

Sustainability in the Meetings Industry

How to implement CSR in conferences, meetings and events

Bruges will host EFSMI, the 1st European Forum on Sustainability in the Meetings Industry on 27 & 28 June 2010. This international event is an initiative by Charles-Eric Vilain XIII, organised by the MPI Belgium Chapter, and driven by all European MPI Chapters. MPI is the leading professional association in the meetings industry, which aims to make their members successful by building a rich human connection to knowledge and ideas, relationships and market places.

The objectives of the EFSMI

This will be the first time that a specific forum has been organised in Europe around sustainable meeting. It is also the first time that all European MPI chapters will have taken the initiative to set up a project together. The intention is to sensitise and inform meeting planners and suppliers about how a sustainable meeting can be organised and how to make an event more profitable, both ecologically and socially. This forum will itself be a fine case study.

Is sustainable development compatible with meetings and events?

The Meetings Industry is the 2nd biggest polluter in the world. A lot can be done about this with good planning. Think of the choice of the destination, a destination that is easily accessible for example by train, the use of public transport, the venues chosen, avoiding individual water bottles, using green energy, sorting waste, using recyclable material, using local products, making a social contribution to the local population, etc.

CSR: option or obligation?

Whoever only sees Corporate Social Respon-

sibility as image building will not come across convincingly. It's about a total mentality change that is happening today. More than 85% of the companies are already taking minor or major initiatives in that direction. Destinations, hotels, venues, caterers, etc., are no longer chosen at random. Organisers are now also looking at ROI, and CSR certainly plays an important part in this.

How is sustainability measured?

There are various ways to measure this and there are also various standards. The 2 most important and most used measurement systems are APEX and BS8901. The APEX standard is an instrument for the organiser to determine beforehand how sustainable the various meeting suppliers and destinations are. The BS8901 standard on the other hand measures all initiatives during the event and also compares the evolution of one particular event from year to year. During our forum we will have a specific session about these 2 standards, and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.

What can the participants really expect from the conference?

The intention is that at the end of this forum, everybody will know exactly what corporate social responsibility means, that participants will go home with very concrete and practical ideas, that they will learn that thanks to sustainable meeting a lot of expenses can be avoided and ultimately that it is a great networking op-



Charles-Eric Vilain XIII, Conference Director EFSMI 2010.

portunity with colleagues from the whole of Europe.

Why is Bruges the host city?

EFSMI 2010 could only be held in a city with a proven vision on sustainability. This is the case in the World Heritage city of Bruges. VITO (European research and advisory centre, developing sustainable technologies) testifies: The city's administration has made serious efforts over the past years to make the city "cleaner", i.e. environment-friendlier: research was needed to optimise the air quality of Bruges by adjusting the traffic flow. The city as the pilot for using hybrid city buses and energy from the Alps is used for all municipal buildings. Bruges' added value lies in the fact that it is easily accessible by public transport and that all the hotels and convention venues are located within walking distance of each other. Together with the local suppliers, the hosting convention bureau Meeting in Bruges will constantly self-evaluate its sustainability and apply the best practices before, during and after the Forum.

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