



# Time for change?

**A great deal is happening in congressland at the moment. Now that the economy is booming, many organisations consider it time to start looking for a new venue for their congress. Where the traditional national congress market was focused on a fixed location, there is now room for new ideas and changes.**

**I**n spite of the fact that the congress market for associate congresses is less sensitive to economic situations, we now notice a distinct urge to change. From the congress organisers we learn that there are several reasons for the change of venue. Firstly, there is an enormous renewing offer which stimulates congress organisers to give more consideration to the choice. Is a congress in a traditional congress location still sufficiently innovative or are there opportunities to attract more participants or sponsors in case of a change of venue? Is the present location still active enough in what it can offer, or has time stood still there for several years? Are the rates charged still acceptable or is the year on year increase in the rates no longer competitive? These are all issues that should be reconsidered. Time for change!

## GROWTH

The biggest risk for the congress organiser is that it attracts fewer participants or sponsors. In these economically favorable times it is easier to attract participants or

sponsors from other sectors. That is the main reason why the congress organiser has the courage to change. When sponsors or participants give up, it is now easier to replace them. This significantly reduces the financial risk for the organiser. Practice shows that at the moment, the numbers of participants increase and that sponsors, too, commit themselves easier to a congress as a partner.

## ACCESSIBILITY

What, then is the perfect location for a congress? Every day we speak congress organisers and in a large number of cases the accessibility is the most important search criterion when looking for a new venue. Of course this depends on the target group: whether it is located near good public transport connections, or on the other hand can well be reached by car and there is sufficient parking space in the immediate vicinity of the venue. In my opinion it should not be the accessibility that has the topmost priority, but the professionalism, capacity and the link with the location's target group. A relation with the theme of the congress is also a very good

reason to opt for a specific location. If a location really contributes to the success of the congress, then the willingness to travel to this venue is greater. But what about the risk that the target group has the feeling that the venue is not exactly centrally located? Of course, that risk is possible, but if you go for the location's quality and a good intrinsic programme, the trip to that venue is of minor importance.

## INSPIRATION

In selecting a new location, you should not think too much in limitations but make maximum use of what the venue has to offer. Even if the location is not fully compatible with the way the congress was organised year after year, a new venue will open up new ways of thinking. Can I improve on my congress? Can we work in alternative work forms, do we need a different number of subsessions or are the discussions less in class? Be creative. Take your workgroup to the location and walk around on the premises. Be inspired by the venue's elements and let yourself be informed about the possibilities. Now is the time to change!

Guest author Erik Werners is manager/owner of De Vergaderstoel. Under the label of Congres-Service.nl De Vergaderstoel organises congresses for trade unions and companies. De Vergaderstoel inspires, books and organises. The guest author can be contacted via [erik@devergaderstoel.nl](mailto:erik@devergaderstoel.nl)