



Utrecht

# City of knowledge

**With various innovative companies, knowledge and educational institutions, research centers and the projects that result from the collaboration between these players, the city of Utrecht profiles itself as the knowledge city of the Netherlands. In the coming years, in order to further reinforce this profile, the province capital aims to attract more knowledge events compatible with the spearheads Green, Health and Smart.**

One of the locations where knowledge and knowledge development have central position, is the Utrecht Science Park. "Parties like the Utrecht University, the University Medical Center Utrecht and the Hubrecht Institute for Developmental Biology and

Stem Cell Research are major stimulators for research", says Hans Sittrop, manager with the Utrecht Convention Bureau. "Jointly with companies and research institutions like TNO, Deltares, Danone Research, SRON and RIVM these parties develop solutions in the field of bioscience and health, sustainability (energy, water, mobility and construction) and smart applications like gaming. The results of these developments make that Utrecht is more and more often chosen as destination for congresses focused on these subjects. Early April, for instance, the Centre of Expertise Smart Sustainable Cities (HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht) together with six Dutch Universities of Applied Sciences and the Utrecht Sustainability Institute (USI), organized the international conference 'Sustainable Built Environment 2016: TRANSITION ZERO – SBE16' on sustainable building and construction.

By the end of May, the RAID Conference 2016 will take place, focusing on how Robotica, Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and Data can be applied in cities, financial services, health care, transport and the automotive sector. Early October we can welcome the annual International Society of Exposure Science (ISES) congress, which focuses on exposure and environmental health sciences. These great events put the Utrecht Science Park on the map, and reinforce the profile of Utrecht as city of knowledge."

### URBAN DEVELOPMENTS

As regards content, the city is well represented. But in order to be a good host to a congress, the city itself, of course, must also have something to offer. "In the city of Utrecht quite a few developments are under way", says Sittrop. "The area around the railway station is undergoing a complete metamorphosis. On the city-side, the Hoog Catherijne shopping mall which connects the station with the inner city, is completely renovated. Between the station and the city center, the Catherijnesingel is being constructed. Via a modern, light building, you can walk across the water of the new 'singel' (canal) to the inner city." On the other side of the station a 'second facade' is created. The Jaarbeurs square, where Utrecht's largest trade fair and congress venue is located, is being made into an event square. Also, the new city office, a mega cinema and a WTC with small-scale offices, shops and hotels and restaurants are being created. With the construction of terraces, cycle and footpaths around the station area, this will be a new hotspot.

According to Sittrop, this is a great extension of the facilities offered by the wonderful medieval city center. "Here, in a relatively small area, you can find attractions like the Dom Tower (cathedral tower), canals, wharf cellars and museums like the new 'nijntje museum' (Miffy Museum) which was opened to commemorate the 60th anniversary of this well-known cartoon character. Combined with the many great locations, hotels, shops, bars and restaurants, Utrecht offers a lot of entertainment. What is more: within 5 to 10 years, some 750 hotel rooms will be added to the stayover capacity."

Also worth while discovering, for instance by bike, is the 'Utrechtse Heuvelrug' (hill ridge) with its castles, forts, country estates and nature reserves. "The city of Amersfoort boasts wonderful monuments like the Koppelpoort, whereas the former fisherman's village of Spakenburg certainly matches Volendam."

### EXPERT ADVICE

Sittrop thinks that the number of association congresses taking place in and around Utrecht will increase. In order to make this happen, the Economic Board Utrecht (EBU) provides a promotion fund of 1.3 million euros for organizers who realize international knowledge events in the province, which con-



nect to the spearheads Green, Health and Smart. "According to the EU, the region of Utrecht is the most competitive region in Europe. It is by supporting the organization of international knowledge events that we can show the knowledge of Utrecht, disclose its networks and promote Utrecht among relevant target groups."

In these efforts, organizers can count on the assistance of Utrecht Convention Bureau, which offers, free of charge, independent, expert advice about the possibilities for congresses and informal programs in Utrecht, and among other things also provides a bid fund. Initiatives like Hotel Service Utrecht, a free of charge online

reservation service via which participants in congresses and events can simply and safely reserve their hotel room, also make the organization of international meetings easy. "Moreover, from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, Utrecht can be reached by train and car in just half an hour; the prices in the region are also very favorable. Here we have all ingredients to make a congress successful."

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