

80 of the world's PCO leaders meet in Athens

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Professional Congress Organisers (PCOs) are meeting in Athens for their annual gathering to discuss issues and answers to this tough economic period and to show that face to face meetings are still very important in such times. Greece has the honour to host the **41st IAPCO Annual Meeting and General Assembly, held in Athens in Grande Bretagne Hotel on 18-21 February 2010.**

The programme includes a wide range of topical subjects that cover all aspects of event planning and organization including procurement, long-term forecasting in Vision 2020, and the position of the pharmaceutical companies within today's market. One particular topic that is always of importance is the collaboration between PCOs and the Convention Bureaux to raise the profile of a destination; this will be discussed in depth with speakers from the European Cities Marketing and Panagiotis Arkoumanas, CEO, Athens Tourism & Economic Development Company (Athens Convention Bureau). The delegates will also get updated on other issues such as sustainability in the congress industry, the involvement of clients and the impact on today's business. Delegates will also participate in working groups and think tanks focusing on specialized topics.

The meetings industry as an engine for economic growth

IAPCO strongly believes that there are opportunities to be had in these tough economic times. Despite the current slowdown of the world's economy, the results of the IAPCO annual survey continue to show that meetings are still a crucial factor of economic growth and a strategic element of an association or company's development. "An event is an opportunity to create a face-to-face experience and an opportunity to reach out and communicate a brand, a new technology, a new study", said Patrizia Semprebene Buongiorno, President of IAPCO, "Meetings have a strategic value because they are part of the corporate business marketing mix".

Conferences in the Greek market

The developing conference market in Greece and especially Athens represents an interesting challenge. Undoubtedly the development of conference tourism is one of the key priorities of the GNTO (Greek National Tourism Organisation), offering a unique opportunity to limit the seasonality of Greek tourism.

Awareness of Athens is quite high because of its unparalleled history. This competitive advantage may prove very effective, given the right and targeted communication. However, it is not enough.

The Athens Convention Bureau (ACB) was founded in 2008 and has a leading role in coordinating the effort to attract events in Athens and gear up the city to become one of the ten most attractive event destinations in the world. The existing infrastructure for hosting big events, new reference points like the recently inaugurated Acropolis Museum and the close cooperation with the conference tourism stakeholders are the most important tools in the hands of ACB.

The Athens Convention Bureau welcomes the 41st IAPCO Annual Meeting and General Assembly in Athens and joins the efforts of the organisers to present the city in the best possible way to the international delegates.