

Vienna, October 2020

Austria Center Vienna welcomes financial support package for organisers: important step towards increased planning security in 2021

Austria's event industry has been extremely hard hit by the pandemic. Since March, around 50 events at the Austria Center Vienna have either been postponed or cancelled, meaning this year has been a virtual washout for the congress tourism industry, which is such an important element of the capital's economy. But now a financial support package for organisers could help to convince them to stage events in Vienna in 2021, despite the ongoing uncertainties.

"2020 has been a complete catastrophe for Vienna and the international congress industry. So organisers are very uncertain as regards planning for 2021. Which is why we need to put specific measures in place now that will restore confidence, while also significantly enhancing planning security during these difficult times," explained Susanne Baumann-Söllner, Managing Director of the Austria Center Vienna.

State support package for organisers – a plus point for Vienna

The EUR 300 million financial support package recently agreed in the Austrian parliament is designed to deliver greater planning security in future. If an event is subject to restrictions or is cancelled, the organiser's liability will be limited by the Federal government. "Large-scale events involve lead times of several months, so any short-notice changes can result in significant losses for an event, or prove to be a bridge too far," Baumann-Söllner noted. "We welcome the support package that has just been announced as it will reimburse organisers for unavoidable expenditure due to last-minute changes. This model could give Vienna the lift that it so badly needs and quickly lead other international congress destinations to follow suit."

Conditions for congresses

Other measures besides the financial support package are required to provide the necessary planning certainty for international conferences: "The current cap on participant numbers of 1,500 for indoor events deals a knockout blow to the majority of our events," Baumann-Söllner said. She believes that the maximum number of participants needs to be increased significantly from spring onwards at the very latest, depending on the trend in Covid-19 case numbers. And the congress industry is dependent like virtually no other on developments elsewhere in Europe and overseas. "We want to do our bit to make it possible for events to take place in 2021 with the highest safety standards and the largest possible number of participants. With this goal in mind, in September we launched a rapid test pilot project on our own initiative, which allows participants to get tested and receive their results within 10 minutes. The use of rapid testing and the upcoming financial support package are important steps towards ensuring that Vienna can gradually get off to a new start as a congress destination in 2021."

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responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC) and operating the Austria Center Vienna. The Austria Center Vienna is Austria's largest conference centre, with 24 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 26,000 m² of exhibition space, and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit. www.acv.at

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