

PRESS RELEASE // FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

17th November 2009

BE RESPONSIBLE!

IAPCO, the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, would like to express its views with regard to the recent Statement of the European Commission :”EU to declare war on business trips”.

It is a recognized fact that there is a need to curb greenhouse gas emissions as part of world’s environmental strategy and the EU is to be commended on embracing this subject. It is however essential that a balanced and objective approach is taken when considering how best to do this. Many seemingly obvious solutions, whilst solving the problem at the outset, create considerable difficulties further down the line.

For example, there is a much publicized move to use local produce in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This could be applauded; however, by limiting the import of produce from certain developing nations, the local economy in those countries suffers dramatically, leading to increased poverty, starvation and ultimately dependence upon those countries who helped inflict the problem upon them. Consequences of seemingly obvious solutions must be thoroughly considered and followed through.

The most recent decision from the EU relates to limiting business trips with the target of reducing them by 20% and replacing them with telecommunication and web-based alternatives.

Business trips embrace many aspects, an important one of which is attendance at meetings, conferences and events. By heavily directing the limitation of business travel, and thus attendance at conferences and events, there are serious consequences further down the line.

1. Many nations do not have the technical infrastructure to participate in such meetings and thus such a dictate is limiting the ability for representatives of those nations to participate in a learning and peer review environment. By limiting the attendance of representatives from European countries, the peer review is moved into a position of imbalance.

2. In many cases there will be technology security problems as sensitive data is often discussed and presented.

3. If attendance at meetings is restricted, or indeed reduced by the proposed 20%, local economies will suffer dramatically. Contributions from delegates equate to approximately €1620 per person [2007 average spend]. Can local governments survive with such a dramatic loss of revenue to their local businesses?

4. Technology cannot replace human interface. Governments must never lose sight of the fact that human beings communicate on a face-to-face basis; no technology can replace the benefit and added value of body language, networking and personal contact.

5. There is a strive for continual learning: Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are two such programmes which require annual further education. This cannot be achieved without human contact, a large part of which is undertaken during specialist conference and meetings. You would not consider it advantageous for your children to be educated purely via books and the internet; no, you require a teacher and for the children to be in attendance in schools; conferences and meetings are the adult's equivalent forum for serious learning.

6. Inspiration evolves from conferences and meetings and however good may the technology be, it can never be as inspiring or thought provoking as actually being there. You need to be a part of the ambiance, soak up the atmosphere, feel the mood, absorb the surroundings. Only then will you truly be able to take away the full power of the information being presented to you.

7. There is a common belief that air traffic is polluting the air. It is however a true scientific fact that air traffic is only contributing to a 5% maximum of the gas emissions worldwide. And now, all airlines are proposing carbon offset programmes to their passengers.

8. The activities of IAPCO members alone represent a global economic impact in excess of 3 B. Euros worldwide. Add to that all the business activities that are not controlled by IAPCO members and you would be, of course, multiplying these figures by probably at least a hundred! Cutting this will have a devastating impact on the economy.

IAPCO, with its members, has long ago already created its own task force and guidelines. We strongly believe that face-to-face meetings, conventions, seminars and events are an essential part of daily life and the economy. Reducing this will have no impact on the world gas emissions but will have a strong negative effect on the world economy and therefore the wellbeing of humanity.

ABOUT IAPCO: Meeting Quality

IAPCO, founded in 1968 is the worldwide association representing professional congress organisers. With over 100 members, IAPCO organises every year its annual meeting and general assembly in a different city and plays a leading role in the promotion of the professionalism of congress organisation throughout the world (Annual Wolfsberg Academy, Regional Seminars, political actions). IAPCO also publishes a number of documents including a code of ethics, a dictionary of technical terms (now in 15 languages) and working brochures. IAPCO is a member of the Joint Meetings Industry Council [JMIC] and the Convention Industry Council [CIC]. IAPCO members organised in excess of 5000 meetings annually, representing more than 1.9 million delegates, with 0.5m2 exhibition space, creating an economic impact of some 3.1 billion euros.

For further information, please contact: IAPCO Head Office : Brambles House, Colwell Road, Freshwater, PO40 9SL, UK Email: info@iapco.org www.iapco.org