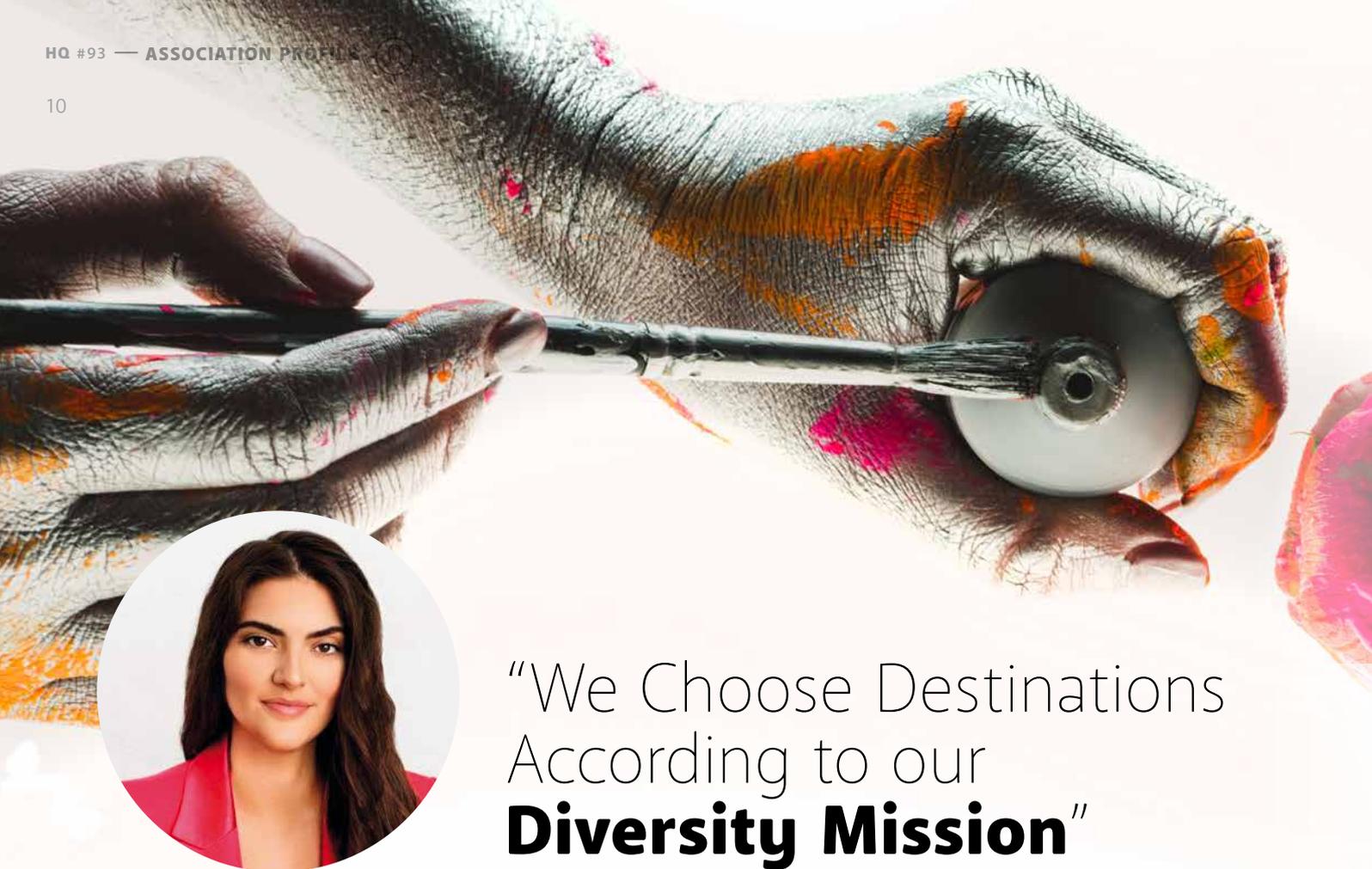
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## “We Choose Destinations According to our **Diversity Mission**”

The International Cultural Diversity Organization (ICDO) was established in Vienna to promote diversity, interculturality and raise awareness of different cultural expressions and their values. **Josipa Palac**, president and CEO, spoke with us about the organisation projects, its mission and the social impact that cultural diversity can have in several destinations.

worldwide are the ones who live in the most biodiverse places on Earth.

We choose the destinations of our projects in accordance with our mission to safeguard diversity. These regions are facing immediate danger of extinction of local cultures, languages, traditions, and biodiversity.

**Cultural diversity is an increasingly popular theme within associations. However, how does this translate into choosing the destination of your event?**

Since all of ICDO's projects are dealing with cultural diversity, it is important to say that we deal not only with negative stereotypes and personal biases about various marginalised groups but also with a broad spectrum of diverse factors that are affecting different groups and individuals worldwide.

Every year the ICDO team develops a set of projects based on previously

conducted research and evaluates the urgency of the issue that is related to cultural diversity.

The issues we are tackling are relevant and important not only to the local community but globally, too. More precisely, when preparing our ‘Kalan Je La’an: Following the Maya Voice’ project for Mexico our research showed that the biodiversity of the Yucatan peninsula is in danger and that global joint efforts are needed to preserve the biodiversity of the region. When safeguarding biodiversity, we must consider the importance of the local inhabitants of the endangered areas. Indigenous communities

**Having such a wide membership with intersections among many professional sectors and different industries, what are the biggest challenges and how do you tackle them?**

The ICDO team is made up of a diverse group of experts and professionals from different fields and backgrounds. We believe it adds to our value and strength. But, where there is strength, there are also some challenges. When you have a lot of strong individuals with different experiences, it is important to find a way for each voice to be heard and to make



a dialogue among everyone to find the most appropriate and the most effective solutions that will contribute to the overall goals of the organisation.

Objectivity is a top priority, so it is also very important inside of the Organization to have communication, honesty, and transparency.

**A post in your blog shows that certain organisations may face ‘diversity fatigue’ in their working cultures, what does it mean?**

Diversity is rapidly becoming a standard feature in the policies of many societies and organisations. Some organisations are adjusting to this new norm without fully understanding and implementing what diversity and inclusion stand for, although it is changing quickly as the need for recognising and safeguarding diversity is becoming greater and greater. Globalisation, migration, new ways of living, and interconnectivity are all factors that are without a doubt shaping modern and future societies.

We think that diversity and inclusion should be seen not only on paper but transferred into reality, especially within international associations and companies that work with diverse groups of people across many countries.

**Are you paying attention to developing countries or rewarding destinations with established policies for cultural diversity?**

As always in our projects and our organisation we pay equal attention to developing countries and countries with so-called established policies of cultural diversity. In all of the countries where we work, be it Bosnia and Herzegovina or Austria, there is always room for improvement in policies for cultural diversity.

We don’t think there is a reward destination. We think there is no end to spreading the word and practices, education and information, raising awareness for development and sustainability in all places worldwide. No place on Earth has achieved these goals to a satisfactory level.

So, for us, as mentioned above, there is no reward destination, but we aim to have the most intercultural exchange between diverse sets of destinations.

**How do you design future destinations and the meetings industry in 2020 with regard to the field of human rights and social inclusion?**

According to my experience in working with human rights experts from various scientific fields, I came to realise that in order to execute a project which has social dimension of human rights and cultural diversity successfully, inclusion is crucial.

My advice for anyone tackling such complex issues is to always reach out to the best experts in the field and to develop element of cultural sensitivity while curating the projects, as we always do. I highly urge all the organisations and all the initiatives who deal with topics of human rights to take into consideration important notion of cultural diversity when determining programs and goals.

*Read the article in full on HQ website.*



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## Welcome to the 2020's, the Decade of **Board Diversity**

**Benita Lipps**, head of Interel Association Management, talked to board members of four associations - the Brussels Binder, the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC), ELSA Alumni, and the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO) - about the benefits and challenges of serving in a highly diverse board.

Ask any association leader whether they are satisfied with the diversity in their boards. The most likely answer is that they are not. Whether it's gender balance, geographical spread or integrating the next generation into the leadership structure, most of us need to acknowledge that not much has moved over recent years.

This is not to say that associations are ignoring the issue. On the contrary, the awareness that diversity is an important component in effective leadership is continuously on the rise.

I was recently asked by a frustrated group of newly elected board members - all male, white, European and over 50 - whether it was actually legal to run a board with no women. This anecdotal evidence is backed by hard facts: the

2017 BoardSource report 'Leading with Intent' showed that 65% of participating CEOs knew that increasing diversity was important, but they had not yet taken any actions to improve diversity. Among the board members, 41% agreed that diversity was important, but probably not a key priority for their organisations.

So if our boards have learned to talk the talk, why are we not yet walking the walk? It's because shaking up the dynamic of a boardroom is easier said than done.

Research shows that the most efficient boards are often composed of like-minded, long-standing directors. This is even more the case for international associations, where face-to-face interactions are rare and there's less time to connect on a personal level. The familiarity and camaraderie between

long-standing colleagues leads to a productive atmosphere where consensus can be reached quickly and decisions are easily made.

So, why rock the boat by insisting on diversity? In today's continuously fast-paced, interconnected environment, the question 'why rock the boat' has become theoretical, if not heretical. The association boat is rocking on the waves of change whether we like it or not, so we need to find the right crew to stir it through these lively waters.

**Here are three misconceptions to address first.**

**Misconception n. 1:  
we don't need to worry because  
we have a female vice-president**

A popular misconception is that a certain person is diverse, due to their race, gender, nationality, age, or sexual orientation. They are not. They are a unique individual. However, including them in your board may bring diversity to it. Diversity is the presence of people who, as a group, have a wide range of characteristics, seen and unseen, which they were born with, or have acquired. So, when you aim to add diversity to your board, stop looking for a diverse candidate but find someone who can change the dynamic and makeup of the collective or group.

Also, diversity goes deeper than identity diversity and is often most beneficial

when you also consider social and professional diversity, as well as cognitive diversity (skills, perspectives, thoughts, worldview).

"The first members of the Brussels Binder shared a vision," says Corinna Horst, the President of Brussels Binder - an association promoting gender balance in policy debates. "Their different expertise and qualifications were crucial to cover all the basics and instrumental in getting the association off the ground."

**Misconception n. 2:  
if our board ain't broke, why fix it?**

Encouraging more diversity in the boardroom doesn't suggest that your system is broken. It is a way of opening up new opportunities such as more innovation and better member engagement.

Juliana López Bermúdez, board member of AIPC - the industry association for professional convention and exhibition centre managers world wide - is very clear on why diversity matters. "In my opinion, a diversified representation on a board generates richer and broader discussions, it enhances the possibilities of success for an association when defining their strategies and action plans," she says. "Any effort in this sense is advantageous and with certainty will generate great benefits to all its members."

We mentioned the dark underbelly of easy consensus and homogeneous boards: groupthink and strategic rigidity.

By increasing the diversity of perspectives, experiences and expertise, association boards increase their chance to come up with new ideas, services and solutions. This perspective is shared by Robert Vierling, a board member of ELSA Alumni - the alumni association of the European Law Students' Association: "In my opinion, the promotion of board diversity brings enormous value to the members of the association. Any decision-making process that takes into account a variety of viewpoints on the issue in question will lead to a better result that best serves the members of the association."

The benefits of board diversity have a direct impact on the relationship with members and the association community. "Having experts on the board from different organisation types, from different parts of Europe also provides a broader representation of the members," explained Sanna-Kaisa Spoofo, Maura Hiney and Hjärdis Czesnick - board of the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO) in a joint statement. And they added: "Choosing board members that are well linked to other research integrity initiatives in Europe helps to build the profile of ENRIO outwards, thus making ENRIO a legitimate and important voice at a European level."

If the makeup of your board is drastically different from the makeup of the community you serve, your association may fail to recognise and address their true



needs. “Diversity within the members of the board of directors allows that the cultural and economic realities of each region, posed from a local perspective, may be taken into account during the analysis and discussions in the board-room,” states Bermúdez.

“ELSA Alumni is an association that lives from bringing together people of different ages with different professional and cultural backgrounds to learn from each other,” agrees Vierling. “Therefore, I think it is essential to reflect this diversity in the board of the association. Only in this way can the pool of opinions and needs of the members be adequately represented and the different interests be represented.”

**Misconception n. 3:  
newcomers fail because they don’t  
understand how we work**

Let’s assume you made the effort and managed to get some of these ‘diverse outsiders’ onto the board – not just women, but also people from different parts of the world and even some youngsters that are just starting off in their career. Consequently, you expect to increase international membership and finally get your social media problems solved. And then? Not only are you still waiting to see results, your formerly productive board meetings are suddenly dominated by frustrating conversations about the ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ of your work. What happened to the benefits of diversity?

You may have a radically diverse board but, unless the members feel welcomed and valued, the association is unlikely to reap the benefits. Inclusion provides people with the chance to contribute to the organisation, while feeling comfortable and confident enough to do so. Robert Vierling agrees: “For me, diversity on the board means that you invite them to come together and listen to their views and ideas and ultimately allow their voice to be heard.”

Will this make for a more bumpy ride when it comes to board governance? Probably. “Working in a diverse board is certainly more difficult than working in a one-sided board, as it is always more difficult to take into account the full range of opinions and find a compromise,” admits Vierling. Is it worth it? Absolutely! “The diversity and commitment of the board contributed to our fruitful, intense discussions on the direction of the Brussels Binder and its work,” confirms Horst.

**With these misconceptions out  
of the way, what can be done to  
increase board diversity? What  
concrete steps can be taken to be  
more representative and inclusive?**

**Solution n. 1:  
proactive board (re-)design**

To avoid meaningless diversity quotes, strategies for diversification should be based on real needs. Take a look at your membership, your mission and your

current challenges to see where your association could benefit most from fresh insights. Board self-evaluations assess (future) skill gaps and enable the board to redesign itself. Once you agree where those gaps are (or will be), you can create a concrete and evidence-based roadmap for change.

#### **Solution n. 2: professional board recruitment**

There is a tendency in international associations to recruit board members from their pre-existing networks through word of mouth. To open up more opportunities for diversity, candidates should be encouraged from outside these networks. This requires a fair and transparent recruitment process, as well as a recruitment campaign that explores new channels of communication.

#### **Solution n. 3: inclusive board governance**

Making the most out of individual differences – in opinion, style, language - that go hand in hand with true diversity can be challenging. It is therefore important to create a governance platform that allows all board members can learn, enquire and actively participate, while assuring them that their contributions are welcome and valued. Establishing ‘emerging leader’ or expert positions within the board help to give everyone a clear mandate. Last but not least, barriers to board participation should be minimised by taking into consideration factors such as time zones,

language barriers, family life and travel budgets when planning board meetings or retreats.

#### **Solution n. 4: a welcoming board culture**

If senior leadership is too dominant, or too quick to snuff out opposing viewpoints, diversity is unlikely to flourish. A diverse and inclusive board therefore also needs to nurture an inclusive culture. The Brussels Binder does so by emphasising everyone’s shared commitment to a common vision: “The diversity and commitment of the board enables the board to come up with decisions that are credible to the larger team of volunteers. There is also a very strong sense of collaborative leadership, so all board members are equal,” explains Horst.

**Do you still need some arguments to convince your board that the 2020’s are the decade to invest in diversity? These three points will be hard to ignore.**

#### **Board diversity helps to meet the evolving needs of the association:**

“A new association needs a different kind of board than an association that has been around for a while,” says Horst. “Commitment, passion, time and hands-on engagement, not only providing strategic vision and direction, was needed at the beginning. Now, with an organisational structure that includes a management committee

that handles the day to day matters, the board is evolving.”

**Board diversity is truly enriching for all:** “This experience has opened my eyes to the perspectives of our older Board members, but also to their views and understanding of my generation,” explains Vierling. “As a result, the work on the Board is an incredible learning experience for all of us. I am happy and proud to feel this diversity in our board work and I am convinced that every ELSA Alumni member will feel it too.”

**Board diversity is no longer optional:** “In the 2020’s the diversity of the board is a necessary part of professionalism, reliability and democracy of an international unpolitical association,” stress Spooft, Hiney and Czesnick.

**Convinced? Let’s agree to make the 2020’s the decade of greater board diversity.**



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# Age Diversity in the Workplace

By Gráinne Ní Ghiollagáin – Business Development Manager @ Soolnua



Nowadays, people have begun working longer and delaying retirement, so for the first time ever, four generations of people are working alongside each other. Baby Boomers (55+), Gen X (36-54), Millennials (25-35) and Gen Z (18-24). Age diversity within a company is a great thing! In particular for us in the Meetings industry, it is the key to the overall growth and success of a company – not only are our workers from 4 different generations, so too are our clients, and this diversity only contributes to the overall benefit of the company. 85% of professionals globally surveyed by CV Library believe that age-diverse teams help contribute to more innovative ideas and solutions, which in turn leads to more creative and innovative meetings and events.

So how can the Meetings industry build upon the age diversity within their companies and ensure the company and its employees are working to their best capabilities and learning from each other? One key factor highlighted by Harvard Business Review is not to dwell on the differences between the generations but to instead build collaborative relationships in which the strengths of all the different generations are being communicated and capitalised on. There is no research out there to show that 35-year-olds manage any differently nowadays to 35-year-olds a generation ago. It's important not to shoehorn different generations into different boxes, this in turn only increases age discrimination

– there is so much variation between people and getting to know people individually should be what every company aims to do.

Cross-generational mentoring is an excellent way to build these collaborative relationships – reverse or reciprocal mentoring programs work whereby a younger person, who may have grown up with the internet, is paired with a more experienced senior employee – so for example, while the younger person can teach the older person about social media and influencers, the older person can share their knowledge and expertise from years within the industry. In more mix aged teams, this sort of mentoring develops more naturally.

In summary, embrace age diversity within your company! With your team's combined and enriched brainpower, you will stay current, flexible, and open-minded. It will also help with talent retention as your whole team, no matter their age or status, will feel valued for who they are.

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# Five Lessons **To Inspire** Your 2020

Addressing cultural diversity at an event can feel like a minefield as you try desperately not to offend. Cultural diversity is up there with accessibility in terms of importance, as managers strive to create events without borders no matter the culture, religion, physical or mental challenge of participants. Here are five things to inspire them.

prayer or quiet room where needed and be mindful that this may have an effect on meeting and mealtimes.

## Lesson number 5: **Responsible speaking**

If your event requires a panel, ensure that the speakers themselves are a diverse mix, taking their gender, origin and ethnicity into consideration. Do a little research into the local area – no point flying a panel in from across the world when you surely have some very valid experts nearby, who will also help you to root the event in the destination.

In conclusion, respecting Cultural Diversity requires timely communications, good research and an open mind to avoid unfortunate surprises. As well as little homework on the origins of attending delegates, you may also find it beneficial to familiarize attendees with some background information on the local customs and culture.

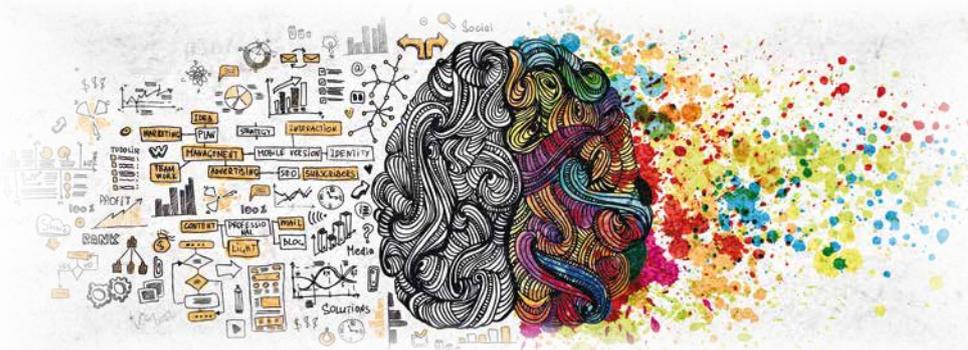


Rebecca Johnson



GLOBAL  
**DESTINATION  
SUSTAINABILITY**  
INDEX

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## Lesson number 1: **Mind your manners**

Food is always the biggie at events. Attendees might remember contacts once they've put a face to a name, but for sure they will remember whether they ate well or not and whether they encountered any food manners that they found distasteful or curious.

I have the fortune to live in Spain, where tapas and food sharing come second nature. Working in events, however, reminds me that not all cultures think alike and that eating from the same plate can seem unhygienic and rude to someone else. Not all of us are adept at chopsticks for example.

Drinks can also arouse confusion. Iced water in jugs is unusual in places where drinking water does not come from the tap so make sure communications are clear when offering this service to overseas delegates.

If your host country does have a particular style for food and drinks, make sure you can explain it to your attendees.

## Lesson number 2: **Content is king**

If you suspect you may have some attendees from a variety of cultures attending your event, ensure you choose foods that can be enjoyed by everyone. A little vegetarian goes a long way, although any professional caterer should be able to assist you with Halal and Kosher dishes. Make sure you communicate all ingredients to avoid any unhappy accidents.

## Lesson number 3: **Time keeping**

There is a reason that punctuality in Spain is known as 'la puntualidad británica' (British punctuality). Different cultures have differing views on what is acceptable timekeeping. Keep an easy intro and permanent coffee break for the start of your meeting to satisfy the needs of both those cultures who like to arrive early and those who have a more relaxed approach.

## Lesson number 4: **Observance of festivals**

If your meeting happens to fall over a religious festival, ensure that you can offer a



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# A New Development Strategy for **Vienna**

As the host of more than 4,500 events a year, Vienna is one of the most popular meetings destinations anywhere in the world. With the presentation of the 2025 Visitor Economy Strategy by Vienna Tourist Board, the destination is ready to strike a new era for meetings.

## New brand

The Visitor Economy Strategy is focusing on establishing and strategically positioning the brand for Vienna as a destination for meetings by 2025. The first steps have already been taken in this direction: the Vienna Tourist Board, working with its Vienna Convention Bureau and Vienna-based agency *seite zwei*, drew up a communications concept for the new Meeting Destination Vienna brand which harmonises with the brand strategy for the destination as a whole.

In terms of content, the brand draws on the high quality of service and expertise offered by Vienna's meetings industry. The central communicative idea runs through all of the elements of the brands 'Vienna makes it easy for you' to plan, organise and eventually enjoy an event.

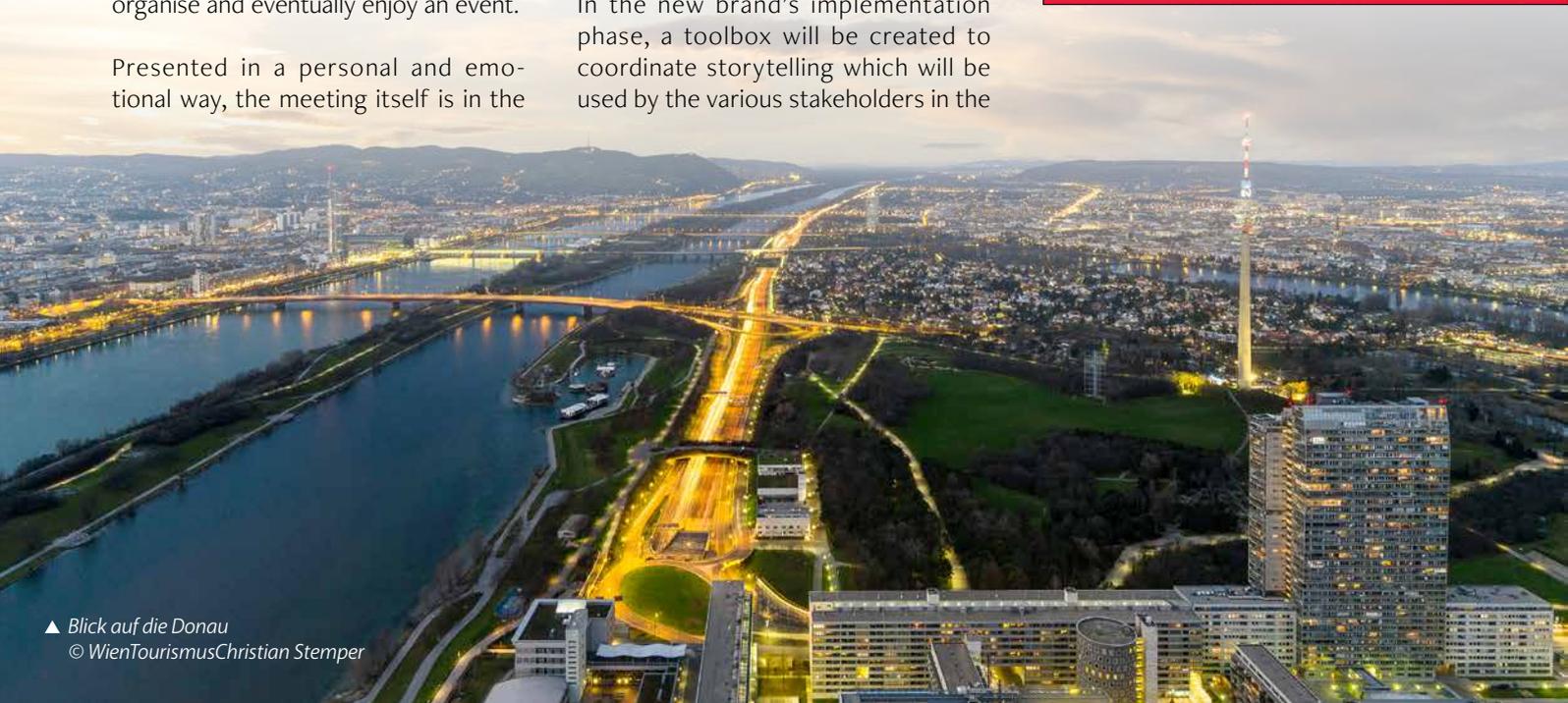
Presented in a personal and emotional way, the meeting itself is in the

foreground of each individual communications element. This sense of meeting is explored from various sides, both in terms of content and the images used. The different executions show that Vienna is not only a place to meet other people, but a place of contrasts and surprising moments, encounters with great thinkers, or charm and Viennese humor. The target audience is addressed directly, along with the message 'Meet exceptional perspectives through local eyes'.

The feeling of people meeting and interacting with one another is encapsulated in the claim, which, in turn, is a smart extension of the umbrella brand 'Vienna. Now. Forever', extrapolated to 'Meeting Destination Vienna. Now. Together.'

In the new brand's implementation phase, a toolbox will be created to coordinate storytelling which will be used by the various stakeholders in the

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Viennese meetings industry to add to the appeal of all aspects of Meeting Destination Vienna.

### New role

“The role of tourist boards has changed a great deal globally,” explained Vienna’s Director of Tourism Norbert Kettner. “We are no longer a pure-play destination marketing agency: we fulfil a curatorial and networking role to ensure the ongoing high-quality development of the destination and add fresh impetus alongside all of the players in the city.”



“Destination management is one of our core competences in addition to specific targeting of prospective visitors in marketing the destination. This also means that we have to play the role of ‘spoilsport’ in situations where vested interests stand in opposition to the common good. Vienna is famous for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. Where developments are a significant hurdle to economic, environmental or social sustainability, rules and intervention are also needed. In such cases, the Vienna Tourist Board will have a hands-on role in shaping the necessary frameworks, as our city is a precious commodity that must be handled with the utmost care.”

### New developments

It’s not by chance that Vienna has an international reputation as a centre for political dialog and a hub where the latest scientific findings are shared. As a location for meetings, the city is one of the most sought-after destinations worldwide.

Furthermore, Vienna’s meetings industry is a flagship sector of the visitor economy. Today it already accounts for one in eight overnight stays recorded in the city. And at around €540 per day, congress participants spend almost twice as much in the destination as the average visitor to the capital.

“In future, meetings will be increasingly used to drive Vienna’s development as a business and research location, to increase its international visibility and to enhance its competitiveness,” explained Christian Woronka, head of the Vienna Convention Bureau (VCB) and Market Management at the Vienna Tourist Board.

Under an alliance between location policy makers and business development agencies, the strategic ties between Vienna’s meetings industry and specific key industries with a presence in Vienna were defined for the first time in the new Business and Innovation location strategy for 2030.

Going forward, the aim is to identify and acquire key events in the target industries, as well as to establish new high-visibility proprietary events in Vienna. As Woronka added, “international congresses will continue to be the backbone of the city’s activities as a destination for meetings, and, in addition to that, we will sharpen the focus on the corporate event segment.”

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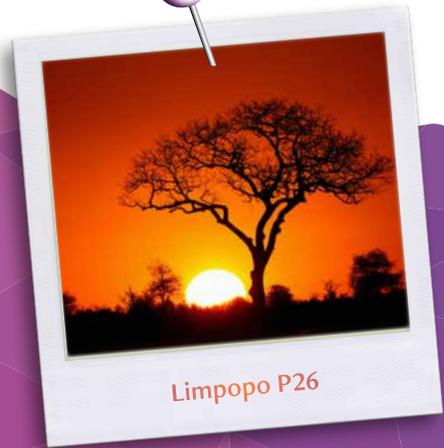
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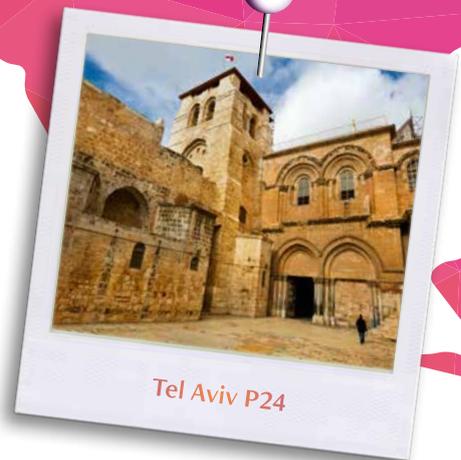
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# HQ World Tour



# 12 Pictures of **Tel Aviv** and **Jerusalem**

The first time I travelled to the cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem was 25 years ago. Almost nothing of that visit remains with me now, except my fascination. Halfway through November 2020 I had the chance to return for five days, as a guest of the Tel Aviv Convention Bureau. I wandered around and observed the multi-cultural inhabitants as they went about their lives. What was it like? Again, I experienced a feeling of amazement. It was an entirely different experience this time around, however. I have distilled my visits and ponderings into 12 brief tales, all written with the congress delegate in mind.

— *Marcel Vissers reports* —



▲ *The coastline of Tel Aviv*

## 1. My welcome began at the airport

On arrival at the Ben Gurion international airport everything proceeded smoothly, unlike 25 years ago, when I was practically strip-searched. The people in the streets appear more welcoming and particularly the younger ones seem to have a proud, healthy view of the society in which they live. And just like the first time, I can still hear ‘Shalom’ everywhere.

## 2. A look around Tel Aviv White City

The best way to familiarise yourself with the city of Tel Aviv is to take a tour of Rothschild Boulevard, its oldest boulevard, featuring the city’s first kiosk and street lamp. You’ll hear stories about the houses that line the boulevard and the people who lived there, in addition to becoming acquainted with the renowned Bauhaus architecture. The tour also reviews the efforts currently underway to preserve and restore these buildings. I consider the project’s results so far a resounding success.

Take a visit at the **InterContinental David**, which offers stunning views of the Mediterranean Sea, the SoHo of Neve Tzedek and historic Old Jaffa. InterContinental David Tel Aviv brings the essence of modern luxury to the non-stop city. Don’t miss this superb chance to orient yourself.

## 3. Tel Aviv Expo, top-tier venue

Tel Aviv has had to work long and hard to attract international congresses. That’s all due to Israel’s complex international

relations, but the situation has seen some major changes. It’s no exaggeration to say that Tel Aviv Expo is the leading and most progressive venue in Israel for professional conferences and exhibitions, attracting business tourism from all corners of the globe. With new state-of-the-art pavilions, a business hotel and a restaurant complex due in 2025, the city aims to realise its true potential as an international hub for business, culture, science and technology.

## 4. Lunch @Miznon

When attending a congress, food is of the utmost importance. It gathers people together and creates a bond. Sharing is a vital element of Israeli cuisine.

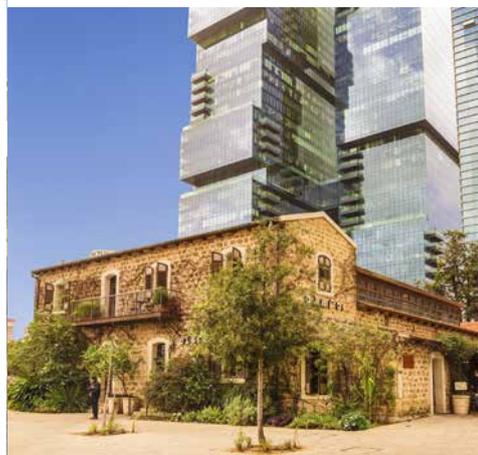
A great example of this mindset is the typical street food created by famous chef Eyal Shani. Vegetables harvested in the morning decorate the tables, stews waiting to fill stacks of pita, marvellous cauliflower bouquets, sweet potatoes, and burning potatoes are still to be trampled on golden cardboard.

▼ *Neve Tzedek*





▲ Jaffa



▲ Sarona



▲ Church of the Holy Sepulcher

Behind all of this, you'll find people feeding and delighting you with an all-encompassing feast.

### 5. Tour of Ganei Yehoshua Park

Ganei Yehoshua Park is the largest park in Tel Aviv, sprawling across 3,750,000 sqm. The park includes extensive lawns, botanical gardens, sports facilities, outdoor concert venues and many more attractions to serve the residents of Tel Aviv and thousands of annual visitors from around the world.

### 6. Dinner @Eatwith

Eatwith is the world's largest community to provide authentic food experiences with locals in over 130 countries. They connect hand-selected local hosts with travelers seeking unique, immersive experiences. Whether they're amateur cooks, food-lovers, MasterChefs, or Michelin-starred chefs, the hosts all share one special ingredient: a passion for bringing people together through food.

### 7. Guided Tour of Jaffa

Jaffa is a great destination for an intense city break. Truly fascinating. You should do a walking tour of old Jaffa, one of the world's oldest port cities, experiencing the magic of its picturesque, narrow streets and abundant history dating back to biblical times.

### 8. Stand-Up paddleboard lesson at Hilton Beach

The Hilton hotel beach is Tel Aviv's most upscale beach. You'll see beautiful people all around, cycling, out for a stroll or promenading. Hilton Beach even offers its guests SUP instruction, a paddle boarding method that combines surfing, paddling and balancing. Paddle boarding develops all the muscles and strengthens the internal core, allowing you to enhance stability and balance while admiring the spectacular view of Tel Aviv's shoreline.

### 9. Tour in Sarona

Founded in 1871 by German Templers, this unique site has undergone some amazing changes. Its residents were first appreciated for introducing advanced farming and manufacturing practices to the region, but later expelled for being Nazi subjects in the heart of the First Hebrew City. Then Sarona was transformed into a British military base, after which it became the headquarters of both the Israeli Army and the Mossad, and finally one of Tel Aviv's most popular recreation sites.

### 10. Dinner @Messa Restaurant

The menu focuses on 'Provençal' cooking techniques. The restaurant uses a wide variety of local produce, preserving the quality of the raw ingredients and playing

with different textures to create fascinating complexity in each dish.

### 11. Visit the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation

This is the first and largest visitor's centre of its kind. It presents the incredible story of Israel, the 'Innovation Nation', showcasing the diversity of sectors and people behind Israeli innovations.

### 12. Experience Jerusalem

No-one should visit Jerusalem without walking its streets. I enter Jaffa Gate and head for the Christian Quarter, have a quick traditional lunch of hummus, visit the church of the Holy Sepulcher and walk along the Via Dolorosa. I visit the Jewish Wailing Wall, 'The Kotel', and continue through the Jewish Quarter to the recently excavated and restored Cardo, the Roman road.



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# Limpopo, the Amarula Destination

Limpopo Province is represented by Ms Nomasonto Ndlovu (aka Sonto), CEO of Limpopo Tourism Agency since 2017 and responsible for the promotion of congresses. Nomasonto Ndlovu has built up extensive marketing experience in the business world and the meeting industry. She first held a position as the Global Manager for Business Tourism at South African Tourism, after which she was introduced to destination marketing at Tourism Kwa-Zulu Natal, where she spent two years as the General Marketing Manager. Nomasonto Ndlovu is also a long-time active ICCA member, specialising in Congress Promotion..

— Marcel Vissers reports —



▲ A marula tree

## An unexplored province

Limpopo province is South Africa's most northern province. It is favourably situated for economic co-operation with other parts of southern Africa, as it shares borders with Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest province in South Africa (10.2%), with a population of approx. 5.8 million (2019 estimate). Limpopo hosts more than 3.6 million hectares of national parks, nature reserves and game farms, making up 70% of South Africa's protected land. There are three industries that could serve to attract associations: agriculture, mining and tourism (conference industries).

The Limpopo is less well-known to foreign event organisers and visitors. Many ignore the area as they head for the Drakensberg and Kruger Park. They don't know what they're missing. Whether you're interested in nature or culture, the 'province of the baobab'

(monkey bread tree) has plenty to offer. For instance, you can go on safari in the Welgevonden Game Reserve.

Limpopo is a province of contrasts, featuring classic bushveld scenery, majestic mountains, unspoilt native forests and fertile farmland. Conference participants are most likely to appreciate the excellent private game reserves, alternating with characteristic African cultural and natural elements to make Limpopo an endlessly fascinating experience.

## Lekgotlas: meeting under the marula trees

Amarula Cream liqueur was first discovered in 1989. This exotic, creamy liqueur has since become South Africa's best-selling beverage. Amarula is sold in over 100 countries. Drink it straight, enjoy it over ice cream, add it to countless cocktails or employ it as a secret ingredient in desserts and other dishes.





▲ Elephant while eating marula tree fruit in Kruger Park, South Africa



▲ Marula fruit

Amarula Cream is a South African success story. The liqueur is sweet, creamy and unbelievably fruity with hints of caramel, zingy spice and a dash of citrus. Amarula Cream is irresistibly moreish. The authorities plan to plant thousands of new marula trees in order to give the (agricultural) industry a major boost. Various products may be derived from the marula fruit as well, marula oil for example, which can be used as an ingredient in cosmetics. Marula products often feature images of elephants; according to popular wisdom, they love to gorge on the fruit until they become intoxicated.

Though there are no purpose-built convention centres in Limpopo province, there is a wide selection of wonderful, generously sized lodges and estates with areas suitable for conferences, amplifying the out-of-Africa experience.

And then there are the marula trees, of course. These tall trees feature wide crowns of leaves. They are found in nature all through sub-Saharan Africa. Marula trees are a popular choice for traditional tribal gatherings and 'lekgotlas' (meetings). Many important decisions have been reached in the shade of these imposing African forest giants.

If one were to construct a purpose-built convention centre after all, this should certainly be designed to invoke the iconic impression of a grove of marula trees, with their spreading crowns offering protection against the rain and sun.

Though there are no purpose-built convention centres in Limpopo province, there is a wide selection of wonderful, generously sized lodges and estates with areas suitable for conferences, amplifying the out-of-Africa experience.

### How to get there

Foreign conference participants will always arrive at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. Limpopo is 2,5 hours from the airport by car. SA Airlink offers 21 flights to and from Johannesburg six days a week. The airline also links Phalaborwa to Johannesburg and Hoedspruit to Johannesburg and Cape Town.

**Tourism is seen as one of the biggest potential earners (and employers) with almost limitless potential. Biodiversity is currently the sector receiving the most attention from authorities, but there are equally unrivalled opportunities in adventure tourism, culture and heritage, golf, etc.**

▼ The Ge-Selati River where it joins the Olifants River in the norther part of Kruger Park



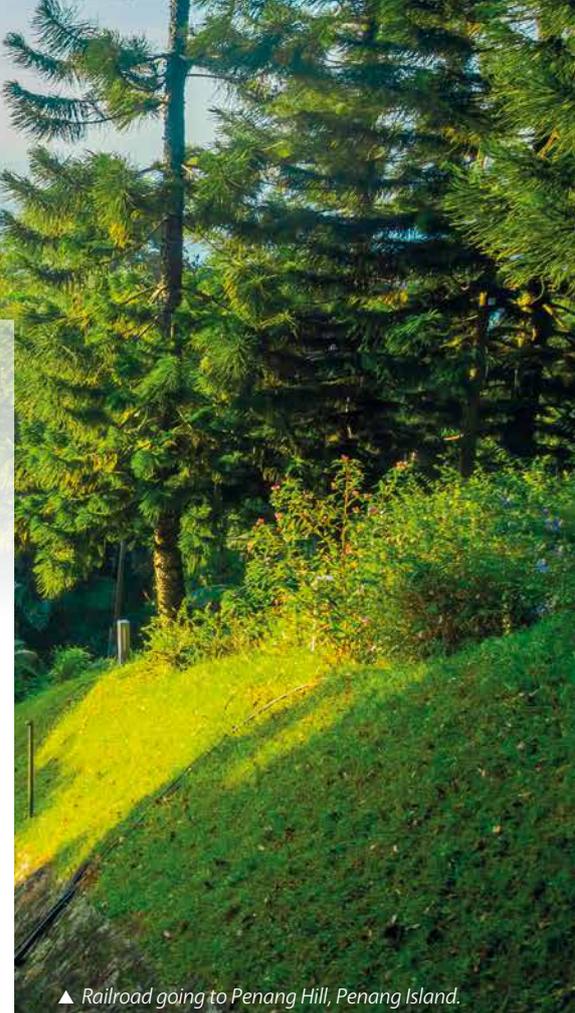
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# Penang, Preserving the Beauty of Our Mother Nature

Before I started my career in the MICE industry, my knowledge of Penang was limited to the Land of Durian (a tropical fruit with a pungent odour). Working with Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) in the past 2 years, however, Penang has become the Malaysia's fast-growing second-tier event destination to me. During my recent visit, the conservation of nature in this island province has deeply touched me. What a paradise for nature lovers!

— Vivian Xu reports —



▲ Railroad going to Penang Hill, Penang Island.

## Natural discoveries

Situated at the north-western coastline of Peninsular Malaysia, Penang is the second smallest state by land mass in the country. Considering the highly-developed urbanisation in Penang, I was astonished to find some vestiges of the precious rainforests that are well preserved for locals and visitors.

My first stop was the **Tropical Spice Garden**, a living museum of tropical spices, vegetation and medicine. I was enthralled by over 500 varieties of tropical flora and fauna, including some endangered species. Personally speaking, the spice garden is a must visit in Penang because it is such a magnificent way of learning the benefit of spices. For instance, I got to know that actually the entire ginger plant including its flower is edible! Ginger flower is high in antioxidants and loaded with anti-bacterial and anti-cancer properties. More importantly, its anti-inflammatory properties

can help treat Arthritis. If you are a kitchen nerd, you can't afford to miss the opportunity to cook with fresh spices in the cooking school of the garden, where small workshop or incentive programmes can also be organised.

A 30-minute ride from the spice garden, I arrived at the foot of **Penang Hill**. I was thrilled to think of having a walk in this 130-million-year-old rainforest, where my second authentic and diverse tropical natural experience began.

Within a 5-minute ride of the Penang Hill Railway, going through the steepest tunnel track in the world, I reached 830 meters above sea level and was welcomed by the wild monkeys on the rooftops. Even though they didn't seem to be excited about my arrival, their appearances put a smile on my face. Upon arrival, I immediately sensed the difference in the cooler and breeze-catching temperature. No wonder the hill was favoured by British explorer Captain

Francis Light, where he started a strawberry plantation. Thus, Penang Hill was also known as the Strawberry Hill.

Taking a walk in the rainforest always involves improbable tales. On one side I was shocked by the colourful spiders hung in their universes of giant webs, on the other side seduced by the overloaded cuteness. While admiring this marvellous natural magic world, a black flash awakened me, quickly crossed my way and disappeared into the deep forest. It was a giant black squirrel! Covered with silk-like black fur from head to tail, except for the bright golden-coloured underparts, this adorable animal caught all the attention of the cameras. And I can assure you these free cuteness encounters if you organise your events here!

## Protecting the guardians of the sea

**Pantai Keracut beach** belongs to the Penang National Park, where Green Turtles and Olive Ridley Turtles are

### DID YOU KNOW?

Temperature of developing eggs decides the gender of the sea turtles

Plastic waste is often mistaken for food such as jellyfish and ingested, which blocks turtles' intestines and often kills them

The survival rate of the baby turtles released into the wild is only 0.1%



nested every year. Since 1990, the turtle conservation in Penang has started. Sea turtles play an important role in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem, because they help keep the healthy seagrass beds, coral reefs and the key habitat for other marine life. They balance marine food webs and boost nutrient cycling from water to land. Initially, direct fishing of sea turtles was the main reason for their population's decline. Today other threats, including habitat degradation and climate change, have worsened the situation. However, as the decline of the sea turtle population occurred centuries ago, a proper perspective or a reliable baseline against which to compare their current state is still missing.

The Turtle Conservation Centre in Penang gathers and records statistics in order to observe the changing of the population of sea turtles. Moreover, they help protect and preserve the sea turtles by collecting the eggs and hatching them in the protected areas. Once the eggs open, these baby turtles will be kept in a small pond until they are old enough to be released. By doing this, the researchers give a better chance for the young turtles to survive in the wild.

After my visit to the turtle sanctuary, I wanted to know what is needed to help protect sea turtles. Three ideas are the following:

- Reduce sea turtle interactions and mortalities in commercial fisheries
- Protect key habitat areas on land and in the water
- Pass for comprehensive legislation that establishes a system to protect and restore sea turtle populations nationally and world widely

What can you do as an individual? Although everyone can try to help at their own level, only the establishment of a legal system protecting and restoring sea turtles can lead to progress and limit the expanding commercial fisheries, which are already 2.5 times larger than what the oceans can sustainably support.



▲ Penang turtle island - Pantai Kerachut

Unfortunately, money often talks first... It's therefore, in my humble opinion, imperative that we, as individuals, gather into groups to put pressure on the politicians so they put this on their political agenda.



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▲ The skyline of Copenhagen

# BestCities 2019: Shaping the Congress of the Future

How can destinations boost the congress of the future adjusting to the main requests from associations? BestCities circled around this issue in a 4-day forum that propelled meeting planners, association leaders and MICE agents into a lively discussion.

— Manuel Fernandes reports —

2020 is a year of irreversible changes for the meetings industry. As we have been emphasizing in **HQ**, a congress can have a magical effect on local economies and truly impact a destination. The heritage that one event leaves both in a small destination and in a large industrial centre, might be decisive for its affirmation as a major economic hub or think tank. In the meetings industry, what precedes us defines our future and this reputation base is vital for all MICE structures. Thinking of an event as a purely commercial act, isolated from its social component, is a far cry from today's business. Add to that the growing awareness of environmental issues, sustainability, and new social architectures in these globalised societies, and here we have a new board to play on.

Last December, the **BestCities** event in Copenhagen tried to address these and many other questions through its slogan 'exploring the congress of the future - fortifying impact'. A rotating alliance of

11 global cities that join forces to highlight the positive influence that business events generate and how their unique features complement each other. After three remarkable editions, the Danish capital was chosen to host 20 international associations. Reflections on the future of the industry was an ever-present theme in an open showcase between the two ends of the rope: the association overview and the destinations' supply.

## Designing new scenarios

In a good way, the city of Copenhagen does not cause any big surprises. Here, everything is managed in a balanced way with priority for the people – *do not miss our report in the last HQ edition of 2019.*

However, this apparent normality hides an admirable path that qualifies it as the 'best city' for its ambitious goals in terms

▼ Bella Center Congress, Copenhagen



of sustainability, clean energy and social development. A walking friendly city with academic and research institutes just steps away from the most important congress centres and hotels. Therefore, we went to the Bella Center Congress to see how the Danish Design Center's minimalist approach is infusing different scenarios for the associations of the future.

A series of interactive activities spanned four alternative projections of a congress that will dominate the year of 2040 with all its challenges and potential scenarios for our industry. Namely: Accelerated adaptation, Catalyst for change, Go regional and Into the wild. This was the result of joint work by the Copenhagen Convention Bureau and BestCities, which led to in-depth research in exclusive collaboration with future scientists and designers. In the evening, we had the pleasure of visiting Øksnehallen, an exhibition space located in the Vesterbro district that used to be a former market hall, part of the Brown Meat District.

### The legacy of meetings

How can we ascertain the impact that a congress has on a city? What does this leave in concrete for local communities? Copenhagen Legacy Lab initiative was the icing on the cake of this global forum and came to summarise in a tangible way the empirical consequences of this meeting. Just imagine that, when hosting a medical congress, two scientists at different stages of research meet to develop an active cell that can serve as an antidote to cancer.



▲ Lesley Williams,  
the new Managing Director of BestCities



◀ BestCities 2019  
Entourage

What is done after all with this accumulated knowledge that MICE promotes in our cities and associations? The importance that this industry can play in making the world a better place is still largely underestimated.

And this is where this Legacy Lab comes to support a positive, long-lasting and sustainable impact of international congresses. At the same time, this concept serves as a descriptive fact for choosing the best meetings for associations, which means that bad examples will eventually disappear.

In this triangle between people, education and business, Copenhagen is leading a systematic approach in creating action for legacy and experience. This initiative is the responsibility of the Copenhagen Convention Bureau, with the support of MeetDenmark and the Danish Executive Board for Business Development and Growth, presented in the The Carlsberg Museum & Business Centre.

### The speakers' turn!

During these four days, the agenda listed a series of interventions emphasising team building, the measurable impact on the community and key performance indicators for a successful event. Indeed, there was a slight trend in relation to issues such as public engagement, responsible policies for MICE and new interdisciplinary practices for associative management throughout the stay.

After the group activities with Danish Design Center, the BestCities delegation attended a lecture with Nadim Matta on how to create impact in 100 days. Thomas Trøst Hansen and Alessandro Cortese, spokesmen for the Legacy Lab, explained how to fortify Impact from a scientific perspective, using a brand-new toolkit developed in Copenhagen. After lunch on the last day, the world-renowned restaurateur who founded the no less famous Noma and New Nordic Cuisine Claus Meyer offered a passionate speech on the socially positive impact that unconventional thinking can have on our society.

The event ended with the passing of the torch from Kit Lykkeitof, director of Wonderful Copenhagen, to the new host of BestCities 2020, David Pérez from Madrid Convention Bureau. If you are an international association or ACM executive do not miss this coming soon opportunity.



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# Seoul, a City of Nature and Technology

Associations interested in ecology or focused on the most advanced developments in technology should certainly put Seoul on their wish list. But the city is much more than that. Seoul has world-class culture, countless parks and contemporary entertainment to offer. In September 2019, I spent five days visiting about 20 places that can offer lots of inspiration to a conference delegate - all of them genuine must-sees.

— Marcel Vissers reports —



△ Namsan Seoul tower in Korea

## Seoul from its poignant history

Strategically located along the Han River, Seoul's history could stretch back over 2,000 years, when it was founded by the people of Baekje, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea.

According to 2012 census data, the population in the area makes up around 20% of the total population of South Korea. Recently, the city has become the economic, political and cultural hub of the country that hosts several Fortune Global 500 companies, including Samsung, SK Holdings, Hyundai and LG Group headquartered there.

Seoul was the home to the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Summer Olympics as well as one of the venues of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Now it is going through yet another transformative time.

While there, I could perfectly feel the spirit of this change thanks to the beauty of art.

Renowned 'dansaekhwa' (monochrome painting, in Korean) artist Yun Hyong-keun presented his first exhibition in Palazzo Fortuny at the last Venice Biennial. The exhibit featured over 60 works by the late artist whose dark and poignant paintings magnificently capture the shattered national psyche of our era.

At the exhibition, I came to realise how much Korea has suffered. Then, my last visit in September 2019 gave me a new perspective on Seoul. The city is exploding in many areas, with nature, culture and technology its highest priorities.

## Seoul from above

N Seoul Tower

When I visit a new place, the first thing I like to do is to climb a tower or an elevator to see the city from above. One of Seoul's well known towers is the N Seoul Tower, a much-loved landmark of the city. The tower's digital observatory is unique and offers an astonishing

360-degree view over a city of more than 10 million people.

## Seoul from the ground - the Coex World

SM Town Artium Coex

Anyone who loves high-class entertainment should definitely visit the newest and most exciting cultural complex. You will be sure to run into a celebrity here. Perhaps someone from K-pop? The building also houses Korea's biggest hologram theatre. Outside, your attention is drawn to the largest screen in the country, as big as four basketball courts and referred to by locals as 'Korea's Times Square'.

Business events at Coex

Founded in 1979, Coex is an establishment in the world of Conventions and Exhibitions. However, a lot of adjustments have been made since then. The building is suffused in a glow of light and houses four main exhibition halls and 55 divisible meeting rooms.



▲ Gyeongbokgung Palast in Seoul Korea

### Starfield Coex mall

The mall is not only a shopping centre but also a theme park. You will spot all the luxury brands in fashion in its brightly lit showcases. The dining options are infinite. Personally I was extremely fascinated by the huge open space crammed with books of the Starfield library.

### King studio

This Studio brings people together. In this genuine K-pop studio small groups or individuals can take in the production experience with professional recording engineers and vocal coaches. I succeeded in making a vocal recording with a group of 6 for the first time here.

### Seoul from the green

#### Haneul (sky, in Korean) Park

As the nation's capital, Seoul has built up a great reputation with regard to nature conservation. A good example

of this is Haneul Park (that used to be a landfill) which was transformed into an Ecological Park. The park is situated on the highest section of 2002's World Cup Park and offers breathtaking views of Seoul.

#### Oil Tank Cultural Park

The Oil Depot Base, to which access was restricted in the past 40 years, has been transformed into an environmentally friendly cultural multiplex. Six oil reservoir tanks remain on-site and have been transformed into performance venues, exhibition halls and lecture halls.

#### Seoul Battleship Park

This one was the first shipbuilding themed park in Seoul. You will find three retired Korean navy vessels on display here, including a submarine. All ships have been converted into an exhibition space featuring the history of the Hangang River and the way people lived on board of these warships.

### Seoul Botanical Park

Visitors in this park are reminded of the importance of preserving plant species, particularly if they know that Seoul is doing everything in its power to remain a sustainable green city. It features a flower-shaped or flattened glass dome and a skywalk stretches across the upper canopy of the garden.

### Seoul from the table

Seoul is known for its incredibly tasty and healthy cuisine. There are many street food corners and you will find countless trendy coffee bars in the city's narrow streets. A few restaurants were given special attention by me.

#### Seoul in a nutshell

- ▶ A well organised city
- ▶ Little for conference organisers to worry about
- ▶ Extremely safe
- ▶ Good public transport, outstanding metro system
- ▶ Clean
- ▶ Colourful in every season

▼ Night view of Jongno District - © Elian Kars - EggHeadPhoto



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# The Journey of Discovering the **Russian Soul**

My first visit to Russia was a press tour in 2018. Feeling the lingering warmth of FIFA World Cup, I was impressed by how the entire country was devoted to this massive international sport-event. This time, I was honoured to be invited again and discover three different spots of Russia: Moscow, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. That's where I started my journey through the true meaning of the 'Russian soul'.

— Vivian Xu reports —

## Moscow, a landmark of national culture and history

I've always known Moscow as the capital of Russia, the political and economic centre that also stores its honourable national history and culture. Moscow became the country's cultural heart in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and gradually grew around the Kremlin from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was Russia's capital before Peter the Great moved it to St. Petersburg in 1712 and then again the capital of the Soviet Union after the Revolution in 1918. The city has witnessed Russia's up-and-down eras, which made itself truly a symbol of Russia's heritage.

During my visit, I have walked through one of the most popular public spaces in Moscow – **VDNH**, the largest exhibition, museum and recreational complex in the world. It is a unique city park consisting

of public parks, exhibition halls, amusement areas, etc. **VDNH EXPO** - a total event area of 324,000 m<sup>2</sup>, with two large trade fair pavilions, seven halls, a concert and congress centre offering 3,700 seats, is an ideal choice for events that require large exhibition spaces. But, if you are looking for smaller event venues, check out some original meeting spaces in the museums, you may be surprised!

I believe the history of a country has a strong impact on how its people are shaped today. Personally speaking, my impression of Russia can be summarised by the expression of 'Russian soul'. It was used several times by famous Russian writers such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. However, the definition varies. To me, the closest meaning of 'Russian soul' in Moscow is competitive and ambitious, like the one portrayed in the project of **Skolkovo Technopark (SK)**.

Celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, SK is the European largest innovation hub. Designed to host a home-grown tech-driven economy, the hub offers labs and flexible office space where businesses and academia can conduct research and test out innovative, marketable ideas. SK defined five areas of scientific focus: biomedical science, information technology, nuclear science, energy efficiency and space technology. As an excellent workplace, leisure facilities must be taken into account, including restaurants, coffee shops, retail places, as well as fitness centre, etc. SK aims at creating a healthy and energy-efficient green complex. As in 2019, there are 1,900 startups settled inside SK, creating more than 30,000 jobs and more than 20,000 innovative projects. "Skolkovo is a place for international cooperation, a channel for interaction between Russia and the rest of the world, for sharing human resources, ideas, contacts among





▼ Zilant

▲ Kul Sharif mosque in Kazan



▲ Fountain Friendship of Nations in Moscow

The republic is also aiming to develop into a global event centre. Last year, several big events chose Kazan as their host, such as WorldSkills 2019, Red Bull Air Race (for the third time), and Russia-Islamic World: KazanSummit. The 45th WorldSkills Competition took place in **Kazan Expo**, located next to the Airport (5-minute- walk) with a special pass directly linked to the Kazan International Airport. From the city centre to the EXPO, a 20-minute-drive or by the high-speed train where the train station is directly linked to the EXPO. The venue boasts a variety of facilities including a 3,000 seats concert-hall, a column-free indoor exhibition space fully equipped with utilities, multifunctional meeting rooms and conference halls with capacities ranging between 20 and 700 seats, comfortable catering and lounge-areas, and a large parking-zone and outdoor exhibition space.

Kazan is renowned for its vibrant mix of Oriental and Russian cultures. Predominant faiths of Kazan city are Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity. A must-see is the Kazan Kremlin, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where one of the largest mosques in Russia, Kul Sharif Mosque, a truly elegant and pure beauty, is located.

Another hidden gem is the **Kazan Palace by Tasigo**. Transformed from an old hospital with 110 years of history, it has been given a new life recently

talented young people. It is beyond today and tomorrow. It is about the day after tomorrow,” said Viktor Vekselberg, chairman of the board of director of Skolkovo Foundation.

TYPES	NUMBERS	SIZES
Atrium zone	1	8,600 m <sup>2</sup>
Atrium Capsules	4	50-100 people
Halls	11	50-550 people
Meetings rooms (fixed)	12	14 people

### Invest in Tatarstan!

Kazan, the capital of The Republic of Tatarstan, is not strange to me. The city was mentioned in a famous Chinese folk song, which I learnt as a kid thanks to the close relationship between China and Russia. I couldn't imagine that, nearly

20 years later, I would be visiting this charming land!

Along the Volga River, Kazan was an important trade centre in the late Middle Age. I believe this history deeply rooted in the culture and influenced the competitive attitude of the people whose mindset is driven by the goal of making significant achievements. If you ask me how I would identify the ‘Russian soul’ in Kazan, I would say: perseverance and determination.

Containing 42.3% of Russia’s polyethylene, produced 33.5% of Russia’s tracks and 28.3% of Russia’s tyres, tyre casing and inner tubes, Tatarstan is one of the most attractive industrial and innovative centres for investment in Russia. The republic shapes its well-developed investment infrastructure and offers federal tax breaks in seven areas of the republic.

as a design hotel. At my first glance of the hotel lobby, the sense of passion towards art in the interior design was immediately grasped. Walking through the lobby, I have reached the spacious bar and restaurant area. The clean glass roof invites the natural light and sunshine in. The industrial interior design style can be captured through the red brick walls, black-matt-metal shelves filled up by wildly-grown plants. What a lovely function area, I said to myself. The hotel is equipped with four separate meeting rooms and a chic and versatile crystal ballroom that can host from 150 to 550 guests.

During my stay in Kazan, I found my favourite dessert from the region and even had the privilege to make it myself! The Çäkçäk is made from unleavened dough cut into small strips and sometimes rolled into hazelnut-sized balls



▼ Monument of Salawat Yulaev in Ufa



▲ Lala Tulpan, Ufa

– which is more time consuming –, then deep-fried in oil. It can also be mixed with dried fruits or nuts, but my favourite is the one simply covered with local honey. Check it out if you too have a sweet tooth!

### Bashkortostan, a republic of natural resources

Located in the Western Russia, Bashkortostan lies between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains. It is the first autonomous republic in the Russian Federation. The capital city Ufa is its industrial, economic and cultural centre. Cold Siberian air masses severely affect the humid, continental climate of the republic. After having experienced the harsh temperatures here I could understand why the ‘Russian soul’ is so enduring and hardworking: you have to be tough to live through such conditions and still thrive forward.

The republic has a multi-industry, highly diversified economy with a focus on oil refining and production, chemical and petrochemical and agriculture. The Ufa State Petroleum Technical University has attracted a lot of students from home and abroad. Moreover, the abundance of private oil production and refining, high-tech service companies in the relevant fields have chosen Ufa

as their homes, such as Rosneft, Lukoil and Burintekh, etc.

Within a 15-minute-drive from the city centre, the complex of exhibition areas and conference halls **VDNH EXPO UFA** then appeared in front of me. Last year, Gas.Oil.Technologies-2019 and the Russian Petrochemical forum took place there. The congress and forum attracted about 400 local and international companies, as well as over 15,000 visitors and specialists. The event will take place again in May this year in the same venue. Consisting in four exhibition halls, three congress halls, an outdoor parking space and a rooftop parking area which can be used as exhibition or function area, VDNH EXPO has become the number one choice in Ufa for event planners.



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# Associations' new generation of leaders

## Value Driven and Hungry for Impact



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Koj is a Managing Partner of Akronos Consulting – a boutique consultancy in Brussels, VP Partnerships at Professional Women International Brussels (PWI Brussels), and recruitment and leadership Consultant at EARS – European Affairs Recruitment Specialists.

She helps individual clients to thrive by aligning their personal and professional vision and organisations to identify the best talent. She specialises in strategic communications, institutional relations and organisational leadership.



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Associations have not remained untouched by the increasing speed and depth of societal changes we're facing. This new reality - much more direct, digital and immediate but at the same time hungry for lasting impact and scalable results - presents great opportunities on almost all levels, but also numerous challenges that organisations are not always properly equipped to face.

One of the big questions that associations are grappling with these days revolves around building up the younger cohort of leaders and board members.

In order to attract and retain younger talent, organisations need to be able to structure their work and proposition around the unique dichotomy of today's world: more technology reliant but also greatly focused on delivering tangible value to the society.

Whether organisations carry a responsibility that goes beyond delivering benefits to its own shareholders or members is a topic for a separate reflection. Regardless of what one may think on the matter, there seems to be a growing expectation, in particular amongst younger generations, for organisations to take a clear stand on larger societal issues.

On the one hand, therefore, it is crucial to embrace solutions allowing for greater flexibility – in connecting and interacting digitally, in limiting burdensome processes, and finally in ensuring smoother (and quicker) decision-making. On the other hand, it remains a top priority to keep positive and long-lasting impact for the members and the broader society at the heart of the association's activities.

This is not to claim that values have so far been absent inside associations' boardrooms. However, the ability to drive positive impact and prompt tangible results is becoming one of the key attractors for young people considering leadership positions within associations. In the era of infinite opportunities and increasingly flat organizational structures, younger people consider board positions less frequently from a purely career-oriented perspective, and much more often based on whether they can be proud ambassadors of a given cause and see results of their engagement.

The roadmap is clear and based on two keywords: value and impact. The execution, as always, is more complicated and nuanced than that. I'd argue we can remain hopeful, however.

# Membership Engagement: Creating Possibility in Communities

**Jeffer London** speaks with the American author and consultant **Peter Block** about building community. Peter's books on community, stewardship and the consultative process have been informing grassroots leaders for 30 years. Active in many groups that rely on the personal goodwill, Peter is well placed to talk about how the power of invitation and possibility can transform engagement. In his book 'Community: The Structure of Belonging', Peter outlines six conversations (Invitation, Possibility, Ownership, Dissent, Commitment and Gifts) necessary to achieve a deeper sense of connection among members - in order to bring about a culture of possibility and generosity.




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## **Jeffer London: What is the possibility of community?**

**Peter Block:** Community is a place where people are connected and care for each other. There is belonging and a sense of identity. Social fabric like this does not just appear - it is woven over time, often in reaction to challenges and transformative events. For associations, the possibility is a view of the future that the members are all committed to.

## **JL: What needs to shift to create this possibility?**

**PB:** Gather around purpose. We are bred in problem-solving - when we gather to solve issues, we create 'to do lists'. Yet, if we gather around the question of identity, we create agency. Many management circles have a narrative based on measures and predictability, which can leave leaders feeling alone, discouraged, as if something is wrong, like they are not good enough. Imagine a narrative based on purpose. When we connect with each other through shared identity, we tap deeper meaning and

aspirations. This naturally brings about motivation, generosity, and a feeling that we have to do something because that's who we are.

## **JL: How do you go about changing the dominant narrative?**

**PB:** The future is created one room at a time. The narrative, and intention behind it, emerges from the conversations you have with your team that you have not had before. Declare what you see as possible as a compelling future, and invite your people into conversation. Ask: 'what crossroads do you find yourself at in this organisation? what possibility for the future inspires you?' By bringing people into dialogue about what is possible, and what they can take ownership for in that possibility, we start shifting the narrative. Ultimately, it is about creating something together that cannot be made alone - but it is easier for people to tackle incremental topics such as what they value, how they want to participate and how they see themselves in the future.

## **JL: What is the first step for a leader?**

**PB:** Self-reflection. If we are not in touch with what we feel and think, how can we expect others to be? We need to have our own view on the future and the possibilities it presents. We need to see how we have contributed to the current situation, and to own up to our responsibility for it. Having had the conversation with ourselves, we can then speak with our teams. It's a ripple effect. While we are authority figures, we need to show up for these conversations as representatives of shared identity, not from a place of power or position.

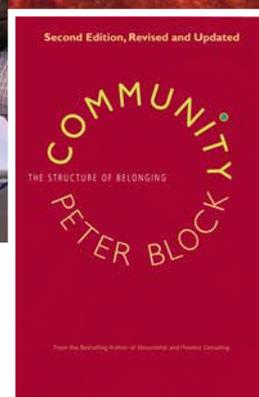
## **JL: What else does the leader's role imply?**

**PB:** Do you see yourself as a steward or a manager? The difference between stewardship and management is purpose. Fractions and divisions, in the world and in our communities, can make us feel fear and fragility. We need to get past the disappointment and ask not 'what should I do with my people?'





▲ Peter Block speaking at CommonGood



but to ask ‘what is emerging in you?’ As a steward, one guides people towards their aspirations – not to a vision statement – but to opportunities for fulfillment. Don’t take on the loneliness and isolation, focus on helping peers to find each other. Support people and initiatives that touch the associations core purpose. Energy is created when we rally around topics that touch us and make a difference for others.

**JL: What is the end game for associations? Is that the ‘member experience’ everybody talks about?**

**PB:** A system where people can connect, turn to each other, find shared passions. When we care about ideas and the people that have them, the community shifts it’s attention from deficiencies and entitlement to possibility and generosity – and members sense belonging.

**JL: How do you deal with members who leave?**

**PB:** Have the conversation about dissent, before people decide to leave your association. Act before it is too late. Before the churn, ask the question ‘how are we doing?’ Communities need space for dissent and you need to leave space for doubts about the organisation. Ask directly ‘what doubts do you have?’ Initiate conversations about resentments, lack of forgiveness and commitments that were once agreed upon but now feel heavy or wrong. You want to hear about issues in a forum where there is still some possibility, not in an exit interview.

**JL: How do you step-up engagement?**

**PB:** We all need many little things to be in place before we yes to taking on more. Lip service or an easy yes, is not what we want. In seeking wholehearted commitment, you are asking people to make a promise to the greater good and to the purpose. Before that happens, people need to have engaged with the purpose, internalised what it means for them, and see something inspirational for themselves in the future of the association.

**JL: What keeps you going?**

**PB:** I don’t want to live in a world without possibility. Faith – sustain my work in the face of adversity.

*For insights into membership engagement, see Jeffer’s blog about stimulating conversation at [jeffer-london.com](http://jeffer-london.com).*

*‘What is the new conversation that we want to occur’ is the question that sparks transformation one room at a time*



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# Cultural Diversity isn't a Challenge, it's a **Glorious Opportunity**

It's 2020. We can't keep talking about the 'new' century or even the 'new' decade, and certainly not the 'new' marketplace. We have to understand that the old ways of doing things - what we've always done with a couple of minor adjustments - aren't just 'old' any more. They are gone!



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mark Levin**, CAE, CSP has more than 20 years of experience as an association executive and is also an internationally-known speaker and consultant to the nonprofit and association community. He currently serves as Executive Vice President of the Chain Link Fence Manufacturers Institute, an international trade association, and as President of B.A.I., Inc., his speaking and consulting firm.



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We can't think about having to deal with cultural diversity as if it is only going to impact certain parts of our organisations, like our conferences and our educational programs. We can't think that putting check boxes on our registration forms for dietary needs means we're really thinking globally and expressing our empathy for people with different needs, beliefs, or cultures.

Associations should be among the leaders in embracing cultural diversity as part of our ongoing missions. After all, there are very few (if any) professions or industries which operate on an international basis that are completely homogeneous. If the people, industries, or causes we represent are multicultural, we should mirror them.

Why would we want to lose members, supporters, partner organisations, and resources just because we didn't make the effort to reach out to everyone who can benefit from, or add to, the work we do? Associations have always been catalysts for change and a true place for people to be part of their own community, whatever that is.

Here are five things your organisation can do to enhance the cultural diversity of your group in.

### 1. Have plan, not a prayer

Change won't come easily under any conditions, but it won't come at all unless there is a plan to make it happen. Don't put weak action items like 'seek' or 'attempt' in your plan. Show commitment to your efforts and confidence in your ability to achieve your goals. Praying for change rarely works. Planning for it and guiding it, usually do.

Be sure your plan includes buy-in from your key leadership right from the start. Don't form a 'diversity task force' if your organisation's leaders aren't already committed to the outcome.





Part of that plan, perhaps a major part at the beginning, should be taking your organisation to meeting destinations that will broaden your members' perspective on your industry, your profession and the world around them. Give members an experience they would probably never have if not for their affiliation with your group. Work with your destination property, the convention bureau, and especially the cultural ministry or other government agency to identify ways to make your event an opportunity for sharing and understanding with, and within, a different culture.

## **2. Start with training and awareness**

The concept of a more culturally diverse membership (and staff, and leadership) is one that most people will support. Getting them involved in the work to make it happen is a different matter. Don't rush into a diversity effort just to say you have one. Bring in professionals to train your staff and organisation leaders in what techniques, terminology and communication work best in your specific instance.

## **3. Be aware of the impact your efforts will make**

Yes, there will be some resistance to spending organisational resources on such an effort, there will be miscommunication among people and companies, and yes, there will be skeptics about whether the effort is a legitimate one or a symbolic one.

In spite of obstacles, there will also be rewards. Think about it – when your association commits to expanding cultural diversity in an intentional and professional manner, you are going to carry all of the participants in that effort along with you. You are going to open their

eyes to the value of being more inclusive and they will take that awareness with them back to their personal and

professional lives, their communities, and maybe even their spiritual beliefs.

## **4. Avoid the stereotypes and focus on the results**

Don't go into a diversity effort thinking that it is about having more languages to choose from or more people of color on your board. That's not what this is about.

Be able to communicate to all of your stakeholders how a more culturally diverse organisation is a natural stepping stone toward accomplishing your organisation's goals. It is not the only way to get there, but it can help and support many of the things you do to bring value to your members.

## **5. Make sure you are committed to the long-term**

A cultural diversity effort isn't a one-year project or a committee goal. It's going to take time and it's going to change frequently, to adjust to the realities of the modern world. Your meeting industry partners are terrific resources for guidance on implementation techniques. They see hundreds of groups going through the same things. They can give you pointers on what has worked for others.

Associations around the world have been change-agents for hundreds of years. The meeting industry has provided unique opportunities for people to experience learning and sharing in a safe, non-threatening environment for even longer.

What a great team we can be to make cultural diversity the norm, not the exception!



# ECM Helps DMOs Strategically Through Conferences

## When you stop learning, you start dying

European cities to discuss the importance of continuous learning for DMOs

Attendees of the ECM Spring Meeting in Graz, March 11-14, will take a deep dive into transformational leadership as well as up- and re-skilling with industry frontrunners, lead destinations and ECM knowledge partners. Participants will review the readiness of their own skills and those of their team and find inspiration to the journey to become a real ‘destination learning organisation’.

Europe’s city tourism is in a rapid transformation process from ‘volume’ to ‘value’, from ‘marketing for more’ to ‘matter and meaning for quality of life in the city’. Many destinations don’t ask anymore what city can do for more tourism, but what tourism can do for the city.

In this new paradigm, the modern DMO can play a paramount role as (co-) innovator and facilitator of cross sector partnerships in the multidimensional cityscape of art and culture, education, science and research, creative industries, hospitality and local communities. However, as the world of urban tourism

is changing, DMOs need to re-purpose, re-skill and adapt to the new reality that are stakeholder’s management, digital competencies, sustainability, community building and innovation facilitation.

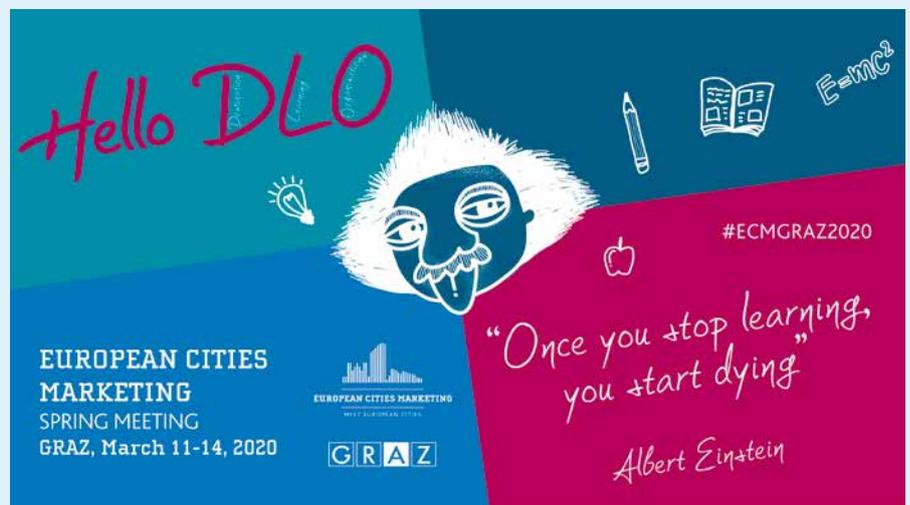
As Albert Einstein once said: ‘When you stop learning, you start dying’. Brain is like a muscle - the more it is used, the stronger it gets. People need to use it to

learn new skills and adapt themselves to what’s coming their way.

Stušek adds: “There will be talks about co-creation and involvement, idea generation, fundraising, advocacy, innovation facilitation, stakeholder management, community engagement, integrated urban planning and how to go from management to leadership.”

Registrations for #ECMGraz2020 are open on

[WWW.EUROPEANCITIESMARKETING.COM](http://WWW.EUROPEANCITIESMARKETING.COM)



## Powered by Culture

European cities are taking on the potential and challenge of the mutual relation between culture and tourism.

Attendees of the European Cities Marketing (ECM) International Conference in Poznan, June 10-13, will seek inspiration when speakers of leading museums, global brands and experience economy experts share their ideas on why culture is more than an optional and time-limited amusement.

Perhaps it is time destinations stop referring to certain groups of tourists as the cultural tourists as opposed to other groups of tourists. Maybe it is time to stop talking of culture as the fun side-event, as the offering outside meeting rooms or even as something that should be experienced in museums or art exhibitions.

Destinations should know better that culture is bigger than tourism. Tourists, whether for business or leisure, are not attracted by a simple offering of hotel room availability. What really matters is the promise of a distinct experience, of something that differs from the familiar and every day. It is a mosaic of cultural narratives, ideas, promises, performances, arts and politics that empower our destinations with cultural attraction.

Culture is what tips the choice between one destination or another. It's what shapes cities and destinations, forms

urban identity and enforces reputative quality. Culture is destinations' competitive advantage and the basis of a city's global position of influence and power.

From countries as the focus of Joseph Nye's original concept of 'soft power', describing a country's ability to influence others through persuasion, ideas and cultural attraction, to cities in focus as the core urban hubs of soft power through concentration of culture.

Culture in all its aspects is what gives a city a hard punch!

ECM president Petra Stušek says: "At ECM International Conference in Poznan 2020, the programme will unfold the soft power of cities as a hard-core competitive factor in creating unique visitor experiences, generating value beyond the city's hardware, creating legacy and building global influence, and sustaining community and collective identity."

Registrations for #ECMPoznan2020 will open soon on

 [WWW.EUROPEANCITIESMARKETING.COM](http://WWW.EUROPEANCITIESMARKETING.COM)

▼ Poznań (Poland)



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## Let's not Forget **Half** of the **World's Population**

How to get the next generation of association leaders to join the board and how to ensure a diverse member representation - according to **Michael Kern**, executive director of Dekon Group in Istanbul.

When I agreed to write this article, I thought of the next generation association leaders just as the Millennials. After some research, I found out that many associations are still stuck with boards of the baby boomer generation, having boards in their sixties and above. So where are the next leaders? Why are many of them still not at the helm of their associations?

Tara Withington shared how her organisation, Executive Director Inc. (EDI), a leading Association Management Company (AMC) in Milwaukee, focuses on a diverse leadership as part of each client's strategic plan. Tara stated: "If diversity is not 'strategic or top-of-mind', it won't happen." One particular client began a major investment in developing the next generation of leaders as far back as 2007. Over the years, this focus has led to a substantial shift in the

composition of the Board, which now includes 46% female representation and a greater presence of emerging leaders. These changes came about from several initiatives spearheaded by the Board to promote diversity. For example, in order to be more transparent on how to become leaders within the Society, the Association developed a comprehensive "Path to Leadership" outline. This document helps professionals and others interested in the field to learn how to become more involved in the Society, and how those activities could someday lead to a leadership role. The Board has also invested in a greater focus on professional development activities for all career stages and developed a leadership program to help promote women in the field. These types of activities can help bring about significant results in developing more diversity within the leadership of associations.



When speaking to the Secretary General of one of our AMC clients about getting a younger generation to join the board, I always hear that they are not interested, or are just focused on publishing articles, or have no time alongside their scientific careers. What we observe then is an aging board, often ultimately becoming a group of retired scientists, which has an even harder time to cope with new forms of communication such as social media, blogs etc. Getting the turnaround at this point needs a lot of energy and a deliberate strategy.

So let's talk about the most stereotyped generation, the Millennials. This generation, born between 1980 and the late 1990s, is usually described as lazy, poorly prepared and without aspirations. Several studies proved that these commonly held stereotypes about Millennials are wrong. According to the Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019, "The youngest generations are no less ambitious than their predecessors; more than half want to earn high salaries and be wealthy." Another study on Latin American Millennials indicates that 41% of them study, 21% work, 17% do both activities and 21% do not work or study.

So what can the millennials mean for associations? An earlier Deloitte Millennial Survey shows that "Millennials are also charitable and keen to participate in 'public life': 63% of Millennials donate to charities, 43% actively volunteer or are a member of a community organisation, and 52% have signed petitions." Let's not forget, today Millennials and Gen Zs make up more than half the world's population and, together, account for most of the global workforce. They are not the future, they are our present.

The keywords seem to be 'active onboarding'. Carol McGury, executive vice-president at SmithBucklin, suggests: "The value proposition needs to

be different – invite the nextgen voice to the table. Inviting individuals to participate in a meaningful dialogue will help shape the future of the association or organisation." Engaging them and inviting them to the table, rather than waiting for them to join, means that you engage them in the organisation and also help them shape their leadership skills. SmithBucklin has also found that there is less of an appetite for traditional paths, years of board service to eventually move to the chair or president position. SmithBucklin had great success as an organisation in creating meaningful nextgen programs resulting in board leadership. Giving nextgen individuals meaningful work to do on behalf of the organisation, inviting their voice to the table and showing them how their input would make a meaningful difference... at the end all this didn't take six years of service.

And, if we look to D&I, meaningful programs within the association ensure that the membership is representative of the industry. But don't forget to get a feedback about the onboarding process and continuously improve. Getting new blood to old boards means first to be strategic, but then to be open for change, and especially to be serious when giving meaningful projects and inviting to the table.

*This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Michael Kern, executive director of Dekon Group in Istanbul. For nearly 30 years, Dekon has been organising meetings of all sizes, worldwide, for their clients, who are global, regional and local associations, corporations, medical and technical societies, NGOs, NPOs and IGOs.*  
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# “**Latvia** is a baby that already has learned to crawl and has **huge ambitions**”

**Janis Astahovs** is the new Chairman of the board at Latvia Convention bureau and will work as general manager at the future convention centre ATTA CENTRE. HQ asked him what he has in mind for 2020 and further.



**How will you position Latvia in MICE industry? What is the main strength of the destination?**

In one sentence? A baby that already has learned to crawl and has huge ambitions. In MICE industry, Latvia is already known to the neighbouring countries as well as the Baltic region. Challenge has always been the venues with distinctive capacities for the MICE industry and it has actually played a very large role in highlighting Latvia as a MICE destination. Our main strengths would then be the affordability, accessibility, safety, reliability, large scale venues and availability of international hotels.

**What is the latest news in town? Any exciting upcoming projects?**

As the General Manager of one of the most exciting projects I have ever participated in, it is my distinct honour to present to you the largest convention centre in the Baltics - ATTA CENTRE, currently in its opening phase.

The total space of the ATTA CENTRE is 15,000 m<sup>2</sup>, whereas the height of the ceiling is 6,5 m. The centre allows to hold a variety of events: exhibitions, conferences, banquets, as well as cultural, artistic and sports events of any

**As a new leader of Latvia Convention bureau, what is your plan for the country?**

In my opinion, Latvia has a huge potential as an important direction for MICE tourism. It has always been a very hospitable country with admirable traditions of a great service. In the nowadays business set up, re-evaluation and innovation are a huge part of every company, where people appreciate great value for the money. Latvia has a long and challenging history behind it, and it is the storytelling that captures both the young and old people. The architecture, traditions, landscape and experience are among the many things that Latvia has to offer.

Unfortunately, it is an unknown destination for the rest of the world. So my plan is to make sure people around the world recognize Latvia and fall in love with it as their new MICE destination. I want to raise the prestige and interest on an international, regional and local level. To increase the potential of congresses and conferences in the city of Riga and throughout Latvia. To promote important sectors of the Latvian economy, including science and research, IT & technologies and manufacturing, for congress organisers by implementing Latvia Convention Ambassadors Program. To advance the profile, professionalism and business opportunities for our country.

For a long time, Riga could not host truly large-scale events. In 2020, however, the largest convention centre in the Baltics with an area of 15,000 square meters will open. This is the only place in the Baltics that can host a banquet for 3,070 people at the same time! I believe that ATTA CENTRE will be a strong argument in favour of attracting the attention of international organisers to our region.

**What is the biggest challenge you are facing now? How are you going to address it?**

I would have to mention a few challenges that I have faced recently. As any new business requires marketing, to get the name out through all channels and in all directions. The challenge is or has been for quite some time to get the name out as much as possible, because many people do not see Latvia as their destination. There are associations of an eastern European country with bad customer service and low quality of life. That leads to another challenge, that I have recently come across, that is the infrastructure for large conventions.

Infrastructure is a long term goal that requires a dialog with authorities, municipalities and government. Our job as Latvian Convention Bureau is to highlight this information to government officials with suggestions on how to overcome or improve the situation and how big of an impact and opportunity it creates to our country.



▲ The old town of Riga

our dishes are cooked by using natural eco products that are grown in a local farm and are beautifully served with German quality glassware and Swiss cutlery. No defrosted and microwaved ingredients are allowed to even touch the plates – we make everything from scratch.

A rooftop restaurant and an open-air terrace is another appealing asset and guests can enjoy their meal with a river-side view in the background.

ATTA CENTRE aspires to reduce its environmental footprint through continuous efforts: saving energy and water, recycling waste, purchasing products from environmentally friendly and recycled materials. In addition to our base operations, we consider it our duty to regularly conduct research and keep abreast of the current environmental issues.

### What does success look like for you?

As the industrial genius Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” In the modern ego-centric society, teamwork is very underestimated and, every time I think about it, it surprises me that people do not understand the power of teamwork. I am very proud of my team, their courage, work ethic and passion. It inspires me in my everyday life and motivates me every morning when I wake up to reach new heights together with them. Life is a one time offer, use it well.

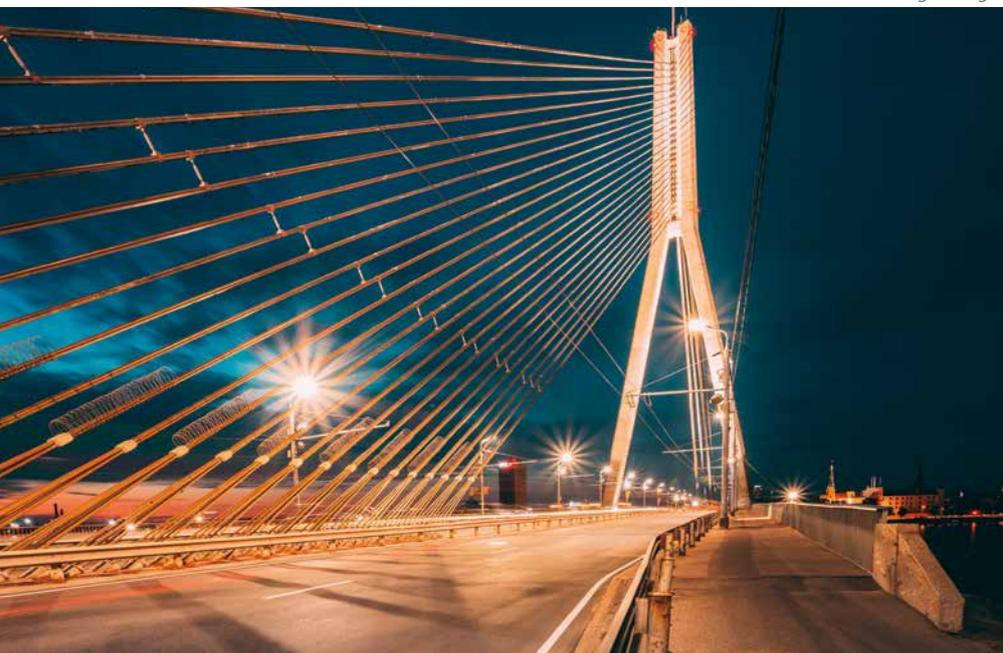
format. The location of the venue is a 15-minute drive from the city airport and a 10-minute drive from the city centre. The high-tech multi-modal system allows to change the whole geography of the entire first floor without the loss of the sound insulation quality. The lobby area covers 1,744 m<sup>2</sup>. The ceiling of the lobby is made in a way that allows banners and signs to be attached for branding of the events. The widescreen LCD screens at the entrance allow to display the latest information on the events, whereas the friendly reception staff will help the guests to find their way around.

The pride of the centre are three wide-screen displays that cover an area of

40 m<sup>2</sup> each. Complementary high-speed 1GB Wi-Fi, 20 000 lumen laser projector, international telephone communications, the most advanced digital signages, solutions for live streaming, break-out rooms with natural daylight, charging stations for electric cars. The centre is equipped with the latest security and fire safety systems.

ATTA CENTRE is the only place in the Baltics that can host a banquet for 3,070 guests at the same time, and our kitchen covers an area of 400 square meters. Full-cycle catering services are available for our guests: a varied menu for any event and for every taste. Off-site catering services are also available. All

▼ Vansu Bridge In Riga,



Latvia  Convention Bureau

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# Cultural Immersion and Lasting Legacies

For ICC Sydney, staging events is about more than the numbers. The venue is a champion of change and community, helping clients to make a positive contribution to the vibrant city of Sydney through our Legacy Program.

An Australian first, the Legacy Program is designed to help clients create a lasting impact – contributing to the intellectual and cultural capital of Sydney, long after the conclusion of an event, all while providing delegates with enriching experiences.

The venue’s dedicated Corporate Social Responsibility team work with clients to identify how they can advance the social and sustainability goals of their event, forge new partnerships with local organisations, or simply give back and connect to the community via five streams – First Australians, Creative Industries, Innovators and

Entrepreneurs, Generation Next and Sustainable Events.

## Formalising a commitment to Australia’s First Nations

Through the venue’s First Australians stream and driving greater engagement with, and acknowledgement of, Australia’s First Nations people, we became the first convention centre in Australia to launch a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in November 2018.

Setting a precedent for the industry, this initiative bolsters ICC Sydney’s ongoing commitment to recognise and celebrate

the cultures, practices and traditions of Australia’s First Nations within the venue and the events we host.

Australia is a land with a proud First Nation heritage and we pay respect to Elders past and present, and acknowledge the original custodians of the land, specifically the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation on whose land ICC Sydney stands.

ICC Sydney is firmly committed to celebrating and showcasing the cultures of Australia’s First Nations and, through our key memberships, offering connections to local First Nations businesses which clients can engage for their conference programs. Some of the highlights include incorporating an authentic Welcome to Country, arranging Darling Harbour precinct tours with respected First Nations Elders and working with artists and cultural performers.

▼ Kari Alumni Singers, Cultural Performance

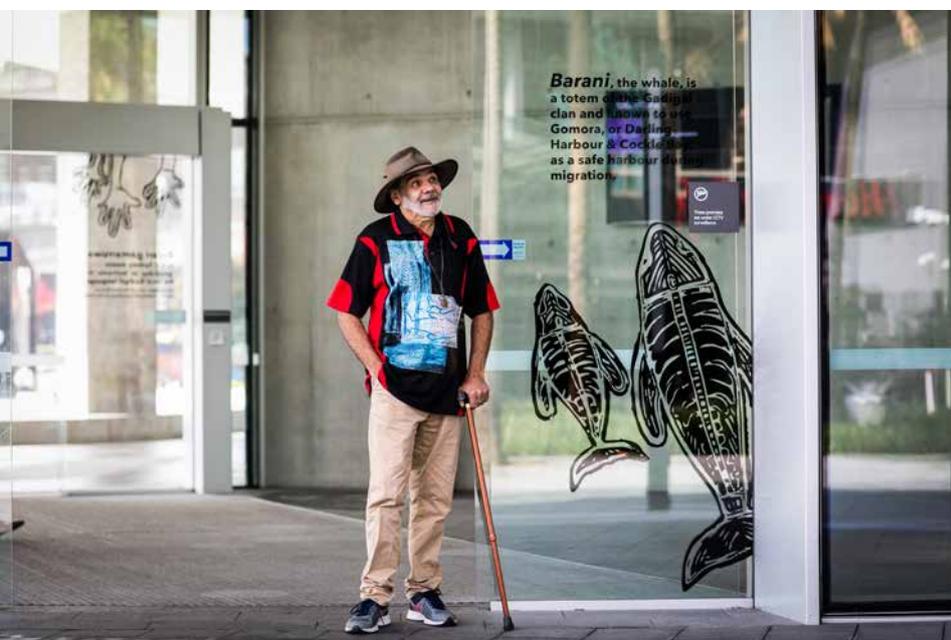


▼ Aunty Margret Campbell, Dreamtime Southern X





▲ Smoking Ceremony – Reconciliation Action Plan Launch



▲ Etchings of Gadigal, Acknowledgement Respect artwork by Jeffrey Samuels

**More Than a Venue**

ICC Sydney’s recent More Than a Venue campaign has been designed to showcase the unexpected, undiscovered and unique ways in which you and delegates receive more than a stunning venue when booking events with us.

At ICC Sydney, delegates can peruse Australia’s most significant collection of large format masterpieces by our most famous Australian painters in the gallery-like spaces outside each level of our convention theatres.

Visitors are welcomed by permanent First Nations artwork each time they walk through our doors and out into the thriving Darling Harbour precinct. Guests can also enjoy the best the region has to offer through menus which feature fresh seasonal produce and fine local wines and beverages in line with our Feeding Your Performance culinary philosophy.

Engage your delegates through ICC Sydney’s Creative Industries stream, providing closer engagement with the host community through people like Sara Mansour, Founder of Bankstown Poetry Slam, who make a difference through creative expression or engaging new talent for event performances and connecting with festival programs including Vivid Sydney and Sydney Festival. We very much see the venue as a showcase for all the city has offer.



**Sara Mansour,**  
Co-founder of Bankstown Poetry Slam

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# Overcome Fears to Grow Younger

Why do we still talk about change and adaptation, when new people come to businesses and organisations all the time? Isn't the change brought by the young enough? Or maybe we don't let them do what they should do, and we strive to teach them the old ways as quickly as possible? Is new blood enough for old boards?

In truth, many associations understand well that they need to diversify their board in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, experience, etc. This should be done in an attempt to get different perspectives and interpretations. It is, however, easier said than done.

A quick fix often applied is introducing a position or few for the young, into the society's governing body. The new person would become the source of internal youth, the one that will finally help align the organisation in the right, fresh path. But isn't that way too much pressure to put on some members just starting out their careers? And will they really be treated as promised?

By categorising and labelling members, boards often limit the benefits of having different perspectives and ways of thinking. They set expectations, but do they have a clear plan on how to use this green resource?

The first step is to overcome the fear of younger members having less experience and instead nurture them through training, set them in the right environment and care for them with the corresponding responsibilities - through which they will grow and embrace their full capacity. It has to be highlighted that those elected to represent the next generation have to be hand-picked and given room for error to keep the fire and passion that drives them.

Mentorship within the board is a way to ensure the continuity of the mission and vision of the association and its long-term plans. Uniform to the so called 'cathedral thinking', the intention is that the young board members will become the leaders of the association in the years to come and will continue its legacy. They will create the future that the forefathers foresaw. Therefore, investing in their skills and experience means investing in the future of the organisation.

The opposite here is also valid. Changing board members too often can result in ineffectiveness and lack of focus on long-term goals. Elect-positions can ensure a smoother transition and mentorship for the new board members when stepping in.

It is not about a face-lift and a new make-up for association boards. The true solution is to find a way for the vibrant, multicoloured members to be involved throughout, having their voices heard, making decisions and influencing the organisation's direction. This is the true path to creating an ageless association.



## ABOUT KENES GROUP

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# The Next Generation: How Associations can **Attract** and **Engage** with **Young Members**



Attracting the next generation is a key factor in the viability of any association. With the fast-moving nature of technology, associations are tasked with continuously remaining relevant enough to attract young professionals and having them on the executive board. Three partners from the World PCO Alliance - Nancy Tan of Ace: Daytons Direct, Andre Viotor of Bco Congressos and Gregg Talley of Talley Management Group - share some of the successful initiatives that their association clients are taking to ensure long-term viability and relevance in a changing world.

Attracting and leveraging younger members is, according to Andre Viotor, one of the most urgent challenges that associations must tackle. “The new generation has different expectations, which will have a major impact on how associations are successfully run in the future,” he says.

One solution that Andre proposes is the implementation of a “young professional advisory board,” which offers a voice to young professionals wishing to be active in the association and yet not ready or eligible to sit on the executive board. Rather than simply being appointed, members of this young professional advisory board would be voted in by their peers. Such a board has its eye on the future and how the association will serve younger generations with changing expectations. With this in mind, the board gathers feedback from the membership about which direction they would like to see the association grow in. The executive board would hold regular meetings with appointed representatives from the young professional

advisory board, who transmit their views and ideas. Andre feels that associations cannot afford to not set up a young professional advisory board. “Without one, associations are likely to fail in delivering to their members the expected benefits, value and return on investment.”

Along similar lines, Nancy Tan advises associations to develop a multi-generational engagement strategy, which would engage student volunteers as well as groom young leaders for the future. Associations need to discern the changes that students and young entrants want to see in their industry and what makes them tick. She also encourages associations to organise activities that can serve as opportunities to facilitate engagement between young members and their older counterparts. Examples may include a technology exchange with student volunteers or young leaders guiding seasoned members on how to use the latest technology as well as social media. The seasoned members, in turn, with their wealth of knowledge, can relate their experiences and know-how to

the younger members. This way, both member groups will not only gain better knowledge, but they will also understand each other’s diverse needs and requirements.

Gregg Talley agrees that it’s all about involving younger members and giving them a voice. “There’s one rule associations should live by. Don’t talk about a member segment you want to engage with or better understand: talk *with them*.” While Gregg agrees that focus groups and surveys are helpful tools in accomplishing this, inviting members to the table for a discussion about their perspective, wants and needs is even better. “We really recommend face-to-face sincere engagement,” he adds.

The primary question that associations must consider is best put by Gregg: “Traditional thinking will not enable organisations to leverage their younger membership. What is your organisation prepared to do to give younger members a voice and the value they expect?”



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