

Headquarters

JULY 2024 #115 BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY



Ariyana Convention Centre Danang

Leading the Way in Vietnam's
MICE Industry

SocialOffset

How to align an event with your
values

Convene 4 Climate

PCMA and SANCBE join forces
for climate action

MemberBoat

Digital marketing for responsible
associations

Standout Feature

Paris je t'aime

Olympic legacies & Sustainable
events by the Seine



SUSTAINABILITY OR GREENWASHING?



Events and conventions in a new dimension.

The CCH – Congress Center Hamburg is one of the largest and most cutting-edge convention centers in Europe, combining spectacular architecture and flexibility with the highest levels of sustainability.

Discover more:



Editor's Letter



THE GREENWASH DILEMMA

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

Organic, bio, eco, agro, natural, green, carbon neutral, climate-friendly – the list goes on. These and many other terms mark the beginning of a new era. The call of nature echoes daily in the media, shops, hotels, conference centres, restaurants – everywhere we go. Like many of you, I am, too, navigating this world of emerging values, grappling with the concept of greenwashing and the quest for authentic sustainability. Yet, sometimes, I question its authenticity. For example, when I ask about the origin of a fish in a restaurant, my question is often met with resistance. Is it wild-caught, farmed or imported? Lack of transparency is an example of greenwashing in the food industry. Surely, those in the food, catering and hospitality industries have a basic knowledge of the origin of their products. This brings us to the concept of ‘greenwashing’ – promoting new values without living up to them. It’s like lying for personal gain.

Greenwashing has become so widespread that governments in many countries have had to intervene. Consider the **Swedish Marketing Act**, which prohibits companies from making false claims and requires them to substantiate any environmental benefits they promote. This legislation aims to reduce the prevalence of misleading or inaccurate environmental claims. In Sweden, legislation such as the **Environmental Code** or the Marketing Act are important tools for the translation of environmental policy principles into practical action. They regulate environmental claims through rules on accepted marketing practices, prohibiting misleading marketing and ensuring truthful comparative advertising. They are also designed to protect consumers like us from falling victim to greenwashing.

Unfortunately, some businesses are still exploiting the lack of regulation in some areas of the sustainable movement, profiting without making a real contribution to the environment. As discerning consumers, delegates or visitors, we need to scrutinise the motives of businesses of all kinds, including conference centres and hotels, by reading between the lines. This is no easy task as the facts are not always clear, making greenwashing difficult to spot. Companies are well aware that not everyone has the time or inclination to seek out the truth.

So, Marcel, how do we spot greenwashing? By doing your research! Take, for example, a conference centre that boasts the virtues of sustainability. Their claims may be true, but it is wise to scrutinise all labels. Have they obtained any certifications to back up their claims? Profiting from environmental claims without taking real action constitutes a betrayal of nature. On the positive side, there are many companies and organisations that are genuinely investing in a better planet, better business practices and green projects. This is a promising trend: investments and initiatives that demonstrably benefit our planet are indeed the future.

In this edition of *HQ*, we invite you to discover, not just browse, the many examples and diverse initiatives that highlight real efforts towards sustainability and advocacy for effective, sustainable practices in our industry, whether they come from convention bureaux, venues, national or local governments, congress organisers, private or public organisations or individuals. There are many great ideas to take away and apply to your organisation.

Revitalised to Gold

CCH - Congress Center Hamburg Sets a New Benchmark for Sustainable Venues



Germany has long been a leader in sustainable development in Europe, setting new standards in many areas, including architecture and green building. The refurbishment and redesign of the **CCH – Congress Center Hamburg** is proof of this leadership, having received the prestigious Gold Certification in the Revitalisation category from the **German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB)**. Gold is the highest level of DGNB certification for an existing convention centre and underlines not only Germany’s and Hamburg’s commitment to sustainability and innovation, but also the CCH’s important role in setting new standards for venues and the meetings industry.

Originally built in 1973, CCH embarked on a transformational journey, undergoing a major upgrade and redesign. When it reopened its doors in April 2022, the venue unveiled a revitalised look with substantial sustainable improvements. The ambitious refurbishment was masterfully executed through the collaboration of **agn Leusmann** and **Tim Hupe Architects**, earning the CCH a Gold Certification. Sustainability was central to the CCH revitalisation from the very start. Compared to constructing a completely new building, the CO₂ emissions from the production processes for the modernisation and redesign of the new CCH – Congress Center Hamburg were reduced by approximately 50%. This amounted to about 25,000 tons of CO₂ saved in production. This achievement was crucial in achieving DGNB Gold certification with an overall compliance score of 76.7%.

Andreas Rieckhof, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economy and Innovation in Hamburg, said: “The CCH is one of Europe’s most modern convention centres. It is a key factor for the city’s economic appeal and positive image, and a centre of international scientific dialogue.” This emphasis on sustainability is reflected in every aspect of the CCH, from its architectural design to its operational practices. Additionally, Hamburg Messe und Congress is a signatory of the **Net Zero Carbon Events** initiative, which advocates for global cooperation within the events industry to jointly address and overcome the challenges of the global climate crisis.

The renovation includes eco-friendly and healthy building products, with 85% of wood products sourced from sustainable forestry. The meticulous selection of building materials was subject to rigorous scrutiny and qualification testing, with the result being outstanding indoor air quality test results. **Jan Zak, Auditor in charge of the CCH – Congress Center Hamburg**, noted, “For the purposes of DGNB certification, 837 construction products were inspected prior

to installation, and tested for suitability regarding material properties and formulation components as a pre-requisite for a healthy interior space hygiene, which has since been confirmed by conducting room measurements.” High-quality digital lighting and state-of-the-art event technology significantly enhance the user experience at CCH. Through the use of high-efficiency, dazzle-free LED lighting and strategically placed sun breakers for natural shading, the centre maximises energy efficiency and eliminates the need for energy-intensive air conditioning. **Architect Tim Hupe** highlighted the positive impact of this feature on the delegates’ experience, stating, “The horizontal ‘brise soleil’ sun breakers create a pleasant daylight mood and an excellent visitor experience in the new entrance hall and the Belvedere, which combines well with the fantastic view across the surrounding park landscape. The long horizontal brise soleil elements not only allude to the vertical ornamental strips but also protect against direct sunlight, producing a natural shading effect. Thanks to the smart control of the facade openings, it was possible to avoid installing an energy-intensive air conditioning system.”

Sustainable operations were also emphasised through digital alternatives to printed materials, limiting single-use items and promoting reusable or compostable utensils. 2,000 square metres of additional rooftop garden area have been created to improve the local microclimate and increase biodiversity. This green space adds to the extensive 45-hectare *Planten un Blomen* (Plants and Flowers) park that surrounds the

The DGNB at a Glance

The German Sustainable Building Council is Europe’s largest network for sustainable buildings. Founded in 2007, it offers a certification system that evaluates buildings on a wide range of criteria, including ecological, economic, and socio-cultural quality. The DGNB certification system is a global benchmark, ensuring buildings meet high standards of sustainability throughout their lifecycle.



CCH, offering delegates attending events at the venue a green refuge during their meetings, as well as a perfect view from the congress centre. The renovation of the CCH went beyond the building itself, transforming the surrounding area to make it more accessible and welcoming. The upgrading of the squares Dag-Hammarskjöld-Platz and Congressplatz means that there is now easy, barrier-free access to Dammtor station. This square has been landscaped with green areas and a fountain, making it a more inviting place for residents and visitors. The area has a special traffic concept optimised for cyclists, with numerous cycle racks, and can accommodate buses and VIP transfer vehicles during events. The Marseiller Street has been narrowed to create the Marseiller Promenade, adding two extra hectares of green space. Accessibility was another priority with features such as barrier-free access, audio induction loops, tactile guidance systems, visual warning systems and digital signage. Their goal was to ensure that every visitor and delegate, with or without a disability, would feel welcome and that these inclusive features would enhance their visit.

The modernisation of the CCH – Congress Center Hamburg was possible thanks to **Sprinkenhof GmbH**, a company integral to the venue's new Renaissance. "The revitalisation of the building, which originally dated from 1973, entails a transformation. Thanks to its timeless yet modern architecture that puts people at the centre, the CCH is not only designed to satisfy today's needs but also to cater to the needs of the future. One aspect we particularly cared about was to make the CCH both high-value and sustainable to be ready for future

challenges, and we are excited to see our efforts resulting in Gold certification by the DGNB," explained **Martin Göрге**, CEO of **Sprinkenhof**.

Johannes Kreißig, Chief Executive Officer of DGNB, praised the project's holistic approach: "The forward-looking way in which the legacy substance of the building was handled is of enormous importance in terms of sustainability and climate protection." A spokesperson of Hamburg Messe und Congress added, "The CCH uniquely combines the concept of ecological, technical, and social sustainability with daring artistic vision. The City of Hamburg's farsighted planning regarding the sustainability of the CCH has become a key element of our customer acquisition strategy."

The CCH's commitment to sustainability sets a new standard in the meetings industry and highlights the global importance of sustainable practices in reducing carbon emissions. This pioneering project demonstrates how existing structures can be revitalised to meet future sustainability goals, paving the way for more innovative and environmentally friendly convention centres worldwide. The CCH success story is a shining example of how sustainability can be seamlessly integrated into modern architecture, providing a model for other convention centres to follow and inspiring a global movement towards sustainable development in the meetings industry and also beyond our scope.

HQ

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THE ASSOCIATION
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SocialOffset

"We are moving
from a world of
brand loyalty
to one of
loyal brands"

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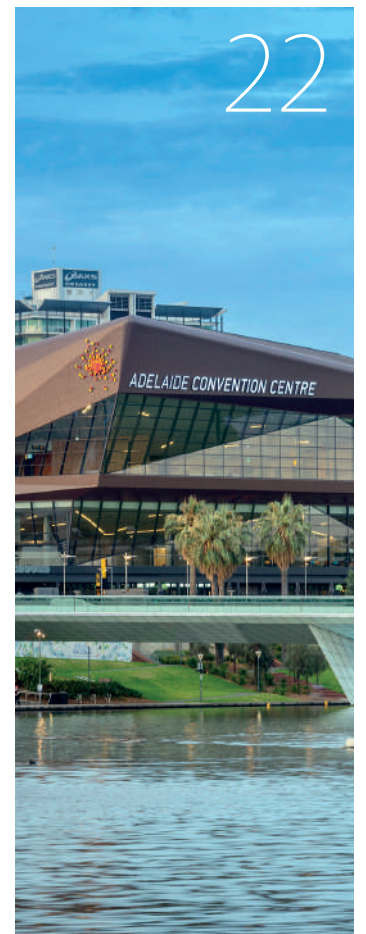
MemberBoat

"Associations are
prioritising a blend
of digital and
physical strategies"



Adelaide

Leading the global
sustainability
journey for
business events





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AUGUST 27-31, 2024

BRNO - CZECH REPUBLIC



ASSOCIATIONS AS ALLIES OF SOCIETY!

AUTHOR:
MANUEL FERNANDES,
HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

With each annual edition of *HQ*, we have tried to offer different perspectives on sustainability for associations, capturing practical examples of organisations and events that are showing themselves to be the strategic beacon of this vital trend for the MICE industry. How are European associations aligning themselves with the European Green Deal? What new sustainable requirements are being included in bidding processes and who is budging the needle between international associations and event destinations?

As **Mohamed Mezghani, Secretary General of UITP and new President of European Society of Association Executives (ESAE)**, tells us, “when we talk about sustainability, it’s important to distinguish between the association, its members and the sector in which it operates. What associations can do is identify measures to make the sector more sustainable, provide members with tools to support them in this, and ensure that the associations’ own activities are sustained.” Indeed, associations don’t have the power to impose sustainability measures on their members, but they can definitely promote the benefits of the sector in terms of sustainability, amplify its good practices and contributions to this cause, and employ a framework that encapsulates its three pillars: environment, society and economy. So, dear reader, have you ever wondered how your sector is contributing to a greener environment, to greater social inclusion, or even how it is moving towards a green transition and upcycling its resources on an economic level?

As **Mark Levin** writes in his opinion column, “Associations have a unique platform and numerous opportunities to be on the leading edge of the sustainability movement worldwide,” and this platform can be perfectly stretched to create awareness among the sector’s policymakers

and offer legislative opinions that unite society with the boards, decision-makers and strategists of each sector. Because, as is widely accepted these days, in order to craft a concise and clear message about sustainability, it is necessary to integrate it into the association’s mission and its advocacy roadmap. You need to build a communication plan that can convert technical, sector-specific language so that the media, politicians, environmental organisations and wider society can grasp and really understand what your organisation is implementing in a positive and meaningful way. Figures, facts and legacies. The days when associations only lived in the bubble of their sectors and councils are numbered. We see this in sustainability actions, but also in social impact, constant technological breakthroughs and the labour market.

Therefore, the relevance of sustainability as a core issue today depends essentially on a genuine commitment to social practices, Corporate Social Responsibility and the pyramid that runs from our sectorial leaders to the users and customers. Since, as Mr Mezghani argues in favour of his transport sector and drawing on his association, “Often what citizens associate with public transport are strikes, pollution and sometimes a lack of safety. We need to convey a more attractive, cleaner and safer image of the sector and emphasise what it brings to our economies, the most successful examples of green transport and the impact it has on our society.” In other words, it’s not just about scientific facts and technical language. It’s about public perception and industries as allies of society. Associations as allies of society!



HQ ESSENTIAL

INTERVIEWS & STORIES



We are moving from a world of brand loyalty to one of loyal brands

In 2019, when **Elena Gerstmann** returned home from a business trip, she faced a dilemma. Wanting to grab a snack along the way, the only option available at the airport was a restaurant that she had ruled out for years due to its anti-LGBTQ+ financial support. Fast forward to 2022, and her wife **Beth Surmont** attended a conference in an American state that had recently passed an anti-LGBTQ+ policy. Both questioned whether they should boycott both the restaurant and the conference, until it struck them: wouldn't it be better to create a platform that would help delegates donate their money to offset expenses that went against their core values?

Thus, **SocialOffset** was born, a non-profit organisation providing a socially conscious alternative to boycotting events and destinations, enabling individuals to align their values by donating to local charities.



Should delegates be at the centre of an association's social decisions?

They have to be considered. One of the things we have to do as organisations, from SocialOffset's perspective, is validate people's feelings. We've moved from a world where we talked about brand loyalty to one where people expect loyal brands. What does this mean for associations? Well, I think it's impossible to thread the needle, to get it perfectly right, but as companies or non-profit organisations, we have to be aware of what's going on. We can't stick our heads in the sand and hope that nothing happens. It's important to listen to what our delegates have to say, and how they align in terms of values, so that we can communicate socially and make decisions based on loyalty and connections to our organisations' core value. However, it's almost impossible to make decisions based on what all your constituents want, so whatever you decide, you're not going to make everyone happy.

What social impact priorities do associations in the United States expect from you?

Our first inclination was towards LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive rights, and racial injustice. As we developed our minimum viable product by talking to locals and

participants, we added hunger, housing insecurity and environmental concerns. These were chosen to ensure that we had a range of causes that people could align and identify with. Another reason is that they are universal. When we travel to face-to-face events, we know that, far too often, this has an environmental impact. We also know that on the way to a hotel, we come across hungry and housing insecure people. And then, when we enter a convention centre, we notice the enormous food waste left between sessions. It's in our faces! It's true that participants and exhibitors go to an event to advance science, culture, and the mission of the organisation hosting it. We're finding cures for diseases at our conferences and innovations at various levels. That's why face-to-face is so important. But as participants, what are we doing to make the world a better place? Through our vetting process, it is with local charities that SocialOffset makes its impact. Locals who know the problems and are putting up what we call "the good fight" are the best ambassadors to help leave the place better than we found it.



Do you think that the event of the future will be inseparable from the social impact it will leave on a place? Can a well-structured event survive without causes?

(Silence) I don't know. If you think about society, the environment and bringing people together, we're operating in a very complex world. My background is in social psychology, which has to do with connecting people, groups and networking. When you put two budding scientists, doctors or engineers in a room interacting about something that could spark a 40-year collaboration, that can make a real difference and change the world. Can it happen virtually? Yes, but it certainly won't have the same level of impact and complexity. What we have today is the desire to call it out. Maybe 50 years ago, we might have had a room full of men because women had left the industry due to sexual harassment. Just because we didn't talk about it doesn't mean it didn't exist.

Then, when we talk about the accessibility of people who are unable to travel due to disabilities, whether it's a physical, social, or economic limitation, we have to address that as an industry. We still haven't found the right business model to include these delegates. As it is, we deal with business models that depend on physical space but also on virtual networks, since for many non-profit organisations their bottom line depends on their conferences.

How do you interpret the duality between impact and influence and what is legacy for you from the perspective of a social advocate?

I think about impact, influence, and then intent. And I think that intention is sometimes forgotten, both by companies and organisations, but also when it comes to people. So, how do they apply what they think is right to make an impact? Especially those in power and who start from a position of privilege. If we talk about myself, I'm a white, educated, upper-middle-class person with influence. How do I use that to make a difference? Nevertheless, in other spaces or contexts, I'm not a person with great power. I'm a lesbian of Jewish descent who grew up under social services in my early years. From this point of view, on most days, everyone comes in and out of privilege and influence. How do we use that to become better people? Beth and I created SocialOffset as a way to make a difference in the world. I see the world more through social justice, while Beth sees it in terms of meetings and the way people hold face-to-face events.

In your opinion, was the pandemic the spark that set off this social dialogue or, on the contrary, do you see associations returning to the old business-as-usual frame?

I think the conference space has improved because of the pandemic. It shook us up at a time when we were dealing with Black Lives Matter, the anti-racism movement and other social phenomena that were happening in the world. It forced us to stop doing things the way we had always done. I know many associations that are rethinking their objectives, target audiences, learning methods, venues and event duration. At the same time, some of the problems we face haven't really changed. I hope we're moving forward and making progress every day in terms of teaching and learning. As they say, you never step in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and you are not the same as well. So, I think COVID has definitely changed some things.

Do you think the associations you have worked with have a clear picture of what they want to achieve at this level?

I think it means something to some associations, while others persist in ignoring it. Those say that they have other priorities, that all they care about is the 'green pen,' the business side of it. On the other hand, we see other associations who understand these social aspects but who tell us: "We'll carry on doing things the way we're doing because it's worked for us so far." Then there are the associations that try to live up to a purpose. They have values even if there are ranges within those values. We know, for example, that there are some association Boards in the US that only use these criteria once they have chosen their location.

We also know that there are some associations that aren't talking publicly about the issue, but are promoting silent boycotts by rejecting certain locations. Finally, there are some who also tell us that they prefer to go virtual because of this social confusion. The danger for me, because I value face-to-face, is that these organisations simply throw up their hands and give up on setting good examples. I think clarity looks like organisations selecting the right mode of delivery that aligns with their mission and objectives, validating their attendees' value, and working with SocialOffset (yes, I'm biased) to make the world a better place - one event at a time.

“

As we're talking now on screen, I feel connected to you, but would I feel more connected if we were in person? I'd say yes.



How Can *Universities* Serve as *Strategic Partners* for Your Destinations?

In a significant step for Prague's MICE sector, the **Faculty of International Relations of the Prague University of Economics and Business (PUEB)** and the **Prague Convention Bureau (PCB)** have entered into an exclusive cooperation agreement, marking a new chapter of opportunities for students and professionals in a dynamically evolving local industry.

In our industry, universities can provide various opportunities for collaboration. For example, emerging professionals can benefit enormously from the learning opportunities of a conference, while at the same time providing industry representatives with the chance to network with future leaders in a particular field. This memorandum of cooperation consolidates the joint work between Czech academia and the practical experience of the meetings industry, offering students unique opportunities for internships, practical training and involvement in research and education projects in direct partnership with industry professionals.

“The collaboration between PUEB and PCB started already back in 2016 when a joint project of the course called Introduction to the Event Management started,” tells **Roman Muška, PCB Managing Director**. The course aimed to provide students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to organise all sorts of events, with a special focus on the organisation of international congresses and conferences. “As this course was optional only and there was no possibility of internal promotion at the university, there were just a small number of students attending it in the past. With the new leadership at the Department of Tourism in the Faculty of International Relations, we agreed to deepen our previous collaboration in order to increase awareness about business events and their importance.”

Raising awareness about the MICE industry and business events is crucial not only because many people left the sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also because MICE is an important cog in the engine of Prague's economy – an industry that is a priority for Muška over the tourism sector: “We have a long-term collaboration with some universities in our Ambassador Programme, but in this case the main goal is to create a new generation of young professionals through quality education, an internship programme and greater cooperation in research and other projects with professionals in the meetings industry.”

Key aspects of the cooperation:

- **Exchange programmes and internships for students:** Students of the Faculty of International Relations will have access to exclusive internships and job opportunities within the meetings industry sector, offered by the PCB and its member organisations.
- **Joint research and educational projects:** The collaboration will focus on joint research and the development of educational programmes that reflect the sector's current needs and trends.
- **Expert lectures and workshops:** Industry leaders and experts from the PCB will regularly contribute to the educational process at the Faculty of International Relations through guest lectures and workshops.





“

We have a long-term collaboration with some universities in our Ambassador Programme, but in this case the main goal is to create a new generation of young professionals through quality education, an internship programme and greater cooperation in research and other projects with professionals in the meetings industry.

When assessing the attractiveness of a destination, one of the key factors is public-private collaboration, and universities can provide enormous credibility in this regard. Often, the instigator of a bid to host a conference is a university or research centre; they are usually key partners at the start of the bidding process, and the vitality of change-makers and innovators contributes enormously to the success of a bid. “One of the great examples of collaboration with ambassadors from different universities was our recent candidacy for the **52nd World Chemical Congress of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry**. For the first time in the history of the event, two national chemical societies – the Czech and the Slovak – submitted their candidacy for the world’s most important congress in the field of chemical sciences together,” adds Muška. “Moreover, on the Czech site was the bidding team created by representatives of the **Charles University, University of Chemistry and Technology Prague (UCT Prague)** and **The Czech Technical University** in Prague. Right after this successful collaboration, we presented this case study at the seminars for potential congress ambassadors at the UCT Prague.”

The stronger the university’s policy on supporting conference applications, the more successful the destination will be in attracting an event. Especially since by encouraging teachers and researchers to actively participate in organising events and getting involved in

various committees, they are also promoting the university as such. “Our universities organise conferences of different kinds on a regular basis. When it comes to international conferences of a larger scale, specifically those that cannot be accommodated within universities, we, as the convention bureau, are usually involved. Nevertheless, not all university professors are aware of our existence and all kinds of support they can get either from us or the city of Prague. Therefore, we regularly organise seminars for the current or potential future congress ambassadors at our local universities. The best supporters on these occasions are our already existing ambassadors, who share their experience in bidding and congress organisation with their peers.”

Within this conference culture, companies are also playing a more active role in training talent and adopting an educational perspective as an active training centre. In other words, an alternative to universities in terms of training human resources. “The current memorandum also includes internships in companies related to business events, such as DMCs, PCOs, congress venues, conference hotels and any service providers involved in the MICE sector. The main aim of this activity is not only to show the attractiveness of our industry to university students, but also to explore and further develop young talents who will stay in the business and respective companies also after their internships,” concludes Muška.



Convene 4 Climate

PCMA and SANCBE Unite for Climate Action in the Meetings Industry

Announced at **IMEX Frankfurt 2024**, the upcoming **Convene 4 Climate** conference, scheduled for 2-3 October 2024 in Barcelona, is designed to shake up the meetings industry with its focus on sustainability and climate action. This key event is the result of the collaboration between **PCMA** and the **Strategic Alliance of the National Convention Bureaux of Europe (SANCBE)**, marking a major step forward in the industry's commitment to environmental responsibility.

HQ's **Editor-in-Chief, Marcel Vissers**, first picked up hints of the joint PCMA-SANCBE conference at last year's **PCMA Convening EMEA** in Copenhagen, where the event's theme, "*Let's Collaborate. Let's Grow. Let's Belong*", laid the foundation for this year's strong focus on sustainability. Marcel's early interest in the development of this conference clearly flagged its potential for significant impact, asking *HQ* to follow its progress closely and our publication's anticipation has only grown since then.

This year's **Convene 4 Climate** conference in Barcelona will focus on three main themes: **Reimagine**, **Inspire**, and **Movement**. These themes will be explored through sessions, workshops,

and discussions aimed at fostering innovation and collaboration. The ultimate goal is to inspire stakeholders in the business events industry to adopt sustainable practices and create game-changing solutions to address climate challenges:

The **Reimagine** theme will focus on future ideas, preparing industry professionals to make informed decisions and take immediate action. Participants are encouraged to think beyond

The SANCBE was founded in 2014, and has become a network of 29 national destination marketing organisations. They have become a collaborative industry platform working together to strengthen Europe's position as a leading destination for international business events.

current paradigms and envision a future where the meetings industry plays a key role in addressing environmental issues.

The **Inspire** theme will take delegates on a journey to co-create a future in which every event promotes sustainability and provides new inspiration. Participants will learn how to integrate sustainability into their events, making them both environmentally responsible and sources of inspiration.

The **Movement** theme will focus on navigating uncertainty and creating a community of practice to build the business case for investing in sustainability. The conference seeks to create a supportive environment where participants can share their experiences, challenges and successes to accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices across the industry.

Sherrif Karamat, CAE, President and CEO of PCMA and CEMA, stated, “Together with SANCBE, PCMA is co-creating a way forward for a regenerative future that empowers the global business events industry to continue to operate in a common-sense way while driving positive change for a new economy. Now is the time to embark on this transformative journey to reimagine the future, inspire sustainable progress, and ignite a movement towards a more resilient tomorrow.” His words speak to the importance of the conference as a movement to set new standards for sustainability across the business events sector. For example, the two-day conference will showcase innovative technologies and approaches that can boost the sustainability of events, from renewable energy solutions to waste reduction techniques. This practical focus aims to provide examples that can be applied across regions and cultural contexts.

Another key aspect that will contribute to the success of the conference and certainly increase its global reach is the partnership between PCMA and SANCBE. Their collaboration was instrumental in bringing the Convene 4 Climate conference to life, proving the power of cross-continental collaboration in addressing global challenges.

SANCBE Co-Chairs Matthias Schultze, Managing Director, German Convention Bureau (GCB) and Eric Bakermans, Director Marketing Meetings & Conventions, Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC): “Business events offer platforms for addressing complex issues, and they act as crucial catalysts for successfully merging sustainability and digitalisation. Europe, as a hub for meetings and conferences, leads this twin transformation with initiatives such as the European Green Deal, offering not only a consistent strategic framework, but also avenues for practical solutions. To invigorate our collective mission,

it is now vital to synchronise our efforts and, above all, find inspiration in one another.”

In Barcelona, attendees will explore future scenarios and creative solutions around the intersection of climate-tech and the world of business events in relation to the challenges we are facing. The Convene 4 Climate event will serve as a living laboratory, bringing together the meetings industry and adjacent sectors to meet for action in a workshop solution-driven content. The programme is designed for high interaction, mixing climate-tech project explorations, keynotes and workshops. From sustainability leaders to decision-makers, the audience will focus on finding tools, technology, skills and people to propel better decisions and the ability to incorporate sustainable practices and act now. This inaugural event is set for a highly curated audience where we can focus on the quality of the interactions between communities, and assess to multiply coherently while inspiring optimism to transform what we offer and how we operate and produce.

With the growing urgency of climate change, the event’s focus on sustainability is timely and essential. The conference aims to create a ripple effect that will influence the sector for years to come by bringing together a diverse and influential group of industry leaders, innovators and sustainability experts. The thoughtfully designed programme will encourage meaningful discussion, collaborative problem-solving and the creation of actionable strategies. Those interested in learning more about sustainability’s local and global impact and attending the conference are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest form.

The Convene 4 Climate conference will serve as a landmark event for the meetings industry. It is an opportunity to reimagine the future, inspire action and create a movement towards sustainability. We look forward to the groundbreaking ideas and partnerships that will emerge from this event and remain committed to supporting and driving these efforts for the benefit of our industry and our planet. This is more than just a conference; it is about sparking a global movement that embraces sustainability at its core. The cooperation between PCMA and SANCBE is a brilliant example of what can be achieved when we join together for a common cause.





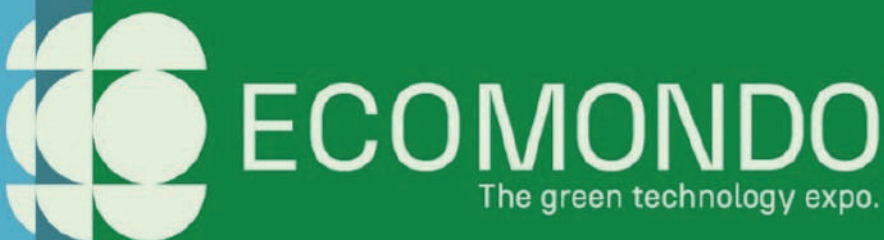
From 5th to 8th November, **Ecomondo**, Europe and the Mediterranean basin's leading event for the green and circular economy, will be back at **Rimini Expo Centre** to meet the objectives of the **European Green Deal**. The tradeshow will be a place for meetings, work sharing and training where the institutional, economic, scientific, academic and association worlds will play an active role in the national and international green transition.



Innovation, Technology and *Best Practices* of the 27th Edition of Ecomondo

Sustainability and ecological transition are consistently strategic areas for the competitiveness of companies and associations on the international stage. In 2023, Italian exports exceeded 660 billion euros with the sustainability segment as the driving force, a figure that is expected to rise by a further 10% this year and by an average of 14.1% over the next two years. These organisations will be the protagonists of the **27th edition of Ecomondo**, which will take place from 5th to 8th November at the Rimini Expo Centre, a tradeshow organised by the **Italian Exhibition Group (IEG)**. Delegations from 120 countries and 60 international trade associations are expected to take part in this edition to facilitate best practices and perspectives on green transition solutions in Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa. Ecomondo will, therefore, be an opportunity to promote green brands and affirm commitment to the fight against climate change well beyond simple business-to-business. “We see that all companies, even those not directly related to biodiversity, are investing in sustainability because they make it a matter of business risk for the future. If ecosystems aren't protected, companies won't be able to grow. Ecomondo acts as a catalyst for this transition, offering concrete solutions and cutting-edge innovations for the benefit of the planet,” says **Alessandra Astolfi, Global Exhibition Director of the Green and Technology Division at IEG**.

After last year's record-breaking edition, Ecomondo 2024 will once again present studies and projects from Europe and the Mediterranean basin for technologies, services and industrial solutions in the green and circular economy sectors. A centre for research and innovation, the tradeshow will be a place for sharing and interpreting the policies of the European Green Deal, where experts, decision-makers, and many professionals from the sector will discuss the challenges and opportunities linked to environmental issues and sustainable policies. It will also serve as a networking platform for research and innovation funding, and academic opportunities resulting from this new Green Deal. “To compile our programme, we rely on the valuable input of our 80-member Scientific Technical Committee, which constantly explores the main technological, regulatory and market developments in the main sectors of the green economy. This committee, together with the feedback gathered from our institutional and corporate partners, has enabled us to respond effectively to the requests and needs of the hosted buyers,” says Astolfi. To put this event together, Ecomondo collaborated with 110 partners, 35 of them international, including government institutions, trade and investment agencies, universities, industry associations and environmental organisations.



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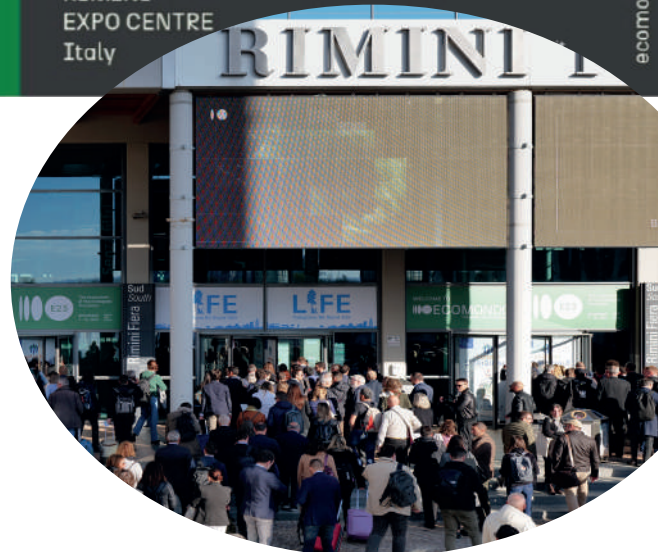
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This 27th edition has been designed with a precise focus on technology and innovation in terms of content, logistics and operations. “Our goal is to set an example of a more circular economy by showing how digital advances and technological innovations are key to achieving the climate action goals.” In terms of content, they have decided to converge on cutting-edge themes such as **Big Data, artificial intelligence, the new space economy, agriculture 4.0 and urban mining**. “These premises will be the focus of numerous conferences, seminars and workshops, offering participants a comprehensive overview of the latest trends and the most innovative solutions for the ecological transition.” The event is divided into six core macro-areas, namely **Waste as a Resource, Water Cycle and Blue Economy, Circular and Regenerative Bioeconomy, Bioenergy and Agroecology, Site and Soil Restoration and Environmental Monitoring and Control**. “This subdivision reflects the many aspects of the ecological transition and provides a comprehensive picture of the sector’s business opportunities,” she says. Ecomondo recognises the fundamental importance of international associations in proposing relevant issues and content for the event. “Ecomondo’s partners are the main trade and industry associations representing all industrial and service sectors related to the ecological transition, green innovation, the circular and green economy.” Associations are invited to present their research, take part in round tables and organise special events or workshops in synergy with other partners. “In addition, Ecomondo has programmed a series of in-depth sessions and seminars designed specifically for associations. Our aim is to create an environment where the needs of companies, institutions and associations can be met together, promoting an integrated and cooperative approach to sustainability and the green transition,” adds Astolfi.

Moreover, the tradeshow will also offer a space for dialogue on the sustainability challenges and green socio-economic development on the African continent. “In line with the Mattei Plan, an important investment project on African territory initiated by the Italian government, we have planned a specific space for events dedicated to cooperation with African countries. Our aim is to actively involve local entrepreneurs, thus transforming cooperation into real co-planning.” And it doesn’t stop there: “Our mission is to act as a community catalyst for the green economy on an international scale, a role that doesn’t end on the days of the event, but extends throughout the year thanks to a series of international events in which we are actively involved as organisers, co-organisers



and partners.” In this context, Ecomondo will also expand its business through joint ventures in the United States, the United Arab Emirates, China, Mexico, Brazil and India, as well as two international events such as **Ecomondo China – CDEPE** and **Ecomondo Mexico**. “Ecomondo’s internationalisation is not just about business, but also about science. One of our objectives, for example, is to promote the publication of research and studies in high-impact international journals.”

The exhibition layout will be renewed and extended. In fact, the construction of two new temporary halls will take the exhibition area to 137,000 square metres. Five exhibition districts will feature projects targeting vertical industries, including the **Textile District**, which will candidate Ecomondo as the capital of ethical fashion; the **Paper District**, a meeting place for all players in the paper supply chain; and the **Blue Economy** area to minimise negative impacts on the marine ecosystem and promote its resilience and regeneration. These will be joined by the **Innovation District**, where 30 start-ups will be exhibiting in the **Start-Up & Scale-Up** area, while the **Green Jobs & Skills** project will create a space for dialogue between job supply and demand in the fields of sustainability, training and orientation opportunities. Generation Z will also be the focus of attention with the second edition of the **Lorenzo Cagnoni Award**, which will be bestowed on the three most innovative start-ups. “Exhibitors and buyers attending Ecomondo will see a major event that not only talks about sustainability, but is actively working to reduce its own environmental impact. As of the 2022 edition, Ecomondo has had ISO 20121 certification, which acknowledges our commitment to adopting circular economy models,” Astolfi concludes.

STRATEGY

TEAM WORK

MARKETING



“The blend of *digital and in-person event strategies* will keep associations ahead of the curve”

Olena Lima is the **Founder and Principal Consultant of MemberBoat**, a Sydney-based digital marketing agency dedicated to helping professional associations and other membership organisations embrace emerging digital marketing tools. She started working with associations 15 years ago and quickly fell in love with the sector. After seven years, she founded MemberBoat and is also the host of the **Membership Marketing School** and the **Association Hub Podcast**. We couldn't miss this chance to sit down with her and exchange a few words:

What are the priority factors in the decision-making of the associations you work with?

In today's landscape, if you're not embracing digital tools now, you're already behind. It doesn't necessarily mean you have to transform all your events into digital or hybrid - people need and love face-to-face interactions - since digital interactions begin well before the event itself. This may include registration or Expression of Interest online forms, social media and newsletter promotions, speaker submissions and registrations, online discussions prior and after the event, and so on. Digitalisation plays a crucial role in making events more accessible for those who can't attend in person, making associations more inclusive. The trend towards digital growth has not been held back by the return of the 'old normal.' Instead, it has complemented traditional event planning, offering a more integrated and comprehensive approach to member engagement and event management. Associations are prioritising a blend of digital and physical strategies to maximise their reach and impact, ensuring that they cater to diverse member needs.

If we talk about the conference of the future, what new networking space are we talking about? What will be the third evolution to emerge from online and hybrid?

With emerging technologies, we're moving towards immersive experiences that seamlessly blend physical and digital elements, making events more engaging, interactive, and memorable. In my view, the third evolution of conference technology will likely focus on creating personalised, AI-driven experiences that anticipate and meet attendee needs in real time. This means leveraging data analytics and machine learning to provide customised content, networking opportunities, and recommendations that adapt to the attendee's journey throughout the event. For example, if an attendee shows interest in a particular topic, the AI system could dynamically adjust their schedule to include related sessions or suggest relevant exhibitors to visit. This level of personalisation enhances the attendee experience, making it more meaningful and valuable. Moreover, integrating these technologies will make events

more accessible and inclusive. This inclusivity not only broadens the reach of the event but also enriches the diversity of perspectives and experiences, making the event more valuable for all participants.



The future of conferences lies in harnessing the power of emerging tools. By blending physical and digital elements, we can transform how attendees engage with events, making them more impactful and memorable.

How can we move from a “content is king” context to an experiential era through emotional involvement?

Events have never been just about content. They’re fundamentally about people, connections, and emotions. The more opportunities event organisers create for meaningful interactions and unforgettable moments, the more successful the event will be. Technology plays a pivotal role, it’s not the core of the event. Instead, it’s a powerful enabler that enhances efficiency and allows organisers to focus on what truly matters – people interactions, emotions, and creating memorable experiences. For example, interactive technologies, such as live polling apps or Q&A platforms, can make sessions more engaging by allowing real-time audience participation. Similarly, networking apps can match attendees with similar interests, facilitating meaningful connections that might not happen otherwise.

Furthermore, experiential elements such as immersive VR experiences or augmented reality exhibits can transform how attendees engage with content in a dynamic and memorable way. A VR simulation could allow attendees to explore a new product in a virtual environment, providing a deeper understanding and connection to the material. This is where technology shines – by taking care of logistical and operational tasks, it frees up organisers to focus on crafting these experiences.

Do you think the associations you have worked with have a clear vision of what they want to achieve in terms of legacy and social impact?

Associations have begun to navigate new concepts adapted to today’s reality, planning their events to be more interactive, relevant, and inclusive. This shift ties directly into my response above – if we recognise that events are

fundamentally about human connections and emotions, the next step is to consider their long-term impact, their legacy. To me, ‘meetings with purpose’ means designing events that go beyond the traditional metrics of success – attendance numbers and financial returns – to consider the deeper, more meaningful impacts. It’s about ensuring that every aspect of the event, from the breakout sessions to the networking activities, aligns with a greater purpose and contributes to the overall industry the association serves.

By focusing on these legacy elements, we can help associations create events that are not only successful in the short term but also leave a lasting positive impact. This approach enhances the value of the event for attendees, strengthens the association’s reputation, and fosters long-term loyalty and engagement.

How do you communicate for impact in event-focused marketing campaigns? What are the associations’ big mistakes in this regard, and how should traditional and digital channels work together?

The key to successful event marketing lies in continuous innovation, balancing technology with genuine human interaction, and clearly communicating the event’s broader impact. By focusing on these aspects, event organisers can create experiences that are not only impactful and memorable but also foster a strong, purpose-driven community. Attendees want to know that their participation contributes to something significant. This could be through sustainability initiatives, community outreach programmes, or industry advancements. The biggest mistake, in my view, is relying on what was successful before. This can lead to stagnation. The landscape is constantly evolving, and unless we stay abreast of new trends and member expectations, it’s impossible to create a successful and sustainable event. Another common mistake is relying too heavily on technology for the community elements. While online community platforms foster connections and conversations, they’re just tools. The true essence of community lies in meaningful, real-world connections. Online platforms can facilitate initial interactions, but it’s the shared experiences and personal interactions that truly build strong, lasting relationships.

How can an association approach a new era of marketing and social business by appealing to the value of changing generations?

While Millennials are the main driving force of the economy, the emphasis must now be on understanding and engaging Generation Z. Their expectations and preferences are shaping the future of conferences and it’s crucial that we adapt to them. I believe, the main secret to a successful

event catered to a multi-generational audience lies in co-creating experiences and incorporating audience feedback into the planning and execution. Co-creation involves actively involving different generations in the event planning process. This could be through surveys, focus groups, or social media engagement, where their opinions and preferences are solicited and acted upon. Organising a conference in 2024 means recognising that the old priorities of the baby boomers and even the Millennials need to evolve. It's about creating events that are not only informative and engaging but also socially responsible and reflective of the values of the younger generation. This involves selecting topics that are relevant to Gen Z, such as social justice, climate change, and digital innovation, and presenting them in a way that is dynamic and interactive.

What useful tips would you leave to many associations going through difficult financial years?

One of the most effective strategies to promote events on a budget is to leverage your existing community. Your members are your most powerful marketing channel. They are already engaged and are likely to have networks filled with relevant individuals who could benefit from attending your event. This word-of-mouth approach can significantly extend your reach without the need for a large marketing budget. To facilitate this process, provide your members

with the necessary tools and interesting content to make it easier for them to share information about the event. This can include pre-written social media posts, email templates and digital flyers. Encourage them to share personal stories or testimonials about their experiences with your event. Also, consider setting up an ambassador programme, where selected members are recognised for their efforts in promoting the event, with incentives such as discounts on registration fees or exclusive access to certain features of the event.

As well as empowering your community, AI and marketing automation can also play a significant role in maximising efficiency and impact. AI can segment your audience based on their interests and behaviours, allowing you to tailor your marketing efforts more precisely. For example, AI-driven analysis can identify the topics or sessions likely to appeal to specific segments of your members, allowing you to target your communications more effectively. Marketing automation tools can simplify many of the processes involved in promoting events, such as email campaigns that can nurture contacts and keep potential attendees engaged with personalised content.

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Organising a conference in 2024 means recognising that the old priorities of the baby boomers and even the Millennials need to evolve.



HO DESTINATION INTERVIEWS & EVENTS



The Green Print of *Adelaide Convention Centre*

Leading the global sustainability journey for business events



In May 2024, **Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC)** unveiled its new ESG strategy, *The Green Print*, marking a significant milestone in its commitment to sustainability. The four-year plan maps the Centre’s path to a more sustainable future, minimising its environmental footprint, maximising its positive impact on communities, and creating tangible solutions for its clients and guests to support a better tomorrow.

The Centre’s sustainability achievements dovetail nicely with Adelaide’s reputation as a clean, green and sustainable destination for business events. Known as the ‘City in the Park’ and the first National Park City in the southern hemisphere, Adelaide is on a mission to become the world’s first carbon-neutral city.

A week after the official launch of *The Green Print*, *HQ* caught up with **Sarah Goldfinch, General Manager of Adelaide Convention Centre**, and **Damien Kitto, CEO of Business Events Adelaide**, at IMEX Frankfurt.

Congratulations on the launch of *The Green Print*. What inspired the development of the Centre’s ESG strategy, and how does it align with your commitment to sustainability?

Sarah Goldfinch: Thank you! As the world’s first convention centre to achieve EarthCheck’s coveted Master certification, Adelaide Convention Centre has always been a global leader in sustainable business and environmental practices. We’ve hired a dedicated ESG Project and Planning Manager to help us expand our sustainability efforts to build on this achievement. Among a variety of focus areas, we’re focusing on procurement, supporting local businesses and ensuring

that the supplies we choose have minimal environmental impact, as well as upgrading our facilities, such as upgrading our lighting with energy-efficient LED. Our menus continue to feature locally sourced ingredients, and we’re constantly looking for new ways to minimise waste to landfill. Currently, I’m proud to share that we are diverting more than 99% of our waste from landfill through various waste management processes, including investing in technology such as Adelaide’s first WasteMaster, an on-site organics recycling unit which converts organic waste into material that can be used as a source of mulch in Adelaide’s gardens. We acknowledge there is more we can do and are always looking for new ways to innovate and build on our sustainability commitment – hence *The Green Print*.

How did you come up with the idea of creating *The Green Print* for meeting planners?

SG: With the growing spotlight on sustainability in the business events industry – and indeed, our new ESG Manager coming on board – we wanted a structured, long-term plan rather than an ad-hoc approach. *The Green Print* builds on our EarthCheck credentials and supports Adelaide’s recent submission to the **Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-M)**. We’re working closely with *Business Events Adelaide* and the city to further enhance our sustainability credentials. *The Green Print* provides a defined process, measurable targets and accountability for all our stakeholders.

Damien Kitto: The Centre has been a leader in sustainability for many years, and a close strategic partner. More broadly, *Business Events Adelaide* has partnered with GDS-M in order to



gauge Adelaide's progress as a destination. GDS-M evaluates and benchmarks over 100 cities' sustainability performance. Currently three Australian destinations, and eight in the Asia Pacific, are part of the GDS-index, and so being assessed alongside other cities will help build an understanding of Adelaide's relative strengths and weaknesses.

Business Events Adelaide is working with a range of stakeholders, including the ACC, the City of Adelaide, and other venues, hotels, and organisations, to compile a coordinated response. We expect to receive feedback and our first benchmark ranking in November, which will help us develop a strategic improvement plan. Our ambition is to be one of the leading global destinations within three years.

Adelaide already has a strong sustainability platform. The city is carbon-neutral in its operations, and South Australia is a world leader in renewable energy with significant investments in wind, solar, and carbon capture. The government is investing AUD\$600 million in developing a hydrogen industry, including a hydrogen power plant and electrolyser near Whyalla, which will be the first in the world to use turbines to run on 100% hydrogen. Olympic Dam, one of the world's largest mines, will also be powered by cleaner, cheaper renewable energy, and our State Government has passed some of the strongest legislation in the world regarding single-use packaging.

With these strong foundations in place, the time is right to bring everyone together to consolidate our sustainability efforts. Being a member of the GDS-M will allow us to showcase our credentials and position Adelaide as a sustainable global city, leveraging our all-round approach to renewable energy and environmental leadership.

The city and the centre collaborate with customers to integrate sustainability into event planning and execution. Do meeting planners see your sustainability approaches as a must-have or a nice-to-have?

SG: Sustainability is no longer just a nice-to-have, but rather a must for many clients, especially green agencies and associations. We're often required to meet specific criteria and provide certification and proof of our efforts. At the ACC and *Business Events Adelaide*, sustainability is definitely a must. We address concerns about travel emissions by offsetting carbon credits and ensuring our on-site activities are as sustainable as possible. It's vital that we maintain these standards as we continue to grow our business events and profile as a global leader in the delivery of sustainable events.

DK: In fact, sustainability is a dominant theme at the global events and exhibitions we attend, such as **IMEX**, **ICCA** and **PCMA**. The business events sector is rapidly moving towards sustainable practices with 75% of travellers saying they want to do so sustainably. Adelaide aims to be at the forefront by

providing a consistent sustainable experience from arrival to departure. This includes everything from the airport, hotels and convention centre to social venues and activities.

Do the Adelaide Convention Centre and *Business Events Adelaide* also have a role in educating attendees about sustainability?

SG: Absolutely. We partner with clients to guide them through sustainable practices, offering tangible solutions to enhance their own events and support their objectives. Even if sustainability isn't their priority, it is a priority for us. We ensure that there is no additional cost for sustainable practices because they are built into everything we do. We work closely with clients to meet sustainability benchmarks and educate them on the importance of these practices.

DK: Adelaide's size as a boutique city allows us to work closely and collaboratively towards our sustainability strategy. Our 'Team Adelaide' approach involves all stakeholders, including the City of Adelaide and the South Australian Government, to promote Adelaide as a smart, sustainable city. We use our innovation precincts, such as Adelaide BioMed City, innovation and agricultural technology to promote sustainable practices and attract global business events.

Have you received feedback on The Green Print since its launch?

SG: The response to The Green Print has been extremely encouraging, with positive feedback from our partners, colleagues, clients and guests alike. Australia's convention centres look to us as leaders in sustainability, and our delegates appreciate our long-term commitment to sustainability, which has helped strengthen our industry position.

Will other Australian destinations and venues follow your example?

SG: As a destination, Australia has taken a very proactive approach to sustainable events, which is fantastic to see. We've had some very positive feedback from other venues and enjoy sharing best practice examples and initiatives. Australia's distance from key markets such as Europe and North America makes it imperative to present a strong sustainability solution for those organisers and delegates who travel to Australia from afar. We're leading the way with the ACC and want to continue moving up the GDS rankings. Our ESG Manager recently conducted webinars for the **Australian Business Events Association**, sharing our sustainability practices and providing guidance on sustainable event management. This is helping to reduce the environmental footprint of events across Australia.

Download The Green Print by scanning the QR code below.





Ariyana Convention Centre Danang

Leading the Way in Vietnam’s MICE Industry

Ariyana Convention Centre Danang is a haven for international business events on the beautiful beaches of Da Nang, Vietnam. Its connectivity and first-class facilities have led the venue to win several awards, such as “Most Popular M.I.C.E. Resort” by the **Vietnam Tourism Association** in 2019 and “Convention Centre – Country Winner” by the **World Luxury Award** in 2022. It has also been nominated for “Vietnam’s Leading Meetings & Conference Centre” by the **World Travel Awards** in 2023 and 2024. In this exclusive interview, **André Gentzsch, General Manager of Furama – Ariyana Danang International Tourism Complex**, which includes the convention centre, reveals why this venue is considered a leading choice in the industry.



The World Travel Awards 2024 has nominated Ariyana Convention Centre Danang as Vietnam’s Leading Meetings and conference Centre. What sets the centre apart from other venues in Vietnam, and how does it cater to the specific needs of international associations?

What sets us apart is our strategic location. Set within the Ariyana Danang International Tourism Complex, it is effortlessly connected to **Furama Resort & Villas** and the **International Convention Palace**, and stands out as Vietnam’s largest oceanfront convention facility. In addition to being located on one of the world’s most picturesque beaches, Ariyana Convention Centre Danang offers unparalleled access to significant cultural and natural sites, including Hoi An Ancient City, My Son Sanctuary, Hue Imperial City and Ba Na Hills. Its proximity to Danang’s city centre and airport facilitates smooth logistics, ensuring minimal traffic disruption – a common problem in larger cities. The centre

is located on Danang’s resort road and is surrounded by over 3,000 rooms in four and five star properties, making it an ideal venue for events of all sizes and types.

The venue’s proven track record in hosting major international events, such as **APEC 2017**, has demonstrated its ability to host high-profile events. Its state-of-the-art facilities, exceptional service and a culinary team that delivers diverse and elevated dining experiences further cement its status as a premier venue. As a result, we believe that no other venue in Vietnam combines such comprehensive benefits for events of all sizes, making the Ariyana truly unique in its offering.

What are the current and forthcoming projects at the Ariyana Convention Centre aimed at attracting new business and enhancing the overall experience for international congress delegates?





We strive to attract new business and enhance the event experience through a multifaceted approach. Central to this is our commitment to innovation and technology. By incorporating cutting-edge solutions such as **Fibaro's** wireless automation for efficient lighting and A/C control, and laser projectors for superior visuals. Additionally, our use of AI-powered facial recognition and NFC systems streamlines attendee check-ins, making the process secure and seamless. To add a unique and unforgettable visual element, we also offer innovative drone light shows, redefining aesthetic standards for events. Safety is another critical focus area. Through the **ECOSMAS** project, we utilise state-of-the-art IoT technology for real-time electricity usage monitoring. This helps identify and mitigate potential electrical hazards and enhances overall event safety by reducing fire risks.

Recognising the growing importance of attendee wellbeing in the event industry, we have introduced meditation sessions with **Breathwork and Healing Sound** as part of our meeting packages. These sessions, designed to reduce stress and promote a tranquil, focused state of mind, reflect a broader trend towards incorporating wellness into professional gatherings, ensuring a balanced and health-conscious event experience.

Furthermore, Ariyana is a proud co-founder of the **Asia Venue Alliance**, an initiative aimed at raising service standards, exchanging events, sharing industry insights, and creating a unified brand that attracts international attention. Within this alliance, we view our fellow members not as competitors, but as partners working together with the vision of setting the stage for extraordinary events that leave a lasting impact.

How does the centre prioritise sustainability in its operations, and what initiatives are in place to reduce the environmental impact of events held at the centre?

Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do. The centre integrates green technologies such as motion-sensor lighting and energy-efficient laser projectors, significantly reducing energy consumption and environmental impact. Through the



ECOSMAS project, we are reducing electricity consumption by up to 30% by closely monitoring and optimising energy use.

A key sustainable practice at Ariyana is the onsite production and packaging of drinking water using glass bottles instead of single-use plastics. Our own water brand, **FREDAQUA**, highlights our proactive approach to minimising our environmental footprint.

Our sustainability commitment extends to strong community involvement. The centre works with Tr'hy village in Tay Giang district, home to the Co Tu ethnic minority, to support local agriculture. This initiative serves a triple purpose: it boosts the local economy and preserves traditional farming practices while showcasing the region's rich culinary heritage to international delegates and promoting sustainability by reducing food miles and prioritising local, seasonal ingredients over imported goods. In addition, by incorporating traditional products such as local Nam Ô fish sauce into its cuisine, the centre helps to preserve and celebrate local heritage, providing guests with an authentic cultural experience while supporting local craftsmanship.

Can you elaborate on the centre's legacy and how it supports the meetings industry in Vietnam?

The Centre, managed by Furama, draws on a legacy of 30 years of hospitality to significantly strengthen the meetings industry in Vietnam. Our legacy is built on a tradition of warm hospitality and superior service, which we strive to enhance from one generation to the next. Our dedicated team guarantees personalised attention to every guest, meeting their needs with genuine warmth and professionalism. Our commitment to excellence helps us create lasting memories and build strong relationships based on trust and respect. By maintaining these standards, Ariyana serves as a model for other venues across Vietnam, pushing the entire industry towards higher levels of professionalism and service quality. This raises the national profile on the global meetings and events map.



Maribor: A City of Culture, Wine and Festivals by the Drava!

Maribor achieved a title that transformed its urban landscape and functional infrastructure: the **European Capital of Culture**. This, together with the **1st European Culinary Destination** in 2023, has awakened visitors and delegates to this Slovenian city and its hidden potential as a premier meetings and event destination.

These aforementioned titles and the ensuing renovation significantly upgraded Maribor’s facilities, infrastructure, and overall attractiveness for the European markets. The transformation allowed Maribor to position itself as a unique destination offering a blend of modern amenities, and rich cultural assets with special venues, evident in the numerous historical museums. The renovation of key landmarks like the Drava River Embankment and Lent, the Main Square, the City Park Promenade, and the Minorite Cultural Quarter has further enhanced Maribor’s appeal as a meeting destination. Unlike larger cities, Maribor boasts a compact city centre, where everything is within walking distance. This fosters a sense of intimacy and allows attendees to immerse themselves in the city’s vibrant atmosphere. “Maribor achieved a record number of overnight stays and tourist arrivals last year. In addition to Slovenians, visitors from Germany, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Austria, Czech Republic, Italy and Hungary generated the highest number of overnight stays. Maribor is the third fastest growing tourist destination in Slovenia in terms of overnight stays, after the pandemic period,” **Jure Struc, Director of Maribor Convention Bureau (MCB)**, tells us.

In today’s competitive MICE market, Maribor strategically leverages a multi-pronged approach to solidify its position as a medium-sized convention destination. “When bidding for events, we prioritise criteria that ensure a mutually beneficial outcome, targeting events that align with Maribor’s strengths and unique offerings. This has included culinary experiences that showcase the city’s rich food and wine traditions, cultural conferences that draw on our historical heritage, or events that promote sustainability initiatives that resonate with environmentally conscious audiences. “We look for events that leave a lasting positive impact on Maribor, embracing knowledge sharing through conferences, or infrastructure development projects stimulated by the needs of our



ecosystem,” adds Struc. The business events segment has demonstrated significant untapped potential, and although it currently represents a smaller portion of global tourism numbers, there is a concerted effort to raise its profile. “The activation of the MCB and our participation in presentations and tradeshow are key strategies we use to increase visibility and attract more business events. Strategically, the meetings industry is becoming increasingly important in our planning by taking advantage of our cultural, historical and natural offerings to attract new markets.”

This year, Slovenian Tourism has entered a two-year cycle in which art and culture will serve as the main themes for promoting Maribor, its products and services. With Slovenia’s events industry looking to replicate the success of Michelin-labelled culinary tourism in several of its restaurants, the time has come to showcase the city’s rich cultural tapestry as an attractive and affordable destination for business events. “We’re looking for planners and organisers who aren’t just looking for traditional conference venues, but who want a destination that offers cultural engagement and allows participants to immerse themselves in it.” In collaboration with cultural venues, art galleries or renovated monasteries, Maribor offers a distinctive and inspiring setting for incentives, receptions and gala dinners. “We’ve created a comprehensive cultural calendar that highlights upcoming events, festivals and shows, ensuring that event organisers can incorporate these elements into their event agendas,” says Struc. “This can range from showcasing local talent during opening receptions to organising team-building activities around traditional celebrations.”

Maribor offers exceptional culinary experiences ranging from fine dining to local wine routes. To maximise the natural attraction of Maribor as a destination for oenology and viticulture, the Tourist Board has devised a comprehensive plan to leverage the city’s rich wine heritage and offerings. “We host events dedicated to celebrating our grapevine, such as the **Old Vine Festival** and **St. Martin’s Day festivities**. These events not only showcase our wine culture but also attract enthusiasts and professionals from around the world,” explains Struc. The **Oldest Vine Museum** offers a unique opportunity for visitors to learn about the history and significance of Slovenian wine culture, providing an educational and immersive experience for wine-related events and conventions. As for the planned renovation of the World’s Oldest Vine House, a modern and cosy space is also planned to host events related to oenology and viticulture.

The city has a robust network of local partners who contribute significantly to the vibrant MICE activity in the region. These partners include hotels – such as the **Habakuk** at the foot of Pohorje Mountain, the **City Hotel** and the boutique **Hotel Pohorje** – special venues such as the **Minoriti Cultural Quarter**, **Maribor Castle** and the **Slovenian National Theatre**, and restaurants within an exciting gastronomic landscape, ranging from fine dining at **Mak** and **Sedem**, to bistros such as **Nana**

and **Fudo**. In addition, Maribor has proven to be an excellent host for sporting events such as the **European Youth Olympic Festival**, the **Golden Fox Trophy** in alpine skiing, the **Mountain Bike World Cup** and the **UEFA Champions League** football matches. “Our diverse infrastructure supports a wide range of sporting activities and training camps. Another strategic focus is smaller meetings with a desire for culinary indulgence and unique locations.” MCB actively collaborates with Slovenian congress ambassadors to capitalise on their experience and networks to increase credibility and reach potential clients. “We have established partnerships with caterers, special venue owners, the **University of Maribor** and the **Maribor University Medical Centre** to offer comprehensive event solutions. This strategic approach ensures that we deliver personalised services and tailor-made requirements for association meetings,” the director says.

Destination Maribor is actively encouraging local providers to participate in the national-level certification **Green Scheme for Slovenian Tourism**, which brings together all efforts for sustainable tourism development in Slovenia under the brand **Slovenia Green**. “Our roadmap includes green certifications, eco-friendly practices, and sustainability integration into event planning.” In addition, Maribor is also working on a comprehensive sustainable mobility system in the city. “Sustainability is a core element of our future policies and strategic directions. Our vision is a car-free city centre, with an emphasis on promoting pedestrian walks and the use of sustainable transport such as the **Mbjak** bicycle system, or the free e-bus. Events can contribute to this vision by encouraging attendees to use sustainable transport options and by pushing green initiatives such as carbon offsetting and waste reduction programmes,” Struc concludes. Meanwhile, the **Our Finest** brand represents Maribor’s commitment to high-quality local products and experiences, minimising environmental impact and promoting social responsibility in the meetings sector.





Taiwan's MICE Corridor

An Exclusive Update on Taiwan's Event Capabilities

My second visit to Taiwan had a special purpose. After extensive coverage of HQ previously – including a special supplement in 2021 and an on-site report the following year – **MEET TAIWAN** decided to show the media Taiwan's **MICE Corridor** with new developments, updates and points of interest. We were there to tell you about it!

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES, HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

Taiwan MICE Corridor is a 300-kilometre stretch of the west coast linked by an efficient high-speed rail that runs through more than 650 venues between its main cities, demonstrating the island nation's connectivity, sustainability and diversity of options. "Taiwan has several important MICE cities such as Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung, all of which are located on the west coast with convenient transport and world-class professional venues. We hope to promote them through the MICE corridor, allowing everyone to understand the unique characteristics of each city. This will allow international MICE events to continually return to Taiwan, as holding events in different cities and venues can offer varied experiences," **Lily Su, Executive Director of MEET TAIWAN**, the nation's MICE promotion programme, tells us. In fact, as we will see later, our itinerary between Taipei and Kaohsiung, with stops in the various cities interspersed by the Taiwan High Speed Rail (HSR) made our on-site inspection much easier, projecting a smooth and professional journey for delegates and associations.

One of the big reasons for our coming was the opportunity to experience first-hand the operations and atmosphere of the **COMPUTEX 2024** exhibition, hosted at the **Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center**. One of the largest computer and technology tradeshow in the world, this 2024 edition took place from the 4th to the 7th of June and welcomed around 85,000 ICT buyers and professionals under the theme 'Connecting AI', with sessions on topics such as high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, next-gen connectivity and sustainability, testing both the country's capacity to host major expos and its transformative potential in the tech areas evident in its semiconductor industry. On the transfer to Taichung by high-speed railway, which took about 1 hour and 45 minutes, our interest fell in the **Taichung International Convention and Exhibition Centre (TICEC)**, which is expected to open in 2025. The TICEC, the result of a total investment of NTD 8.8 billion (around 255.2 million euros), meets the expectations of the region's industry and professionals and will provide

around 2,360 standard booths and accommodate 12,600 participants, making it the first major international exhibition centre in central Taiwan. Taichung is known for its various industrial clusters, one of which is bicycles. This sector is clearly evident in the **Cycling Culture Museum**, the first museum to explore the world of bicycles through interactive technology and workmanship aesthetics, where we could see a collection of old bicycles, art installations and films about the history of the bicycle in Taiwan, highlighting the duality between the artistic vision and the technological improvement of this popular single-track vehicle. After a brief tour of the magnificent piece of design that is the **National Taichung Theater**, we immediately headed to Tainan (less than an hour away by high-speed rail – HSR), where we stayed at the beautiful **Shangri-La Far Eastern Tainan**. It had been a long day, and Wednesday was expected to be busy in the 'Phoenix City.'

In the Anping District, we were able to revisit the old **Fort Zeelandia**, a living testimony to the Western Passage through Taiwan's oldest city and a bridge between two worlds. Tainan's rich culture and history, combined with a revamped high-tech industrial hub (of particular note is the Southern Taiwan Science Park), make it a favourite with tourists and MICE visitors alike. The flagship meeting space for the latter is called **ICC TAINAN** (pictured right), which was our second stop in the city. Here, we had a productive presentation with officials from **GIS Group**, the venue's management company, about its sustainability policies (which include its certification as a silver-level green building), its vocation as a platform for entrepreneurship, and its strategic positioning in Taiwan's urban corridor. The success is evidenced by the 62 events, 37 exhibitions and more than a million visitors for a convention centre that only opened in 2022, in the middle of the pandemic. We continued further south, arriving (a mere 12 minutes by HSR) in the stunning city of Kaohsiung. From a modest fishing village to a booming business hub on the tropical side of the island, Kaohsiung has been the fastest-growing city in Taiwan and a MICE centre of excellence. These services





Four Four South Village



Kaohsiung Exhibition Center



Anping Matsu Temple



International Convention Center Tainan



Asia New Bay Area



The Dome of Light in Formosa Boulevard Station

are facilitated by the multifunctional waterfront venue, **Kaohsiung Exhibition Centre (KEC)** (pictured left), which was hosting at that moment the **Fastener Taiwan 2024** exhibition show. An impressive architectural feat where the flow of visitors was seamless and practical, the KEC has bet heavily on hybrid events with its private 5G network throughout its conference rooms and two exhibition halls. The KEC has become a smart international venue for business events and has abundant resources and connections such as the XR Application Integration Platform, 3D Modelling or AI Guide Service. After a brief stroll around the Asia New Bay Area – where we could see the **Kaohsiung Music Centre**, **Kaohsiung eSports Arena**, **Pier-2 Art Centre** and the **Kaohsiung Port Warehouse** – and the **Old British Consulate** in Takao, we stayed overnight at the traditional **Han-Hsien International Hotel**.

Thursday took us to Hsinchu (about 1 hour and 30 minutes from Kaohsiung) to visit the **TSMC Innovation Museum**. This cultural extension of the innovative imagination of Morris Chang, founder of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited, explores the innovative business model of this strategic cluster and Taiwan's industrial Holy Grail: integrated circuit (IC) design and product applications. The trip also included a brief stop at the **Taoyuan Convention and Exhibition Center**, which will be the stage for local high-tech and specialised industries to showcase their products and services, playing an important role in marketing and promoting Taoyuan. The day ended at the more jovial **Amba Taipei Songshan Hotel** in Taipei, to prepare for the final day. The following morning the route was more relaxed by some tourist attractions that can also act as meeting spaces. **Four Four South Village** (pictured left) took us on a journey through time by exploring a former military-dependent village that was converted into a cultural park in Xinyi District. Today, it consists of cafés, craft shops, bookstores and a community centre behind landmark Taipei 101. Typical townhouse-style houses, this small 'village' was planned to be demolished in 2001, but local residents and cultural experts persuaded the government to preserve it as cultural heritage. Finally, right next to the Taipei Dome, we also visited the **Songshan Cultural and Creative Park**, the city's Creative Centre with the aim of nurturing up-and-coming talent, start-ups and interdisciplinary development. Within its five strategic axes – Creative Laboratory, Creative Union, Creative School, Creative Exhibition and Creative Centre – the park is assertively involved in organising various artistic events, and cultural exhibitions that also include presentations of design, visual and architectural events.



Beyond Economics and Skyscrapers, Discover *Frankfurt's* Green Revolution

When the **Frankfurt Convention Bureau (FCB)** invited *HQ* on a pre-IMEX tour, our first reaction was one of surprise. What could they possibly show us that we didn't already know after attending the show for so many years? When the itinerary arrived, it revealed a mission to show us a Frankfurt unknown to many, and of course, it sparked our curiosity.

AUTHOR: JESÚS GUERRERO CHACÓN, HQ DEPUTY EDITOR

Readers who think they know Frankfurt for its skyscrapers and financial institutions will be impressed by the city's commitment to sustainability and its many green initiatives, making it a perfect fit for this July's edition on Sustainability.

Our tour of Frankfurt began at Margarete, a cosy restaurant in the New Old Town. Both the restaurant and the New Old Town exemplified Frankfurt's blend of past and present, innovative and forward-thinking spirit, setting the tone for our weekend of discovery. The restaurant honours Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, the architect behind the 1920s revolutionary Frankfurt kitchen design. The New Old Town, reconstructed from 2012 to 2018, recreated original buildings destroyed during the war with 35 new constructions, including 15 creative replicas. This meticulous blend of historic and contemporary design won the **MIPIM award** in March 2019, showcasing it as one of the world's most sustainable and visionary developments. Both choices were a perfect introduction, highlighting how innovation has long been part of Frankfurt's DNA.

Our walking tour of the New Old Town included a sustainable **#cleanffm** activity, part of an urban cleanliness campaign that encourages community participation in maintaining a steady, clean city. We joined the city's clean-up efforts as we walked through the bustling streets of Frankfurt on a sunny Saturday afternoon. This hands-on activity gave us a first glimpse into the city's many efforts to improve the lives of locals and visitors, as well as Frankfurt's rich history. We actively participated in the green movement and highlighted the city's commitment to community engagement and environmental responsibility.

Our exploration continued with a tour of the **nhw Frankfurt**, a design and lifestyle hotel in the booming European Quarter, next to the **Messe Frankfurt**. The

hotel's money-themed design and 18 meeting rooms, named after currencies, reflect the city's financial spirit while also embracing sustainability. Among a long list of green features and initiatives, guests who skip the daily room cleaning to save water and chemicals are rewarded with a free drink at the **NFT Skybar**. Located on the 47th floor, the Skybar offers stunning 360-degree views of Frankfurt and is perfect for enjoying the sunset or hosting private events.

A second hotel visit took us to the classic New York-style **NH Collection Frankfurt Spin Tower**. Located within walking distance of the main train station and Messe Frankfurt, this hotel occupies 20 floors of Frankfurt's newest skyscraper and boasts 11 flexible meeting rooms. Following our inspection, we were treated to dinner in the hotel's restaurant, where a delicious meal and fine wine set the scene for more casual chats with the IMEX team before the busy days of the show.

A second packed day began at the **Scandic Frankfurt Museumsufer Hotel**, renowned for its barrier-free facilities and eco-friendly practices. The hotel's accredited commitment to accessibility ensures comfort for guests with various disabilities, including wheelchair users and those with hearing and visual impairments. The hotel also boasts seven modern meeting rooms for up to 285 people, equipped with the latest conference technology. In terms of sustainability, the hotel uses organic and fair-trade food from local suppliers and minimises individual packaging. Its partnership with **Too Good To Go** helps minimise food waste by offering meals at reduced prices. Guests can borrow bicycles to explore the city in a sustainable way, which brings us to our next activity.

We took an eco-friendly ride on **Velotaxi Frankfurt** along the banks of the River Main, a perfect way to really





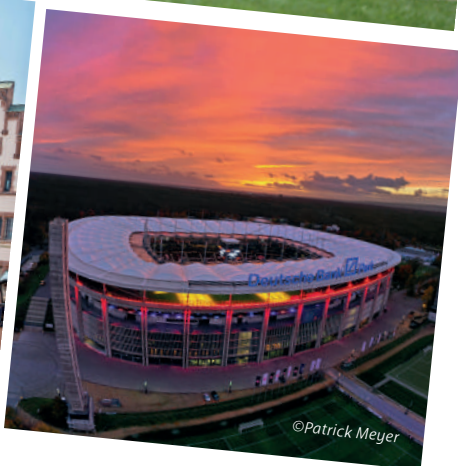
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Hotel Frankfurt Sportpark, a sports-themed hotel surrounded by the green expanse of the Frankfurt City Forest. Surrounded by sports-related organisations, the hotel is often used for their events. Its proximity to the stadium and various sports clubs makes it a top location for sports enthusiasts and professionals.

The **Frankfurt Tourist+Congress Board**, the parent company of the FCB, is closely involved in the organisation of EURO 2024 in June and July. They are overseeing complementary events, including the 1.4-kilometre-long Mainufer fan zone and additional events on the north bank of the River Main, which will host up to 30,000 people throughout the tournament. Frankfurt has embraced UEFA's strict sustainability and inclusivity requirements, including the use of green energy, comprehensive waste management and inclusive projects. These efforts demonstrate Frankfurt's expertise as a host city for major events, meeting and exceeding international standards for sustainability and inclusivity.



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The final stop on our discovery weekend in Frankfurt was **Kap Europa**, part of Messe Frankfurt, which has set the benchmark for sustainable building practices, being the first convention centre to be awarded Platinum certification by the **German Sustainable Building Council** and recently awarded **Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)** certification for its outstanding environmental management. EMAS is an EU initiative that helps organisations improve their environmental performance by providing a robust framework and tool for managing environmental issues. Messe Frankfurt, one of the world's leading trade fair organisers, is committed to sustainability in all its venues, regardless of size, through its ongoing efforts to improve environmental performance, making Kap Europa a perfect example of how venues can operate sustainably.



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appreciate how green Frankfurt is. Our next destination was a site inspection and a sustainably sourced lunch at **Maindock Eventlocation**, where we discovered the venue's commitment to food waste management and supporting local initiatives. The in-house catering service aims to reduce catering waste by creating innovative menus from unused items. They work with organisations such as **Caritas** and **Frankfurter Tafel** to redistribute leftover food, ensuring it reaches those in need. Their efforts go beyond organising events, making a significant impact on the community and promoting sustainable practices.

Last but not least, Frankfurt is more than just skyscrapers and financial services or the host city of IMEX. The FCB leads by example in its commitment to sustainability, making a significant difference with green initiatives. At IMEX, its stand was carbon neutral for the first time, taking into account everything from construction to energy use, catering and exhibitor travel. The stand offered only vegetarian and vegan food, highlighting sustainable choices. Public transport passes were provided for exhibitors to minimise the carbon footprint. The icing on the cake was the effort to offset all emissions, a commitment to a greener future for Frankfurt and the meetings industry.



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Our tour included a visit to **Deutsche Bank Park**, home of Eintracht Frankfurt football club and one of the main venues for **UEFA EURO 2024**. The stadium, set in Frankfurt's city forest, will host five matches during the tournament. The location is fitting, as Frankfurt is also home to prominent sports associations such as the **German Football Association**, the **German Olympic Sports Confederation** and the **International Triathlon Union**, underlining its importance as a sports hub. This connection naturally led us to the **Lindner**



Business Impact, Market Growth and Young Talent Sums Up *IMEX Frankfurt 2024*

The 2024 edition of **IMEX Frankfurt** marked a notable surge of confidence and business certainty in the global events industry. The growth across exhibitor markets and thousands of buyers bringing a steady, long-term pipeline of RFPs all pointed to an industry thriving on solid foundations once again.

IMEX Frankfurt, which took place from 14-16 May, welcomed 12,000 event professionals through the doors of **Messe Frankfurt**, of whom over 4,000 were buyers. More than 60,000 meetings were pre-booked, and thousands more took place on the show floor.

Chairman Ray Bloom said: “I’m delighted to see the return of the Asian market. I’ve heard that one of our exhibitors, Japan, which had its largest-ever representation, has used the show to communicate the business readiness of those areas affected by the recent earthquake.” He also observed that Africa is experiencing growth and maturity within the sector, with Uganda stating that tourism, of which business events are included, has now officially overtaken coffee as its dominant market.

Next generation – hot topic

Encouraging the next generation of event planners entering

the sector was the focus of many conversations at the show, explained **IMEX CEO Carina Bauer**. During the show, **ICCA** announced a new partnership with universities to provide scholarships, mentorships and networking opportunities for students and young event planners. Carina added: “We’ve been really pleased with the number of young people attending our **Rising Talent** programme for those with up to three years’ experience. It was also great to see the launch of a complementary programme, **Young Stars**, which is part of our broadest-ever range of German language education and an integral part of the hugely successful **MICE Impact Academy**.” In addition, the **IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum** marked its 22nd year.

Carina also explained that many senior leaders had remarked on the variety of content on offer this year, with several appreciating having the time and space to go deeper into important workplace topics such as burnout and mental health. Equally, at the planner level, there was a positive response to sessions covering topics in a highly practical way, such as sustainability and especially artificial intelligence (AI). “It’s clear that this blend of strategic leadership sessions and practicality is giving everyone the choice they want and the personalisation they need,” she said.

She also explained that Monday’s specialist education



programmes received widespread credit. Many participants valued the new programme design, which offered more time for breakout conversations and networking.

Association Focus

Association Focus, delivered in association with ICCA, **AC Forum** and **ASAE**, was part of the dedicated day of specialist education where delivering a positive impact on the planet was firmly on the agenda.

Evelyn Mansutti, from the **European Association of Nuclear Medicine**, explained: “Sustainability is a challenge. Each year we introduce new initiatives and have begun measuring CO₂ emissions, but we now need new ideas on how to make our events more sustainable.”

Jose Luis Mira Mira, UPEI, from **The Voice of Europe’s Independent Fuel Suppliers**, added: “We live in an era where we’re all connected around the world, but sometimes we can be overwhelmed by how much information we receive. Our biggest hurdle is getting across our key messages and raising awareness of the importance of sustainability and the transition to greener energy solutions.”

AI can help support planners in communicating key messages, as **Veemal Gungadin**, CEO of **Gevme**, explained in his session – AI: Artificial Intelligence meets Association impact. “Think of generative AI as your new brainstorming partner,” he said. “It can handle those pesky first drafts of emails, presentations and proposals, freeing up your time for truly strategic work. AI won’t replace your creativity, but it’s an incredibly powerful tool to streamline the early stages of content creation.”

Attendee **Jasenko Selimovic**, from the **Vienna Medical Academy**, said: “We currently use AI for research, but we’re at the beginning of our journey. People still don’t know enough about AI and the benefits it can offer – there needs



to be more education before we can start to use it properly.”

Impact Talking Point makes an impact

Across the show, Impact, IMEX’s Talking Point for the next two years, was embraced by partners and exhibitors with Sarawak’s vibrant, multi-sensory activations at the show entrances striking a friendly, welcoming note and others such as Singapore, Houston and Glasgow all launching different impact projects during the week.

New this year and a notable success was the dedicated Impact Zone in Hall 9, led by **MICE Impact**, a co-creative area that united planners, suppliers, and partners with a range of workshops, panels, and stakeholder discussions.

The **Google Xi CoLaboratory** made a popular return to IMEX, while others offering tailored education and a variety of activations included **Maritz**, **Encore**, and industry associations.

Finally, as part of its drive towards net zero, IMEX attendees had the chance to make a personal and positive climate contribution by ‘balancing’ their travel to and from Frankfurt for the first time, thanks to a new partnership with **Cloverly**.

IMEX America will take place from 8–10 October 2024, at **Mandalay Bay**, Las Vegas. Next year’s IMEX Frankfurt will take place from 20–22 May 2025.





Silesia: Meetings and Events in post-industrial Poland

With 179 international association meetings organised in 2023, Poland has applied its strategic efforts and investments in multiple regions to enhance the meetings and events sector. To this end, the **Silesia Convention Bureau** organised its first presentation tour of its destinations this year, which we had the pleasure of witnessing up close.

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES, HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

In recent years, Poland has emerged as one of the most competitive and sought-after countries in the meetings industry, emphasising the diversity of its cultural assets, the richness of its natural heritage, and the reputation of historic cities with more remote regions. According to the results of the latest report, *Impact of Events in Poland 2023 – Economic Impact of the Meetings Industry on the Polish Economy*, the sector plays a crucial role in the Polish economy, contributing significantly to job creation (215,000 jobs), gross value added (PLN 22,973,680,700 or around five billion euros) and the country's GDP (approximately 1%). On the other hand, Poland achieved its best result in history in the **ICCA 2023 country rankings**, coming in 17th place – a significant advance of six positions from 23rd place in the previous report. This growing influence and ability to host international association events has spread to the four corners of the country. It has accelerated various regions into important roles in revitalising the economy and building Poland's strong position on the MICE stage. Last year, the **Polish Tourism Organisation** decided to show the world another historic region with high growth potential, including lesser-known destinations with more affordable budgets: Silesia (*check out the introductory story in our HQ #109.*)

As one of the smallest voivodeships in terms of area, Silesia tells a centuries-old story through its geographical, historical and cultural diversity, which leads to a paradoxical vision where small old towns with fortresses and palaces coexist with young urban centres and revitalised post-industrial facilities. Here, brutalist buildings rise, and steel and metal giants paint an industrial canvas, leaving an indelible mark on society and its historical past. Within these apparent paradoxes, the Silesian Voivodeship is today also one of the greenest regions in Poland, which influences the sustainable direction and strategy of the convention bureau in the events it organises. For example, it is home to Poland's largest metropolis, a multi-city agglomeration with a population of 2.2 million, which generates enormous urban, economic and social potential. This sets it apart from other regions in Poland,

with cultural tangents that cross the borders of Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Following an invitation from the local convention bureau, we had the opportunity to tour some important landmarks in a region rich in natural resources, historic industrial areas and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. “We wanted to show the contrast of our region, and I think that, during these two days, the combination of the post-industrial environment and the green natural heritage was able to provide valid options for both event spaces and incentive activities,” says **Sebastian Gronet, project manager of the Silesia Convention Bureau (SCB)**. During the two-day tour, our media group visited the rehabilitated corners of the Guido mine to show the possibilities for incentives and events in the area, as well as the green and natural side around the Beskid Mountains in the town of Wisła, with a culinary workshop. To complement these points, we experienced the comfort of the hotels and indulged our senses in the region's traditional restaurants.

In Zabrze, our first gastronomic spot was the post-industrial **Szyb Maciej**, which is made up of three levels of a building adapted for catering and events. The restaurant sits in a shaft tower encased in a mining space. On the first floor, there is a bistro, and on the second level, an elegant modern restaurant. On the third level, a banqueting hall. The building is the only facility in the province of Silesia that is part of the Route of Industrial Monuments, a collection of the most important monuments of the industrial era in Europe. The interiors, as well as the courtyard, provide a perfect setting for galas, receptions and outdoor events. This region is famous for its mines that have been transformed into tourist attractions, museums and venues in recent times. The **Guido Mines** combines all these aspects. Six kilometres away from the restaurant, we find this historic deep coal mine that has been converted into a museum, an anchor point on the European Route of Industrial Heritage and a cultural heritage site on the Silesian register. At a depth of 320 metres, we were thrown to a fun but demanding



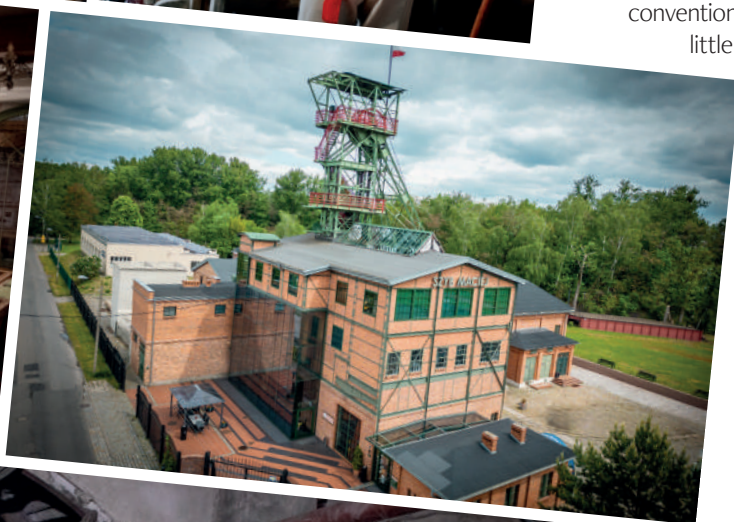


team-building activity simulating the rigorous mining labour in the darkness of its tunnels. Guido is also home to the deepest bar in Europe, the **Pump hall**, which welcomes hundreds of tourists, and it is also available for incentive groups and delegates, hosting around 150 people together with its concert hall.

In Wisła, we stayed at the relaxing and luxurious **Aries Hotel & Spa** at the foot of the Beskidy Mountains. Overlooking the Vistula River, this boldly decorated, sustainable mountain chalet has 89 rooms, including 14 suites, a restaurant seating 60 guests, a lobby bar, three conference rooms accommodating up to 150 people, a spa area with four saunas, a swimming pool, and two outdoor jacuzzis, a wedding gazebo, and an idyllic riverside area. The fully soundproofed conference space, which can be divided into three rooms, features modern equipment and various facilities for organising business meetings in an awe-inspiring bucolic setting. The hotel also includes a striking orangerie and offers versatile room formats, accommodating up to 210 guests overall, providing a perfect combination of comfort, multi-purpose solutions, and high-quality service. The visit ended with some culinary workshops and a brief exhibition of Silesia’s rich folklore at **Olimpijczyk Cottage** – a country house inspired by the sporting career of Olympic athlete Jan Legierski, that includes a restaurant, a traditional museum and accommodation. “We’re one of Poland’s newest convention bureaus, just over a year old, so we feel a little underestimated and undiscovered on the



global MICE market. Our greatest asset lies in the fact that many visitors are curious to find out more about a region that is fresh in the minds of conference organisers,” says Gronet.



“ Last year, the Polish Tourism Organisation endorsed yet another historic region with high growth potential and more affordable budgets: Silesia (check the story in HQ #109).





Discovering *Tallinn*'s Blend of Heritage and Technology

Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, lies on the shores of the Baltic Sea where traditional cobbled streets and digital innovation meet. Last April, *HQ* had the pleasure of exploring the city during an association-focused family trip, joined by a group of international association executives eager to discover a city that harmoniously blends the old and the new. Tallinn, known for its leadership in digital and environmental innovation, is making great steps forward as a sustainable city too, and we were eager to see this first-hand. With its commitment and efforts to attract congresses and meetings, it's no wonder Tallinn is ranked 67th out of 1,486 cities in the **ICCA** rankings, and Estonia is ranked 45th globally out of 156 countries.

HQ MAGAZINE'S EXCLUSIVE REPORT

The journey began at the **Radisson Collection Hotel**, located near the Estonian National Opera, a symbol reflecting the city's modern aspirations. The view from my room revealed a skyline mixed with new modern buildings, shining facades and the historic spires and red roofs of the medieval Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The hotel's exceptional amenities are close to business districts and cultural hotspot, and a fusion of comfort and elegance.

Jumping straight into the subject of innovation in the country and the capital, our exploration took us to the **e-Estonia Briefing Centre** where we learned about the country's pioneering digital landscape. Celebrated as the world's most advanced digital society, Estonia has embraced technology in a big way. Here, everything from voting to public services operates online, supported by a robust digital ID system that showcases the nation's innovative spirit. Estonia's commitment to technology is further demonstrated by its robust startup environment. Home to over 1,400 startups, including ten unicorns, more than any other country in Europe per capita. Estonia is definitely a powerhouse in the tech startup space, supported by initiatives such as the Estonian Startup Visa, which aims to attract non-EU entrepreneurs interested in joining one of Europe's most dynamic startup communities. The scale-up visa allows growing startups to easily hire talent from abroad, ensuring that the skills needed to support this growth are readily available. These initiatives have also led **Visit Estonia** to hire a dedicated person as the **Project Manager for the Digital Nomad Visa**.

Tallinn's historical tapestry came alive during our 'Back in Time' tour, from an innovation display to the capital's heritage. We walked through the Old Town, discovering beautiful Gothic spires, ancient markets, and lively squares, echoing

the footsteps of the merchants of the Middle Ages. We also visited the **Nordic Hotel Forum**, another UNESCO World Heritage site. The contrast between the past and future was evident in the Rotermann Quarter, where restored industrial buildings have been transformed into stylish shops and cafes, embodying a city that respects its heritage while looking bravely into the future.

One of the highlights was **Junimperium Distillery**, where we tasted tradition in their handcrafted gins, distilled from local ingredients and rooted in centuries-old techniques. In the evening, we were treated to a delightful culinary experience at **Restaurant Pull**, a Michelin-recommended venue, where we enjoyed a delicious meal.

Our second day began with a site inspection of our hotel, the Radisson Collection Hotel, followed by a short walk that took us to the **Original Sokos Hotel Viru**, which impressed us with its modern facilities and meeting spaces. We continued to the **Axela Concert Hall** at the **Solaris Centre**, which features a grand hall that can accommodate over 1,800 guests and versatile breakout rooms that can be used for a variety of events. We ended our morning at the **Swissotel Tallinn**, which captivated us with its panoramic views and sophisticated meeting rooms.

After lunch at the **Hilton Tallinn Park Hotel**, we ventured into **Telliskivi Creative City**, a hub of artistic expression, where venues such as **JAIK** and **Fotografiska Gallery** displayed innovative uses of space, while a leather workshop at **Stella Soomlais Studio**, showed us local craftsmanship and sustainability combined with style. At Stella's high-quality leather accessories are made, showcasing the meticulous care and creative spirit that Estonia brings to all its ventures. The day concluded with a delicious dinner at





Restaurant 38 in the Old Town, where the chef's contemporary take on Estonian cuisine perfectly captured the city's innovative spirit.

Our final day continued with the exploration of first-class hotels and venues for events and hospitality. We started at the **Radisson Blu Hotel Olümpia**, which boasts extensive facilities at a great location. This was followed by the **Port of Tallinn Cruise Terminal**, a stunning new building with sweeping sea views and adaptable spaces for large events. We then toured the **Estonian Maritime Museum's Seaplane Harbour**, an exceptional venue steeped in maritime history and capable of hosting large gatherings amidst historic artefacts. A short stroll through the **Noblessner Harbour** area took us to the **Proto Invention Factory**, a striking venue in a converted submarine factory that now serves as a unique backdrop for innovative events.

As we wrapped up our visit, it was evident that Tallinn offers more than just historical charm and digital innovation. It is a city deeply committed to sustainable practices, from its green technology initiatives to its community-focused urban planning. Tallinn is a city that honours its past, operates in the present, and innovates for the future. Don't underestimate it! It's a unique destination for any international association looking to inspire delegates by showing what's possible when tradition and innovation work hand in hand. Tallinn's commitment to sustainable urban development was internationally recognised when it was named **European Green Capital for 2023**. This accolade demonstrates Tallinn's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable urban development, which is aligned with its broader goal of becoming an attractive, innovative and sustainable global tourist destination.

The capital's forward-looking **2035 Development Strategy** aims to achieve carbon neutrality while increasing climate resilience through innovative urban planning. This involves investing in advanced stormwater management systems and redesigning streets to accommodate and promote soft and public transport, with the aim of making 70% of all journeys sustainable by 2035. Tallinn has also pioneered free public transport since 2013, a bold move to reduce carbon emissions and promote social equity. Its strategy includes digital tools to promote nature-based solutions in urban projects, as it is home to lush landscapes and rich biodiversity. Nearly 80% of residents have access to public green spaces within 250 metres of their homes, making nature an integral part of urban life. The city protects important natural habitats, which cover 13.8% of its territory and are home to around 150 protected animal and plant species. The capital offers an impressive 86 e-services designed to streamline city processes, reduce the environmental impact of traditional paper-based systems, and save trees and green areas. This digital approach increases service efficiency and supports the city's green transformation goals.

Tallinn's journey towards sustainability and digital adoption can serve as an example for other destinations, proving that even small cities can lead global change. As we look to the future, other destinations can look to Tallinn as a showcase of what it means to be a sustainable, smart, and inclusive city. The **Estonian Convention Bureau** has a crucial role to play here, providing free, impartial advice and practical support to event organisers and ensuring that every meeting is a success with cutting-edge innovation and sustainable practices.

visit estonia





“The greatest *Olympic legacy* we want to leave is a clean River Seine where people could swim”

2024 was a brilliant year for the aspirations and forecasts of the **Paris je t'aime Convention Bureau**. In the latest ICCA rankings, Paris has returned to the absolute top as the main destination for international congresses, with 156 face-to-face congresses. Over the last ten years, the French capital has always occupied one of the top three places in this ranking, coming first seven times. Following on from this, the convention bureau previously carried out a survey which showed a record 800 conventions for around one million convention attendees.

As if that weren't enough, the **Paris 2024 Olympic Games** will undoubtedly be the centrepiece of this year's major events, having a huge impact on the future of the city and its urbanism - as you can read below. Our **Managing Director, Vivian Xu**, was there at the beginning of March and told us about her unique journey through the various corners of the city, witnessing its transformation to host the Games (*check it out in our HQ #114*). In addition, Paris 2024 is working closely with the city to halve greenhouse gas emissions, using 95% of existing infrastructure to reduce the impact on the environment. A unique opportunity to sit down with **Corinne Menegaux, General Manager of Paris je t'aime**, for an exclusive interview:

Can you name some of the projects aligned with the Games? How involved are you?

We've been working on a hospitality manifesto to involve all the players operating both in the B2C market and business travel. That is to improve sustainability, inclusion, accessibility but also the local economy and the visitor experience. It was also an opportunity to develop some new digital tools.

Myparisjetaime, for example, was launched as a geolocation web app to offer different personalised services, such as smart itineraries, ticket offices, mobility options and real-time news. The plan was to complement a comfortable stay at the Olympic Games on the consumer side, where the local economy, cultural centres, and art galleries could be promoted. The idea is to use it as a lever for business travel and the tourism industry with specific content and centres



According to our studies, when a conference is held in Paris, it attracts 30% more delegates than any other city. That's why we also developed Myparisjetaime, to facilitate the process and the visitor's experience on site.

of interest, where you can easily and intuitively go from an exhibition park to a sports arena.

It's a way of discovering the city and what's around it, in the context of your sector or activity. If you have two hours for lunch and don't know what to do, you can always find a way to visit some museums and galleries linked to your professional sector or the event you're attending. By instance, if you find yourself in a design exhibition like Maison&Objet, the web app can recommend some exhibition halls and landmarks within this category. The application has also been designed for services, such as transport, allowing you to book tickets, schedule activities and various mobility options with a single account. We will take the first step at these Olympic Games, but we intend to adjust the platform to the different market segments by the end of the year.

What is your plan for reusing the venues and infrastructure after the Games? What legacy do you want to leave the city?

These Olympic Games will be very specific as practically nothing new has been built – 95% of the infrastructure was already in place. It's important to emphasise the idea of a positive and purposeful impact resulting from the re-use and future role of the buildings and works of this mega-event. The contribution of the Olympic Games will also leave some infrastructure that can be used for the MICE industry, such as the **Aquatic Centre** or the **Olympic Village** in Saint-Denis. This is also where we decided to materialise our sustainable city values with new cycle paths, soft mobility, low-impact transport networks and the addition of new lines to our integrated metro system. Added to this, I think the greatest legacy we will leave will be a clean River Seine where people can swim in the future.

If we look at the MICE industry, the biggest benefit would be accessibility along with transport. Paris je t'aime has been working on this with hotel room audits, providing a dedicated hotline and an optimal version entirely dedicated to people with disabilities. Using the app, you can filter the information you want for any disability. From a transport point of view, we're going to have new lines such as the extension of line 14 linking Paris to Orly Airport, and we'll soon have the CDG Express that will connect Gare de l'Est in Paris with Charles de Gaulle Airport. When we see so many developments taking place in Saint-Denis, for example, it takes us back to a wider, more connected Paris that doesn't just die out in the city centre. It is part of a larger process towards which we are moving between modernisation, cohesion, accessibility and sustainability.

What criteria and priorities are followed when bidding for events in your city these days?

Our primary objective is to bid for conferences and congresses that leave a legacy in the city, because that's the keyword for our tourism office. Of course, we want to host all events as this is important for the destination's economy – I remind you that 50% of our visitor economy is dedicated to the events industry. In addition to the number of congresses we organise, we also host around 400 tradeshows, raising the profile of Paris as a destination for different sectors of activity and professional groups. What we really want is for people to choose Paris with that reason in mind. I believe that when an association chooses a venue for its congress and/or delegates, the venue has to reflect the conviction of that organisation. Hence, the most important thing for us in Paris is to host conferences that reflect these values, such as sustainability, accessibility, local economy and urban bequests. When we hosted the 30,000-strong **European Society of Cardiology congress**, we decided to create a specific space for the public, to pass on best practices for saving lives, which has been an excellent legacy for Parisians.

We have some strategic sectors that are fundamental to us such as innovation and technology, finance, healthcare, sports obviously, but also e-sports. I would say that we fit those areas, but also everything related to creation, design, fashion, and art, as we have the best art and fashion shows in the world. Gastronomy too, everything that has to do with *l'art de vivre*. Being open to everything, we must focus primarily on these events, because technically we cannot do everything for everyone.

How are you designing your sustainable roadmap for the 2024 Games? Will you be restrictive in terms of sustainable policies and guidelines after the Games?



I wouldn't say we can be too strict because these are also individual decisions that we cannot interfere with. However, we will do everything we can to empower this sustainability awareness by guiding the organiser to make the right decisions. We have just launched an impact calculator that goes beyond the carbon footprint, also covering the effects from an economic point of view, and including the social and material contributions that will be included in the total calculation. This tool is available free of charge to anyone organising an event in Paris, turning it towards local artists and performers, suppliers and DMCS. It's also a quick-thinking global model on sustainability for large international event destinations, such as Paris, which has 80% of its attendance coming from abroad and on long-haul flights. We need to find solutions to alleviate this burden and, to do this, we will have to work with local players and contribute to local projects with impact. This is the major challenge for the coming years after the Games.

Before the Olympics, the aim was to get closer to these planners and organisers, so that will be the next step. A robust website with some specific tools and content strictly dedicated to business travellers, with tips for getting the most out of the destination and making the travel process easier.

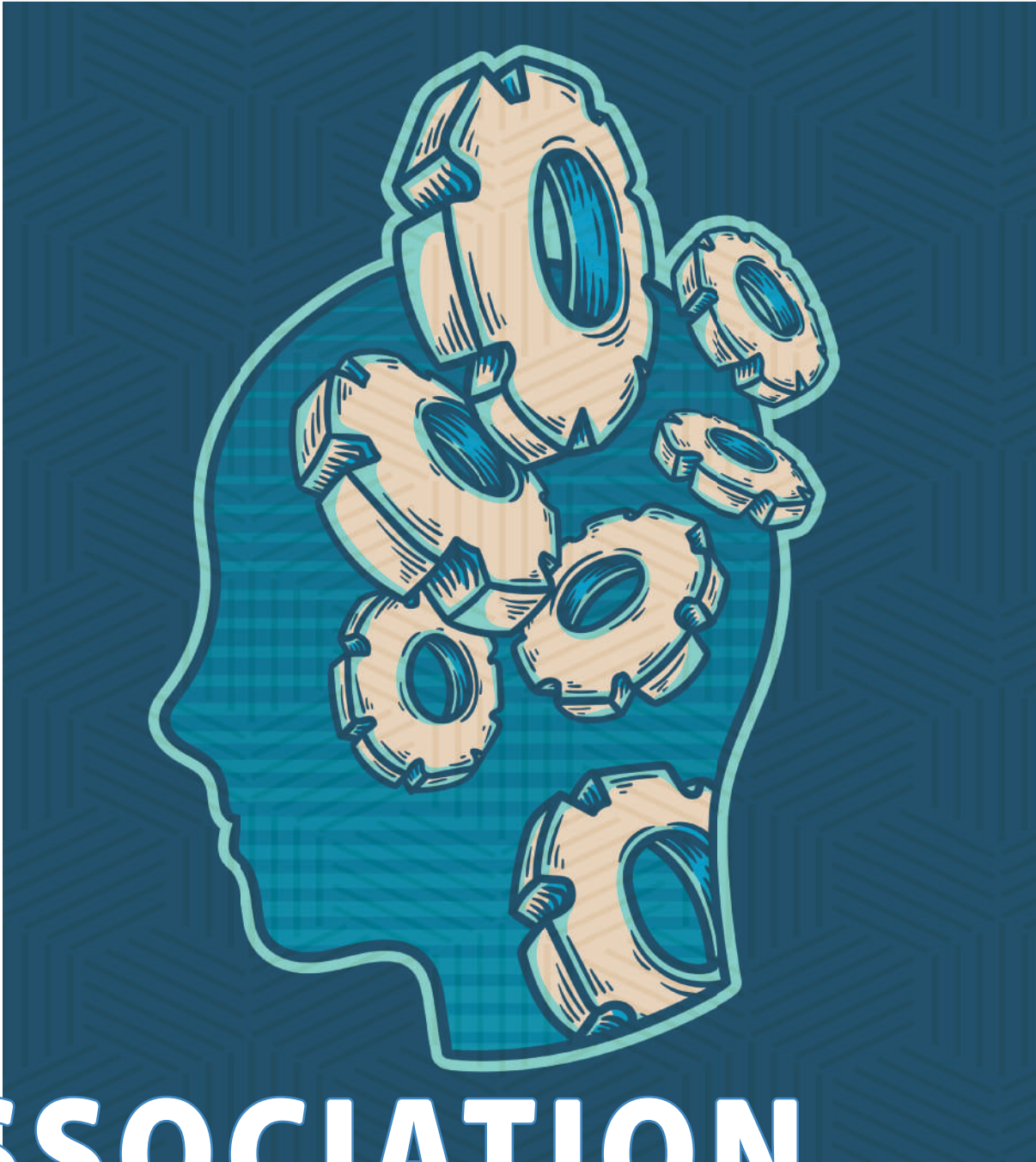
Considering the city's reputation and the future challenges of tourism, how will you manage large flows of visitors without jeopardising the lifestyle of local residents?

This affects the leisure sector more than the business sector, but in fact, Paris has a specific position in this regard as it deals with two main levers. The first concerns our main monuments, attractions and museums, as they're located in

places that don't substantially affect residents' lives. Attractions like the Seine, the Louvre, Orsay, and the Eiffel Tower, are not so exposed to residents who, in this way, do not overlap with the visitors.. The second aspect, which is very important, comes from the fact that around two-thirds of our tourists end up returning, that is, they're not first-time visitors. These repeat visitors end up discovering the city in a different way by avoiding the places they've been before.

This will force us to work hard to offer alternative itineraries that pass through a second layer of Paris with its *patisseries*, secondary museums, bookshops and antique shops. The Olympic Games will also help us to optimise our territory, so it's not only the Seine and the neighbourhoods around it that are important for our urban design, but also Seine-Saint-Denis, Hauts-de-Seine and all their artistic and architectural gems. We must capitalise on our city's resources, keep our eyes open and guide visitors accordingly. This is our main mission and the same will happen with the MICE industry, as in these locations within the closest suburbs of Paris, it will be very easy to hold your event in Saint-Ouen or Ici les Moulinois, and then come to Paris for dinner. In short, with demographic movements, new transport connections and strategic planning for the Olympics, we will draw a different map of the city in the coming years.

HQ INSIGHTS



ASSOCIATION & P CO



Sustainability or Greenwashing

Is Sustainability Still Relevant in the Meetings Industry?

AN ARTICLE FROM WORLD PCO ALLIANCE

Sustainability has been an important presence for several years now. Over this period, we have seen many events go paperless, incorporate onsite recycling and composting facilities, and more.

Still, sustainability continues to invite scepticism and struggle for some associations, and these organisations are asking themselves several questions, namely: What will the future of sustainability look like, and what is required to implement it?

André Vietor, Nancy Tan, Ksenija Polla and Noel Mitchell of the **World PCO Alliance** were asked to tackle the complexities implicit in sustainability, and they share their experiences in this article.

Sustainability Is Here to Stay

Ksenija Polla of Talley Management Group Inc. points to the *ICCA-Destination Canada 2023 Sustainability report*, which shows that most organisations surveyed placed a high level of importance on sustainability, with almost one-quarter considering it extremely important. Additionally, 83% of respondents are actively pursuing sustainability in their event practices, highlighting a growing trend towards integrating sustainability as a core value in the meetings industry.

In turn, **André Vietor of Bco Congressos** points to a number of factors that are imposing the demand on associations to prioritise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), including stricter environmental regulations and government policies, and a growing demand for sustainability commitments from conference attendees, sponsors, exhibitors as well as other stakeholders: “These factors encourage or even require associations to adopt sustainable practices in all aspects of their operations, including their meetings.” As a result, there is a growing preference for venues that are sustainably certified, following practices such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and the use of renewable energy sources.

While in-person attendance is the clear favourite, the pandemic did popularise virtual and hybrid meeting formats, which significantly reduce the carbon footprint associated with travel and accommodation. **Noel Mitchell of Keynote PCO** has noticed that in-person conferences are indeed facing a backlash due to the travel involved, which is particularly a factor in destinations like Ireland, where air travel is essential. The meetings industry is responding to this criticism by actively building information on the benefits associated with physical meetings, extending far beyond simple economic measures. While this information is useful

in general for building understanding and funding with governments, it is also a counter-argument to sustainability criticism.

Along similar lines, awareness campaigns and educational programmes by industry associations, non-profits, and government bodies are promoting the benefits of sustainable meetings and providing guidance on best practices, and there is a growing emphasis on measuring and reporting the environmental impact of meetings. “Overall, the trend towards integrating sustainability into meetings programmes is gaining momentum,” says Vietor, “reflecting broader societal shifts towards environmental responsibility and sustainable development.”

Using the Singapore MICE landscape as an example, **Nancy Tan of Ace:Daytons Direct** agrees that there is an ever-increasing awareness and appreciation for integrating sustainability into meeting programmes. Singapore ranks #17 globally and #2 in Asia-Pacific in the **2023 Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index)**, and has also achieved the certification for the **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Destination Criteria**, becoming the first country to apply the certification process on a national level.

Sustainability Is Good, As Long as There Is a Substantial Commitment

While both Tan and Vietor acknowledge that there is some scepticism among associations with regard to the true effectiveness of sustainability, they both maintain that sustainable practices are a vital element of any association’s meeting. The issue is on the level of true commitment behind such practices. As Vietor points out, “some organisations strive to appear environmentally friendly in an effort to satisfy





stakeholder expectations or enhance public image, without making a significant environmental impact.” Some examples include a single-use plastics ban without alternatives, recycling bins without verifying that the waste is being disposed of in a sustainable location, carbon offsetting without reduction efforts, green certifications without genuine commitment, eco-friendly promotional items, paperless initiatives without reducing overall consumption or greenwashing in marketing.

“While many organisations have sustainability embedded in high-level planning, fewer have integrated detailed operational aspects like Key Performance Indicators and Event Codes of Conduct,” says Polla. “These more detailed elements require significant effort and commitment and are associated with higher degrees of transparency and accountability, which some organisations may find challenging to implement.”

The effectiveness of any practice or policy depends on proper implementation, genuine commitment, and integration within broader, more impactful sustainability strategies. “It’s important for associations to critically assess and continuously improve their sustainable practices to ensure they are making a real difference rather than just creating a green image,” says Vietor.

Implementing Long-lasting Sustainability Is Not Always Easy

The truth is there is a significant logistical and financial effort that is required for associations to adopt sustainable practices, which implies certain challenges such as cost, travel-related emissions, and education. Some associations struggle with the pressure to be ‘green enough’, as integrating comprehensive sustainability practices can be resource-intensive and complex.

Integrating sustainability into meetings and events can be complex. It involves coordinating multiple aspects, such as venue selection, transportation, catering, waste management, and attendee engagement. The scope of this task can be overwhelming, particularly for smaller teams. Without clear metrics, it’s difficult to accurately measure the environmental meeting impact and demonstrate the effectiveness of green initiatives, which is then a challenge to justifying sustainability investments.

Tan agrees that sustainability has its challenges, saying, “SMEs in the MICE landscape are primarily concerned about the costs, the lack of appropriate human resources due to staffing shortages, and the complexities involved in implementing sustainable practices. Additionally, SMEs are concerned about when the ROI for these sustainability efforts will materialise and whether they can afford to wait.”

Finally, associations must balance sustainability with other priorities, such as cost efficiency, attendee experience, and operational feasibility. This can sometimes lead to compromises that make it hard to achieve an association’s desired level of ‘greenness.’

Vietor acknowledges all the above-mentioned barriers, but remains optimistic. “The growing awareness and availability of resources, technologies, and support systems are gradually helping more organisations to overcome these barriers and adopt sustainable practices. And the World PCO Alliance members are, of course, a perfect partner for guiding associations through this journey.”

What does the future of sustainability look like? Here are some of the trends that are likely to only get stronger:

- **Low-waste catering** (charity donations or food banks)
- **Using local produce** (reducing food miles and greenhouse gas emissions)
- **Encouraging public transport** (incentives and discount passes)
- **Advanced data analytics** (track and improve sustainability performance)
- **Increased government support** (grants and guidelines)
- **Increased integration of sustainability** (strategic event planning)
- **Collaborative efforts** (collaboration between event organisers, venues, suppliers, and attendees)
- **Innovative technologies** (AI, IoT, and blockchain)
- **Participants’ influence** (green practices and transparent communication)
- **New tools and resources** (carbon calculators and guidelines for best practices)
- **Education and awareness** (comprehensive educational resources and toolkits)
- **Recognition and incentives** (awards and financial incentives for planners)

So, while sustainability is here to stay, its continued prominence largely depends on each association’s genuine commitment to sustainable practices. With a spirit of openness, collaboration and innovation, meetings can be an inspirational CSR advocate and a shining example to other industry sectors.



World PCO Alliance



Kenes Group joins the **UN Global Compact**

Elevating the Leadership Role in Sustainability of the Associative Sector

BY ESTEFANÍA ZÁRATE ANGARITA, KENES GROUP MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



In today's global corporate landscape, the imperative for sustainability is not merely a trend but a fundamental responsibility that organisations across sectors are embracing. Among these, the meetings and associations sector, often pivotal yet understated in its impact, is making significant strides towards sustainable practices. **Kenes Group**, a renowned Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) and Association Management Company (AMC), has exemplified this commitment by joining the **United Nations Global Compact**.

The UN Global Compact stands as the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, urging companies to integrate human rights principles, labour standards, environmental stewardship, and anti-corruption measures into their operations and strategies. Established in 2000, this voluntary initiative has garnered participation from over 15,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories worldwide, spanning more than 160 countries.

Kenes Group's decision to align with the UN Global Compact in October 2023 underscores its dedication to fostering sustainable business practices. **CEO Ori Lahav** affirms, "Kenes Group reaffirms its support of the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact through our ongoing efforts in human rights, labour standards, environmental sustainability, and anti-corruption measures." This commitment is not just a statement but is substantiated by the company's first Communication on Progress (CoP) submitted to the UN Global Compact in April 2024.

In this inaugural CoP, Kenes Group transparently details its sustainability initiatives and progress, encapsulating its *Sustainability Report for 2023*. This report, a cornerstone of the organisation's *Sustainability Road Map 2023-2025*, outlines comprehensive strategies

ranging from governance and ethical practices to climate action. Besides the Sustainability Report for 2023, the CoP constitutes a 79-queries questionnaire disclosing the progress and commitments of the company in terms of governance, human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption measures.

Elena Fis, Sustainability Officer at Kenes Group who leads the PCO's involvement with the UN Global Compact initiative, emphasises: "Joining the UN Global Compact is pivotal for us as it enhances our global collaboration efforts and strengthens our commitment to ethical business practices and environmental awareness. At the beginning of 2024, Kenes Group introduced, for the first time, a sustainability strategy for the company and all of our events that is aligned with all ten UN Global Compact principles."

Moreover, Kenes Group's employees now have access to the **UN Global Compact Academy**, an invaluable resource hub providing actionable insights and best practices tailored to diverse corporate functions. This initiative not only equips the workforce with essential knowledge but also empowers them to drive sustainable practices across all levels of the organisation.

The significance of Kenes Group's participation in

the UN Global Compact extends beyond its internal operations. It signifies a broader recognition within the meetings and associations sector of its role in the global corporate ecosystem. By embracing sustainability principles, Kenes Group not only enhances its corporate reputation but also aligns itself with global goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations.

Through its proactive engagement with the UN Global Compact, Kenes Group sets a precedent for other organisations within the sector. As the world increasingly demands corporate accountability and transparency, initiatives like these illustrate how companies can leverage their influence to foster positive change globally.

In conclusion, Kenes Group’s journey with the UN Global Compact exemplifies a proactive approach to sustainability within the meetings and associations sector. By integrating ethical principles into its business



Kenes Group reaffirms its support of the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact through our ongoing efforts in human rights, labour standards, environmental sustainability, and anti-corruption measures.

strategies and operations, Kenes Group not only upholds its commitment to responsible practices but also reinforces the associative sector’s pivotal role in advancing global sustainability goals. As we navigate towards a more sustainable future, initiatives like these are crucial in paving the way for a corporate world that prioritises people, the planet, and prosperity.

WE SUPPORT



The **Communication on Progress** is an annual disclosure to stakeholders on progress made in implementing the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact in the areas of **human rights, labour, environment** and **anti-corruption**, and in supporting the **Global Goals**.



#UnitingBusiness



HUMAN RIGHTS



LABOUR



ENVIRONMENT



ANTI-CORRUPTION



KENES GROUP



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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Associations Can Make a Difference Through Sustainable Practices – *In Fact, We Have To*

Sustainability is not really an ‘issue’ anymore. It has moved past the issue stage and into the consciousness of virtually every company, organisation, association, and government in the world. The next step is to make it a true priority of all these entities, and associations need to be taking the lead in this arena.

There are some people who will say that associations are merely organisations representing an industry, or a profession, or a cause of some type, and the association itself does not really have much of a carbon footprint. Those people need to think again. Associations have the opportunity to help shape the future of the fight to protect the worldwide environment by being committed, being proactive, and being courageous.

Here are some of the ways to do those:

Being Committed

1. Adopt a policy that clearly states your organisation’s commitment to sustainability in all aspects of your operations.
2. To go an extra step, amend your organisation’s mission statement and/or bylaws to include your sustainability dedication.
3. Implement association in-house practices that encourage energy conservation and related actions. For example: offer incentives to employees who use public transportation or carpool; install water-saving devices in association offices; reduce paper consumption by relying on cloud usage and electronic backup for documents; continue using video conferencing and other alternatives to replace the need for members and staff to travel, etc.

Being Proactive

1. When sending a RFP to venues that wish to host your meetings, conferences, and other events, require the venue to describe its sustainability efforts. These would include green building standards or recognitions earned where applicable, LEED certifications (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is the world’s most widely adopted green building rating system), water conservation methods, etc.

2. Extend your organisation's efforts to your members, exhibitors, and delegates at your events. Give them specific suggestions on ways they can assist your desire for a more environmentally friendly event.

3. Implement energy-saving actions at your events, including: paperless sessions, with links and QR codes to guide your attendees to session content; replace paper programmes with event apps; offer incentives for exhibitors to limit the amount of paper they distribute to booth visitors (personal note: I've often thought if I could retrieve the exhibitor handout material left in attendees' hotel rooms after my conventions, I would collect enough material to provide back to my exhibitors for them to supply their next convention); work with the venue to assure food and beverage functions (including exhibit floor and session breaks) are using the best practices to limit waste and trash, etc.

4. Include sessions at your meetings on sustainability. Show members how they can be part of your efforts through the adoption of environmentally friendly practices in their businesses, their workplaces, their institutions, their communities and in their personal lives. Show them the impact that they can make individually, and collectively.

5. If possible, use one of your keynote slots in your speaker lineup to have a sustainability expert describe the critical need for energy saving and the scope of what can happen if everyone works together.

Being Courageous

1. Fight against the pushback. There will be some who will be sceptical about your motives, actions, and sincerity. They will think that your organisation is adopting a "issue of the moment" stance; they will not want to be ostracised if they do not participate (i.e., it will cost their company a lot of money; it will be hard to sell to their employers, etc.) They have legitimate concerns in many cases. But we need to be prepared to openly discuss their concerns and move forward.

2. Stand up to your commitments. You do not have to insist on venues meeting all your sustainability criteria but let them know that all other things being equal, sustainability could be the deciding factor in which venue you select.

3. Take a risk by putting measurement criteria on your association's commitment to sustainability. Examples: How many/what percentage of your members sign on to your commitment; by what date will you meet each of your goals/priorities; how many of your meeting venues have acquired LEED certification or have implemented energy-saving measures, etc.

Associations have a unique platform and numerous opportunities to be on the leading edge of the sustainability movement worldwide. It is not a social issue; it is not a passing fad; it is not an option... it should be part of your mission.

Mastering Continuous Engagement

Four Key Strategies For Your Association

AUTHOR: FELICIA ASIEDU, MARKETING DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE, CVENT



It's time to say goodbye to short-lived engagements that dissipate once an association conference concludes. In the dynamic landscape of association management, sustaining member engagement beyond conferences and events is paramount. Members should feel like active participants in a vibrant community and not like they've been ghosted until the next event comes along. By mastering continuous, year-round engagement, associations can extend their reach before, during and after their events, fostering deeper, long-lasting relationships with their members.

Although we speak of 'continuous' engagement, the key is to maintain engagement between conferences and not to create one endless event. By utilising event technology, association planners can nurture ongoing connections and interactions among members through curated content, community building, interactive engagement and data analysis. Seize the continuous engagement opportunity with these four key strategies to support sustained growth and meaningful interactions.

1. Building a Thriving Community

To keep members engaged, you need to create fresh, compelling content and relevant experiences with diverse opportunities to connect. Doing this will put you on the right track to nurturing a more engaged and connected community. Then, all your events can be truly interconnected rather than siloed experiences.

TIP: With continuous engagement, attendees can do more than engage with your content in advance – they can interact with one another. By facilitating opportunities for early connections, members will be even more prepared for in-person experiences and can build a network of connections that transcends individual face-to-face opportunities. Encourage member participation in special interest groups, committees and forums to deepen their sense of community and leverage technology to live-stream or record events, allowing remote members to participate and engage in real-time or on-demand.

2. Exclusive Content and Resources

Reward member loyalty and encourage participation by offering exclusive content, resources or perks. Provide access to premium webinars, industry reports or early-bird discounts to enhance their membership experience and boost continued engagement.

TIP: Adding value with tailored content incentivises continued engagement, so provide resources that align with your members' professional challenges and aspirations.

3. Engage Attendees Through Interactive Elements

Incorporate polling tools, live Q&A sessions and gamification into your conferences and events to encourage audience participation and feedback. Also, facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and collaboration through interactive sessions and group activities, as well as networking opportunities, enabling members to learn from each other's experiences and expertise.

TIP: Interactive elements deepen engagement and create memorable experiences that resonate with attendees long after the event ends. Encouraging active participation fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the community.

4. The Power of Event Data

Conduct surveys to gain insights into member behaviours and preferences, including preferred conference formats, topics of interest, and desired engagement levels. Whether in-person, hybrid, or virtual, knowing what resonates with your association's members is key to driving engagement.

TIP: Data insights can inform future event planning strategies to meet the evolving needs of your community, allowing you to deliver more engaging and personalised experiences.

Successful continuous engagement programmes will connect multiple events year-round, across in-person, virtual and hybrid. With the right event management technology, association planners can enhance the overall member experience, streamline event operations, and increase ROE (return on event).



How Can Event Tech Provide a *Greener*, More Sustainable Experience?

Associations are working towards a greener future and technology needs to play a central role. A huge part of this will include how digitalisation and climate-related targets can work together to combat the negative impacts of the events.

This is something that **ExpoPlatform**, as an event tech provider, takes seriously – with its **Meetings Make Trees** programme helping associations to plant trees to cut their carbon footprint. Thankfully, there is also a host of tech tools that can power sustainable shows, which is increasingly important for brand reputation.

Your starting point should be to create a mobile app for round-the-clock engagement, eliminating the need for printed materials, such as brochures, schedules, and maps. Delegates can access all relevant information on the app, from event agendas and profiles to real-time communication and updates. This significantly reduces the reliance on paperwork in traditional event set-ups, lowering your carbon footprint.

Tools such as a dedicated event website or event app have features to enable delegates to customise their agendas. Users can indicate their preferences, select specific sessions or presentations they would like to attend and mark their preferred time slots. These can be easily updated and communicated in case of any last-minute changes. As a result, you no longer have to use printed schedules while providing a tailored experience that is also more environment-friendly.

Following this theme, digital pre-reads allow associations to avoid printing large quantities of materials. This eliminates the need for physical handouts and again lowers your show's carbon footprint. Digital pre-reads can be easily updated and customised, creating a more personalised experience.

Meanwhile, online registration facilitates electronic check-ins and removes the need for paper-based forms and other materials like ink and envelopes. Participants can register and provide the necessary information digitally – saving time so

more delegates can get through the doors quickly. Using an online registration also eliminates the need for manual data entry and reduces the risk of errors and excessive paperwork.

Another online feature that eliminates the need for paper is an interactive floor plan. This tool does away with the need for physical maps of the venues, reducing waste. Associations can also reduce the use of printed signage on the conference floor. Additionally, the data collected from the floor plan helps identify bottlenecks and improves traffic flow, helping streamline movement and minimising energy consumption.

One area where event tech can help associations boost green credentials and expand monetisation streams is through online ads and banners. The digital nature of these means they can be edited, repurposed, targeted and utilised repeatedly. Associations don't have to deal with the production, transportation and disposal of paper-based materials.

Moreover, using event tech to display ads, such as splash screens on apps, provides valuable insights into the audience's interactions and preferences. Data analytics can provide information on click-through rates, views and engagement levels.

Finally, delegates can provide their input and opinions through digital forms, polls and surveys. This feedback is collected, organised and analysed in real time, enabling quicker insights into attendee satisfaction, preferences and areas for improvement. This not only enhances the efficiency of the feedback management process but also minimises the need for physical paper, printing resources and manual data entry – contributing to a more eco-friendly event.

Are Your Events really Sustainable? Or is it *an Act of Greenwashing?*

Sustainability has been a topic of consistent discussion in the meetings industry for the past few years and is currently one of the hottest topics that all parties involved, from destinations to organisers, venues, and suppliers, are trying to address from their side. Having said that, a lot of events and many stakeholders, intentionally or unintentionally, lean towards greenwashing rather than being sustainable in the true sense.

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As per the **World Research Institute (WRI)**, CO₂ emissions from human activities are now higher than at any point in history. In 2022, global CO₂ emissions were 182 times higher than they were in 1850, around the time of the Industrial Revolution. The United Kingdom was the world's largest CO₂ emitter in 1850, followed by the United States. As of 2022, China leads in emissions, followed by the U.S., India, Russia, and Japan. The U.S. has the highest emissions per person currently.

Events, large or small, have considerable potential to leave a lasting impact – not only on the participants but also on our environment and communities. Therefore, the rising trend of incorporating sustainability into event planning is a response to this understanding and a commitment to minimise harm while maximising benefits. The foundation of sustainable event planning is built upon the *Triple Bottom Line* – a framework that integrates three different aspects: economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

From efforts to reduce energy consumption, minimise waste, opting for digital rather than printed communications, and local sourcing for food supplies to offsetting plans are some of the actions undertaken by the industry to make the events as sustainable as possible. However, the biggest hurdle in this is the actual data in order to analyse the carbon footprint of an event followed by the actions taken to reduce or offset the same, which becomes a root cause of greenwashing.

Greenwashing – summed up by the UN as “misleading the public to believe that a company or entity is doing more to protect the environment than it is.”

So, the big point here is that if you cannot measure the carbon footprint, to begin with, the action plan will never be aligned or have a defined objective to reduce the carbon footprint. In addition, a lot of times, the actions themselves are great in nature but, again, cannot be measured, leading to information based on assumptions or just feel-good factors.

In order to better understand how event organisers intentionally or unintentionally engage in greenwashing, here are some common examples:

1. Token gestures: Actions like planting trees and donations to local charities are all great initiatives, but in reality, they are more feel-good factors than really addressing the problems of sustainability and contributing to their reduction.

2. Inaccurate reporting: Without a detailed analysis and measurement, reports on carbon footprints and actions aimed at reducing them are usually misleading and do not provide a true picture of an event's sustainability. Offsetting actions are very common among event organisers but never equate to the emissions caused by extensive travel, excessive energy use, and other actions taken to plan and run an event.

3. Collaborations & Partnerships: Partnering and collaborating with organisations need to be aligned with the event's sustainability strategy; otherwise, it can often be seen as contradictory or misleading.

4. Transparency: A lack of transparency is a significant issue in the event industry. Organisers often fail to provide clear information about how they are mitigating environmental impacts or how participants

can contribute to their efforts. Sustainability is not achieved by just one event. Destinations and organisers have to integrate this into their organisation at every step and in every process. From sustainability accreditations to sustainable policies leading to efficient operations is what needs to be looked at. Event organisers even today undertake flying in a huge number of speakers across borders rather than finding local experts as well as flying in their teams to run event operations rather than finding local partners. It is simple adjustments to these kinds of actions that can also lead to more sustainable events in the future. Choosing venues, suppliers and various partners should be carefully looked into to ensure they strengthen the objectives of being sustainable and are not taking the event in the opposite direction.

Whilst a lot of actions are taken by the organiser from an event planning and organising perspective, one cannot ignore the aspect of managing attendee behaviour. Changing habits is hard, and this truth extends to your event attendees. It might be difficult to ensure attendees adhere to sustainable practices during the event, such as correctly using designated recycling bins or opting for public transit over personal vehicles. One can even look at incentivising attendees to be involved in this process so this becomes a shared objective and not just the responsibility of the

organiser. Genuine sustainability shouldn't involve any of these superficial measures but rethinking the entire event lifecycle – from planning to execution and through to post-event activities. By adopting holistic practices, events can become powerful platforms for promoting and achieving real sustainability, shunning greenwashing and creating a positive impact that extends far beyond the event itself. This will not only lead to higher attendee satisfaction at your event but also assist in boosting brand image and reputation.

So, for your next event, start by defining your sustainability objectives, being transparent, and communicating them to all stakeholders to engage and involve them in the process. Once clearly communicated, lead with a practical plan to implement them, and finally, accurately measure and report the results, which can then become a benchmark for future editions and other events to further improve and evolve the process.

“ **Greenwashing – summed up by the UN as misleading the public to believe that a company or entity is doing more to protect the environment than it is.** ”

IAPCO is a global not-for-profit membership organisation whose mission is to raise the standards of service amongst its members and other sectors of the meetings and events industry by means of continuing education, interaction with other professionals and research. IAPCO today represents 138 accredited businesses of professional congress organisers in 40 countries. IAPCO membership is achieved through the demonstration of a continual high level of service delivery and is retained through annual quality checks and reviews by the IAPCO Quality Committee.



Leading *City Destinations Alliance* into an Era of *Collaboration* and *Innovation*

Barbara Jamison-Woods was elected as the **President of City Destinations Alliance (CityDNA)** in April 2024. *HQ* interviewed her to gain insights into her reflections on her first months as CityDNA President and the association’s future plans.

Barbara, thank you for joining us. You’ve been in your role as President of City Destinations Alliance for a little less than 2 months now. How has the transition been for you?

Thank you for having me. The transition has been both exciting and challenging. I’m grateful for the support I received from **Petra Stuček, our past president**, and the CityDNA Head Office. Their dedication has paved the way for many of our recent achievements, and I’m honoured to build upon that foundation. My initial weeks have been a whirlwind of meetings and strategic planning sessions. Working closely with the Executive Committee and the newly appointed Board has been a privilege, and we’re all committed to maintaining the momentum and driving CityDNA forward.

You have a wealth of experience in tourism and urban promotion. How has your background helped you in these initial months?

My career spans over 25 years in various sectors of the tourism industry, from consumer tourism to destination management and convention bureaux. This diverse experience has given me a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities we face. My role at **London & Partners**, where I focus on enhancing London’s business tourism and events sector, has been particularly beneficial. It has equipped me with insights into urban promotion and investment attraction, which I’m applying to CityDNA’s initiatives.

Can you share some of the key goals you have set for your presidency?

Certainly. One of my primary goals is to increase support for the Head Office team, which is crucial for elevating the CityDNA brand and ensuring sustainable growth. By strengthening this support, we can deliver even more value to our members. Additionally, enhancing member support and communication is a priority. We aim to provide our members with the necessary tools at every stage of their DMO journey, and improving both internal and external communications, content, and stakeholder relationships is essential.



Another important goal is to turn discussions and forums about future-proofing DMOs into innovative and tangible actions that our members can implement. Continuing the work in opening doors within the European Commission and supporting our meetings industry sector through initiatives like the **EU Dialogue** event, is high on my agenda. I want to highlight and elevate the work of our **Knowledge Groups** which are a significant asset to our organisation, by showcasing their contributions, we can further strengthen CityDNA’s impact. Lastly, I want to create meaningful win/win relationships with our commercial partners.

How have your initial months shaped these goals, and what have been some highlights?

The initial months have been very active. Highlights have included:

- A stronger focus on the Meetings/Events/Incentive industry and participating in the **IMEX Policy Forum**, where we discussed the evolution of the business events industry from a transactional to a transformative approach. Additionally, our **CVB Café** brought together 40 convention and visitor bureaux professionals to reflect on industry trends and challenges. These discussions are invaluable as they help shape our strategies and actions.
- We also held a panel discussion on accessibility in destinations, which highlighted the importance of inclusivity in our industry and our **COO Flavie de Bueil** was elected onto the **Board of JMIC (Joint Meetings Industry Council)**.
- Travelling to the Head Office in Dijon for a few days of focused planning meetings with our Head Office team and our **Treasurer, Patrik Romano**.
- Kicking off a series of one-to-one meetings with our commercial partners.

Can you tell us more about the recent and upcoming events that CityDNA is involved in?

Absolutely. Just before my election, we had a highly productive EU Dialogue event in Brussels, which underscored the necessity of a unified voice for the recognition and resilience of our industry. I will be returning to Brussels with Flavie (de Bueil) in July for further discussions with a range of European industry association leaders and also spend valuable time with **Patrick Bontinck, CEO VisitBrussels and Executive Board Member, CityDNA**. And in June, we held the **CityDNA City Cards Expert Meeting** in Tallinn, which was also a great success!

Looking ahead, we have an exciting line-up of events. In August, we will host the 38th edition of the **CityDNA Summer School** in Brno, an event dedicated to newcomers in the meetings industry, offering invaluable training and networking opportunities. In October, the **GDS-Forum & CityDNA Autumn Conference** will take place in Bruges under the theme *Let Pigs Fly*. This event aims to challenge conventional approaches to urban tourism and the visitor economy by showcasing inspiring stories of achieving the impossible and driving transformative change. In November, the **Visitor Experience Expert Meeting for TIC professionals** in Antwerp will provide a platform to discuss best practices and innovative strategies for TICs. We will also host another CVB Café prior to **IBTM World** in Barcelona, offering CVB

professionals the chance to exchange insights and address current challenges. In January 2025, we will bring together CEOs at the **CityDNA CEO Meeting** in Monaco to discuss high-level strategies and foster collaboration among top leaders in the industry.

These events are crucial for fostering collaboration, innovation, and sharing best practices among our members. They provide platforms for meaningful exchanges and help drive the industry forward.

What projects is CityDNA focusing on in the near future?

One major project is the **CityDNA Sustainability Policy**, which aims to identify sustainable practices within CityDNA and pave our road towards a more sustainable organisation in all senses. Additionally, we've been working on roles within the Board according to current priorities and challenges, organising the upcoming **General Assembly 2025**, and optimising relationships with our partners. We're also excited about the *Global Accessibility Report* in collaboration with **Destinations International**. This report will explore how destinations across Europe and North America can better serve people with disabilities, highlighting best practices and areas for improvement.

Furthermore, we plan to involve our Advisory Council more actively, helping to shape the pathway to an innovative future. Having their advice ensures we continue to lead in promoting sustainable, inclusive, and forward-thinking practices within the tourism industry. Most importantly we will be consulting with our membership as co-creation is high on my agenda.

How do you see the role of CityDNA evolving under your leadership?

I envisage CityDNA as “The Leading Alliance for European Cities” in promoting collaboration, innovation, and sustainability within our industry. My goal is to enhance our collective efforts and build upon the amazing achievements of the Alliance to date. By advocating for these values, we can ensure that our member cities remain vibrant and welcoming for all. Additionally, I plan to develop our meeting industry offer, ensuring that we provide cutting-edge resources and opportunities for professionals in this sector. I'm dedicated to nurturing the next generation of leaders in tourism and urban development, and I'm excited about the opportunities ahead.





European Association Summit 2024: Leading, Managing and Innovating for the Future!

The time was ripe for anticipation of a new **European Association Summit (EAS)**, in a different venue and with a new patron pulling the strings. That's what we saw on 22nd May at the exquisite **TheMerode**, Brussels, which brought together around 230 association leaders and event managers for a lively collective brainstorming of the sector under the **ESAE** realm.

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES, HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

After 11 years of running the summit, the **visit.brussels Association** decided to open the door for the **European Society of Association Executives (ESAE)** to take over an event that has already become the barometer of the strongest trends and topics in the European community. One of the founding partners of EAS, **ESAE** is the umbrella organisation for for associations of all kinds in the discussion and facilitation of strategies, practices and business models for association leaders and professionals – *as well as a regular contributor to HQ*. Recreating its nine communities of practice, EAS event trends were widely reflected in the different sessions of the programme with a strong focus on innovation and leadership. Contemplating key themes such as sustainability, legacy, digital transformation, governance and event management, this edition also made room for the debate on the 2024 European Elections in the strategic and legislative context of associations and their advocacy.

This was the starting point for the inaugural session ‘Building

Bridges – Associations and EU policy-making,’ which brought four association leaders face-to-face with the **European Parliament’s Spokesperson and Director-General for Communication, Jaume Duch Guillot**, in the run-up to the European Elections on 9th June. **Lise Fuhr, Director General, European Telecommunications Network Operators Association**, emphasised strategic partnerships with different sectors to shape more skilful policies within the EU; **Aleksandra Palinska, Executive Director of Eurosif**, favoured sustainable development through financial markets and education for the formulation of new policies; while **Jean-François Riffaud, CEO of the European Society of Cardiology**, echoed a democratic push for synergies between associations and the European institutions, with altruistic purposes at the centre of society.

The co-creation session, ‘Crafting Events to Engage Multi-Generational Communities,’ delved into aspects such as mentorship programmes, interactive elements and networking opportunities to design events that bridge

generational gaps in an industry undergoing demographic transition. Within a panel of young professionals from different sectors, case studies were explored referring to communication methods for different age groups, collaborations with universities, and reducing fees and costs for students and interns, in order to put together more inclusive events. After lunch, we returned to the main room to attend the panel 'Leading, Managing, Innovating – Finding the Perfect Mix,' focusing on the interplay of the EAS key themes and how these three elements can be effectively merged for a perfect balance in association management. Strategic planning, the role of the Board vs. Secretariat and the multifunctional culture of modern teams left an indelible mark on the perception of this 'perfect mix,' aligning the political priorities and strategic leadership of the Boards with the operational management and adaptability of staff. Following a logic of co-creation, the audience was divided into three groups that assorted commercial associations, professional societies, non-profits and organisations of various sectors and sizes who were able to discuss the best ways to emphasise integration, adaptability and supportive environments when devising collective solutions.

Moving on to another subject, in the next session we looked at technology and digital, and asked ourselves why AI should be at the top of an association's list of priorities. 'Harnessing Digital and AI Tools for Excellence and Performance,' brought together Heads of Cabinet, Policy and Operations to scrutinise the pressing issues of digital transformation, generative AI, and the safety of AI tools, while the economic potential of a constantly evolving landscape leads us to these operational integrations in communication, marketing and association governance. If the need to adopt digital tools and AI technologies is essential nowadays, and if the application of tech tools is indispensable in the digital age, it is also important to act in accordance with legal and ethical compliance and at a slow pace in adopting and understanding these tools. At least those were the words of **Dan-Flaviu Nechita, Head of Cabinet at the European Parliament**. Risk management, data privacy and ethical uses were therefore frequently brought to the fore when establishing guidelines to be followed by associations and in the potential to revolutionise various sectors of activity.

The last collective session brought several high-profile personalities around the table to consider 'The future of associations: what role will you play?' **Mohamed Mezghani, the new President of ESAE, Michelle Mason, President and CEO of the American Society of Association Executives, Ben Hainsworth, Executive Director of the European Association for the Study of the Liver, Adrian Harris, President of FAIB and Virginia Janssens, Director General of Plastics Europe**, summarised the debates on display at this summit, and in essence, of the general topics that HQ strives to highlight throughout the year. Changes in the **workforce between talent and hybrid models** (check out HQ #113), diversification of revenue streams in business models (read the interview with Olena Lima on page 11), **competition and 'coopetition'** (check out HQ #105) to raise the invaluable significance of associations, and the demand for a new vision of **leadership and governance** in order to command a new era of relevance. The last session of the afternoon saw keynote speaker **Iffat Rose Gill**, an award-winning social innovator and digital strategist, break down barriers and build the future with innovation at the helm. Iffat shared her life experiences and business ideas to address the still latent gender discrimination and digital skills gap among disadvantaged communities, focussing particularly on empowering women through digital inclusion.

European Association Awards: Recognising the best in class!

The day ended in the outdoor courtyard of TheMerode with the **European Association Awards**, which sought to identify and recognise the best projects submitted to the ESAE competition. In this second edition, the ESAE ceremony included four categories: Impact, Digital Communication, Event Transformation, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

See the winners below:

- **UITP** – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- **MedTech Europe** – Digital Communication
- **European Sleep Research Society** – Event Transformation
- **Cycling Industries Europe** – Impact



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