

CASE STUDY

No. 7

Continuing the series of case studies from leading PCOs around the world

Beyond Congress Management

Associations are more than their congress, and IAPCO PCOs are more than congress organisers. Delivering innumerable quality congresses has given IAPCO members invaluable insights into the business needs of their clients and has allowed them to become trusted advisors who can contribute to the success of an organisation beyond their congress. IAPCO's philosophy is entirely based on quality, and its members actively share best-practice and develop educational programmes and guidelines which enable them to perform at the highest levels in any area of expertise related to organisational excellence. To illustrate this, IAPCO regularly publishes success stories of members who have helped their clients to be successful not just by organising their congress, but by achieving overarching business objectives.

23rd Congress of Philosophy – WCP 2013

4–10 August 2013, Athens

Greek Philosophical Society, University of Athens

School of Philosophy, FISP (Federation of Philosophical Societies)

Organised by IAPCO Member:

AFEA Travel & Congress, Athens, Greece



The challenge

To maximize the attendee's experience and emphasize Athens as the birthplace of Philosophy.

The International Federation of Philosophical Sciences (FISP) voted for Athens as the host destination for the 23rd World of Congress of Philosophy, year 2013.

The Congress was an outstanding cultural institution that served as an international forum for philosophical research, and a meeting place for philosophical collaborators. It was a unique opportunity for friends of philosophy and thinkers from all corners of the world to meet and present to a unique academic audience.

The Host Society assigned AFEA with the role of the PCO, following a bidding procedure. The ultimate aim of this specific congress, apart from the offering of an upscale networking opportunity among distinguished philosophers, and a unique learning experience, was to also highlight destination "Greece" as the cradle of Western philosophy.

The challenge, the so called "Socratic challenge" in this specific case, was to identify, design and implement the strategy that highlights Athens as the birthplace of Philosophy, and offer attendees a "live" experience of how Plato, Socrates and Aristotle used to wander, create and teach in the ancient sites. This strategy would be used not only to attract participants but also to offer them a unique experience on-site, which they would never forget.



The solution

AFEA worked very closely with the Greek Philosophical Society, the President of the National Organizing Committee, Professor Konstantine Boudouris, as well as FISP, to design the best strategy that would empower Athens as the "birthplace of philosophy" and would lead to success, in combination with key factors such as hospitality and teamwork. It was a project in need of a "beyond congress management" approach and could only be successful through collective work. The proposal was to join forces with the Ministry of Culture & Tourism, and the Athens Convention Bureau, in order to identify the best practice that will make the difference. A strategy was put in place to get special permission from the Authorities to use unique archaeological sites for part of the congress sessions as well as the opening ceremony.

Following bureaucratic procedures and meetings, the Ministry of Culture granted

permission for the opening of the sites. The next step was to coordinate logistics for the set-up, as the sites did not have any of the facilities required to host upscale sessions of that kind. A number of site inspections, special tests on sound, acoustics and set up took place, with the aim to create a scene that would make the attendees feel as real "philosophers" of ancient times.



The outcomes

The Congress participants had a once in a lifetime opportunity, not only to visit these sites passively, but be an active part of the everyday life of a philosopher in ancient times.

Four special philosophical sessions were held in four historical and philosophical important sites of Athens: Plato's Academy, Lyceum/School of Aristotle, the Pnyx/the Assembly (the meeting place of the ancient Athenian Parliament) & Plato's Phaedrus. The Opening Ceremony took place in the Ancient Herodion Theatre. It needs to be highlighted that these sites are usually not open to the public, so special permission had to be granted by Archaeological Authorities and respective Ministries.

A number of volunteers, students of the School of Philosophy, of Athens University, offered their utmost to support the organisation. The element of the perfect climate of Greece was an added value.

AFEA has been instrumental throughout the planning and implementation phase, in close cooperation with the Greek Philosophical Society and FISP. The goal was reached.

As expected, the 23rd World Congress of Philosophy, reaching a total number of 3.200 participants from 105 countries, broke records of attendance and left attendees with the taste of the "revival of philosophy in its birthplace", an experience they could never forget.

"I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to FISP & the Local Organizing Committee for their dedication, and the PCO AFEA who had been instrumental in a very challenging but amazing project."

Professor Konstantine Boudouris
President of the Hellenic Organizing
Committee, President of the International
Association of Greek Philosophy

Learn more about IAPCO and what its members can do for your organisation by visiting our website: www.iapco.org or by contacting us on info@iapco.org.