

Vienna, July 2022

The congress of the future at the European Congress of Radiology in Vienna

Respected event organisers from associations and agencies alike look to the European Congress of Radiology (ECR) for inspirational examples of how to bring industry and science together. Hosted at the Austria Center Vienna, the ECR showcased some of the latest trends for the first time and provided a glimpse of what's round the corner for congresses.

“This year, the European Congress of Radiology revealed a new dimension showing how congresses can be hosted going forward: sustainably, digitally and as unique festivals for participants. Together with the European Society of Radiology we extended an invitation to event organisers to join us in a discussion of the future direction of congresses and the needs of the industry,” explained Susanne Baumann-Söllner, Managing Director of the Austria Center Vienna.

Closer networking between industry and science

Peter Baierl of the European Society of Radiology (ESR) presented his blueprint for closer interaction between representatives of industry and science, coupled with networking areas. To promote this, he proposes setting aside entire areas next to the lecture theatres to ensure industry is closely integrated into proceedings. As a result, the ECR is moving away from large halls with one booth after the other, towards exclusive experiential branding worlds focusing on the participant experience and where the product itself takes centre stage. The Austria Center Vienna offers the ideal event design options to meet this need thanks to the combination of halls and foyers with catering stations and adjoining terraces.

Cinema production starring professors

Responses to digitalisation at congresses were also on the agenda. “As we do not make a distinction between in-person and virtual participants in practical terms – or in the congress tickets – we offer everyone an emotional experience that can be compared to a cinema production. We use digital stage settings, camera jibs and teleprompters, always working with the highest degree of professionalism, and the same applies for our podium discussions. Our stars are the professors who share their knowledge. Based on their specific needs, participants can decide whether they want to experience the show, so to speak, live as part of the audience, in the cinema or on television,” Baierl explained, outlining his approach to hybrid congresses. After the shift to online congresses due to the pandemic, many organisers and their participants are longing for a return to in-person events. Lots of organisers are voicing the need for greater flexibility as well as the support of all partners to help make the transition to hybrid congresses. The Austria Center Vienna was quick to respond to these requirements, last year launching three hybrid formats – the Hybrid Circle, Hybrid Sphere and Hybrid Cube – for organisers to choose from and customise. In addition, it has a dedicated partner which specialises in

attractive stage settings and productions to be shown on the 144m² of LED displays and 200 indoor and outdoor screens.

Bringing the outside in

Rather than exclusively taking place indoors, events are increasingly incorporating outdoor elements, too. The pandemic gave the idea of “outside is the new inside” a turbo boost, as more and more congresses are now being held during the warmer summer season. The Austria Center Vienna and the ECR are also making every effort to live up to the needs of participants in this regard, and are together setting new standards with a fresh configuration for Hall X5 which combines both indoor and outdoor elements. “We reconfigured the flexible exhibition on the square outside the main entrance, repurposing it as a cool and appealing registration, bar and networking area. People arrive and immediately feel at home. The direct line of sight to the entrance hall aids orientation, too,” Baierl confirmed. Participants can either network on the main square in semi-outdoor zones or fully outdoors in the fresh air. The green terraces and exterior spaces that the Austria Center Vienna has set up over the past two years are great for evening events and sundowner parties against the impressive backdrop of the Donaucity skyline.

Sharing equipment and facilities: synergies between congress organisers

Approaching the vision of the “congress of the future” from the broadest possible angle, discussions with congress organisers also gave rise to the notion of looking beyond their own congresses with a view to identifying ways of sharing infrastructure. The ECR has been a certified green event for years – in line with strict sustainability criteria it goes without single use items such as rugs, posters and give aways. The Austria Center Vienna – the nation’s first Green Conference Centre – is ideal for green events, including in terms of regional catering, digital branding and getting to and from the venue by public transport. In future, these synergies could be taken a step further while new ones are unlocked between different congress organisers. “We have committed ourselves to the goal of bringing about a marked increase in the number of green events over the coming years. As part of this, we would like to act as an interface between congresses that take place one after the other. Ideally, certain congress furnishings and exhibitions set-ups could be used for multiple congresses in succession. This helps cut time-consuming build-ups and breakdowns while reducing power consumption, waste and costs,” Baumann-Söllner concluded.

About IAKW-AG and the ECR

Internationales Amtssitz- und Konferenzzentrum Wien, Aktiengesellschaft (IAKW-AG) is responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC) and operating the Austria Center Vienna (ACV). The Austria Center Vienna is Austria’s largest conference centre, with 19 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 26,000m² of exhibition space, and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit. The venue has hosted the annual European Congress of Radiology (ECR) since 1991. In 2022, its 26th year, the ECR took place at the Austria Center Vienna as a hybrid event due to the pandemic. The event is Europe’s largest and the world’s second largest radiology sector get-together.

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New semi-outdoor concept with registration zone, bar and networking area in the partially open-air Hall X5.



Central entrance hall with digital LED displays



Linking brand experiences and presentations



Susanne Baumann-Söllner (ACV) and Peter Baierl (ESR)