



# Utrecht: green, healthy and smart city

**Utrecht is the ideal city for international gatherings. The central location in the Netherlands and unique historical setting make Utrecht a natural and obvious meeting place. Hans Sittrop, manager of Utrecht Convention Bureau: "Utrecht offers everything it takes to facilitate a successful conference your guests will remember."**

## SPEARHEADS

Utrecht is the fourth and fastest growing city in the Netherlands, but the number of visitors is also steadily increasing. Sittrop explains: "In a relatively small area, you can find attractions like the Dom Tower, canals, wharf cellars and museums like the 'nijntje museum' (Miffy Museum) which was opened to commemorate the 60th anniversary of this well-known cartoon character. Combined with the many great hotels, shops, bars and restaurants, Utrecht offers a splendid array of leisure facilities."

But before leisure comes work. Sittrop: "Our policy focuses on three areas, spearheads: Green, Health, and Smart. We already have a large number of innovative companies, knowledge and educational institutions and research centers in the city and the immediate region, and the collaboration between these parties results in a great many successful projects. That is why we present our city as the 'smart city'." In order to further reinforce this profile, Utrecht aims to attract more knowledge events compatible with the spearheads Green, Health and Smart.

## CHARACTERISTIC DECISIVENESS

The growing international ambitions of Utrecht and the increasing number of visitors and city residents make innovations of the city's facilities essential. Its largest conference and event venue, Jaarbeurs, builds on the demand from the market for new facilities. In 2016 a large-scale redevelopment of the complex was started, which will take no less than ten years to complete. At the same time, with a characteristic decisiveness, Utrecht redevelops the area around the Central railway station opposite Jaarbeurs. This area includes the most impressive shopping center in the Netherlands, Hoog Catharijne. The project includes an ultra-modern connection between the Utrecht Central Station with the attractive medieval city center.



RIETVELD SCHRÖDERHUIS  
 designed by Gerrit Thomas  
 Rietveld(1888-1964), 1924  
 Image & copyright: Centraal Museum,  
 Utrecht/Ernst Moritz 2009-07

On December 7th, the re-opening of the brand new station will mark the first major step of the ambitious project. This will respond to the needs of the 88 million people who annually make use of this major transport hub, and even further enhance the accessibility of the city. From Schiphol Amsterdam Airport, one of the largest international hubs in Europe, Utrecht can be reached in only half an hour.

According to Hans Sittrop, the redevelopment of the Jaarbeurs and Central Station area is a great extension of the facilities already offered. But that is not all: "Within the next five years, a further 750 hotel rooms will be added to the stayover capacity, thus bringing the number of rooms in the city to a total of 2,500." Sittrop thinks that the number of association congresses taking place in and around Utrecht will increase in the years to come. "According to the EU, Utrecht Region is the most competitive region in Europe. It is by supporting the organization of international confer-

ences that we can show the knowledge of Utrecht, disclose its networks and promote Utrecht Region among relevant target groups."

#### WELL WORTH DISCOVERING

The manager also sees a significant increase for smaller international conferences taking place in the region. "The Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park is an area well worth discovering, with its fairytale castles, country estates and nature reserves. The city of Amersfoort, on the other hand, boasts wonderful monuments like the Koppelpoort, whereas the former fisherman's village of Spakenburg certainly matches the attraction of Volendam." The travel-guide 'Time to Momo' Utrecht, which recently appeared in a Dutch and English version, contains several routes through the city and the region. For the (business) traveler more interested in art, various cities and regions throughout the Netherlands, including Utrecht and Amersfoort, will host parts of the program to commemorate the

100th anniversary of the art movement known as 'De Stijl'. 2017 was declared the 'Mondrian to Dutch Design' Year, and influential work by artists including Gerrit Rietveld and Piet Mondrian will be uniquely spotlighted in new exhibitions and events.

Organizers of national and international meetings and conferences can go to the Utrecht Convention Bureau for professional, independent and free advice on the possibilities offered in Utrecht. The UCB also informs meeting planners about marketing and promotion tools, the financial aspects or grant possibilities for conferences and offers support during bid procedures and site inspections. The Economic Board Utrecht (EBU) provides an incentive fund of 1.3 million euros for organizers who bring international knowledge events to Utrecht Region and which connect to the spearheads Green, Health and Smart. [www.utrechtconventionbureau.nl](http://www.utrechtconventionbureau.nl)