

# GOTHENBURG

TEXT

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# Sustainable Meetings

## VITAL PART OF THE NEW STRATEGY OF GOTHENBURG

**FOR THE THIRD** year running, the winners of the *Global Destination Sustainability Index Awards* (GDS-Index) were announced during the Closing Ceremony of the ICCA Congress, held in Dubai. The prestigious awards showcase the remarkable sustainability initiatives of convention bureaus and destination marketing organisations from across the globe, with the aim of sharing best practices to inspire the meeting and events industry.

The industry is increasingly beginning to recognise that even though tourism has an important impact on a country's economy or destination marketing, it equally impacts the environment through its extensive use of resources needed to sustain the needs of its visitors and local communities. The Global Destination Sustainability Index works with convention bureaus and destination marketing organisations to address this issue, allowing them to maximise

the positive effects of tourism while balancing the negative impacts through a sustainable approach to strategy. The GDS-Index is also a very useful partner for associations who wish to understand to what extent a destination will be able to support them on their sustainability journey.

For the third year, Gothenburg Convention Bureau in Sweden won the Leadership Award and is still leading the way, setting the pace as well as sharing best practice in the industry. Göteborg & Co are pioneers and have inspired the Index with their integration of sustainability into their business practices.

This is a part of the strategy that's being more and more recognised as a part of the future of the Swedish west coast city. One thing is for sure: Gothenburg has a clear plan. Meetings are of vital importance for the destination. With a vision to create a more dynamic meetings destination, the city council assigned its destination



marketing organisation, Göteborg & Co, to develop a strategic plan to support efforts to attract scientific congresses.

Together with numerous decision-makers and stakeholders from the city, academia and the local business community, Göteborg & Co including Gothenburg Convention Bureau has drafted this plan to improve conditions for local research, entrepreneurship and sustainable growth.

## “One thing is for sure: Gothenburg has a clear plan ... [that] builds on extensive collective efforts”

The plan builds on extensive collective efforts. Advancing to create even more benefit together. Gothenburg faces its most significant development in modern times. By the year 2035, the city plans to grow by almost a third and to provide space for the population to increase with more than 30 per cent. The meetings industry contributes to national and international collaboration by bringing academia and the business community together.

It also provides excellent conditions for knowledge dissemination and improving skills. It attracts talent and decision makers. Gothenburg, as a knowledge hub, creates social and economic benefits. In short: meetings make Gothenburg even better. From the strategy we read:

### Ten initiatives to make the city made for meetings better

- Strengthen Gothenburg's ability to innovate by promoting interdisciplinary meetings.

- Utilise scientific congresses as tools for further education and continuous learning in the workplace.
- Increase the involvement of young people.
- Attract specific meetings identified as strategically important for the business community, academia and the city.
- Meetings shall contribute to student recruitment.

- Raise international awareness of Gothenburg.
- Utilise Gothenburg's ongoing development in marketing the city as a meetings destination.
- Develop the process for organising public events to coincide with meetings.
- Utilise the driving force of the younger generation.
- Make Gothenburg a place for global debate, through meetings.

### Seven Gothenburg success factors:

1. Effective collaboration between the business community, academia and the public sector.
2. Sustainable, appealing and outstanding experiences.
3. Innovative ways to maximise delegate attendance.
4. World-leading research and motivated meeting ambassadors.
5. High availability and efficient infrastructure.
6. A diverse choice of meeting facilities and hotels.

7. A neutral convention bureau markets the entire meeting destination.

Gothenburg will gain by finding new ways of providing services in a strong relationship with planners. Developing new innovative meeting concepts in close collaboration with organisations and planners, which also stimulates the innovation pace. And helping organisations to leave a legacy.

The public sector, academia and business community have collaborated to develop this strategic plan. The inclusive work process and great commitment mean that many different perspectives were put forward, creating a strong foundation and understanding for the initiatives that now will be taken.

Göteborg & Co will, in its role as the city's collaboration platform on issues relating to the hospitality industry, drive the process forward and establish contacts with the necessary external parties.

We met Annika Hallman, Director of Gothenburg Convention Bureau, at the ICCA Congress to discuss the new strategy. Which are the most important challenges now when the strategy is approved by the politicians?

“Still, it's a big challenge to put Gothenburg on the international map. The competition is getting harder, and there are new convention bureaus all over getting more professional, and more destinations which means that we must also continue to develop. We have no Eiffel Tower, but what we have instead is very important cooperation between the academia, the private sector and the city,” says Annika Hallman.

It was the city council of Gothenburg that initiated the new strategy and gave Gothenburg Convention

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Bureau the mandate to develop a tailor-made meetings strategy.

“We have shown the broader benefits that meetings mean so much more than just hotel nights. That this benefits research, that we have been able to recruit world-leading researchers, thanks to our congresses.”

One of Astra Zeneca’s three globally strategic Research & Development centres is located in the

IAPCO, INCON and MCI have been in Gothenburg and became impressed of “the all under one roof” business model which is a key USP concept.

Another important thing is that the organisers of international conferences find that Gothenburg succeeds in attracting more delegates than many cities.

Region Västra Götaland is the county council governing the terri-

having a meeting in such a relatively unknown destination as Gothenburg, compared to Paris or Barcelona, we can show that we are sometimes having a bigger audience than London thanks to the simplicity of our city.”

“We have just signed two important congresses to come back to Gothenburg thanks to a high number of participants even to what they had in London. We usually say: ‘A well-run congress is important to get back. And to recruit others.’ It is the same for both national and international meetings. Next year we have a great congress *The European Human Genetics Conference (ESHG)*, that was here in 2010 and will be back next year.”

Next year in April, Gothenburg will be the host city for the *12th Association World Congress & Expo* which in many ways is like a big site inspection. The congress is expected to attract around 400 delegates.

*The following are involved in the process of the new strategy: Göteborg & Co, City of Gothenburg, Business Region Göteborg, Region Västra Götaland, University of Gothenburg, Chalmers University of Technology, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Sahlgrenska Academy, RISE Research Institutes of Sweden, Astra Zeneca, Essity, Dentsply Sirona, Cochlear, Mölnlycke Health Care, Volvo Group, Volvo Car Group and Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre.*

*The following are also represented on the steering committee for Göteborg & Co Convention Bureau: City of Gothenburg, Business Region Göteborg, University of Gothenburg, Sahlgrenska Academy, Chalmers University of Technology, Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre, the hotel associations Storhotelgruppen and Göteborgshotellen, Gothenburg Restaurant Association, Swedavia/Landvetter Airport, SJ, and MCI Group.*

### “What we have instead is very important cooperation between the academia, the private sector and the city”

Gothenburg region. At this site, the focus is on cardiovascular and metabolic diseases and respiratory, inflammation and autoimmunity. The company has pointed out which congresses within these research areas that they would like to see in Gothenburg in the future. Being able to attract global talent is one of the reasons why the company engages in this collaboration with Gothenburg Convention Bureau.

“This is just one example from one private company, and then we try hard to get these conferences to Gothenburg which also attract leading researchers from all over the world to come to Gothenburg. It benefits Astra Zeneca so clearly, and of course, both the academia and the city, as well.”

At the moment there are several new major hotel projects on the agenda. The Gothia Hotel, which already has 1,200 rooms will expand with yet another tower, the fourth. In the future, it will have 2,000 rooms. International organisations such as

tory Västra Götaland in Sweden. They aim to provide conditions for a good, meaningful and healthy life. One of their primary missions is to ensure that the population in Västra Götaland has access to medical care. Their other main purposes are to develop and administer culture, public transport and sustainable development.

“The success in getting more participants is partly because of our cooperation within our region. It is important to use this for knowledge and skills development for researchers. When we have an orthopaedic congress, we can offer almost all our orthopedists in the region to come to the conference. This way we create a win-win situation for the organiser, the region and the city,” says Annika Hallman.

“We maximise the number of participants, also thanks to easy logistics and good central premises, but the most important thing is about the competence development and skills supply. When we get a site inspection, and the organiser is still unsure of