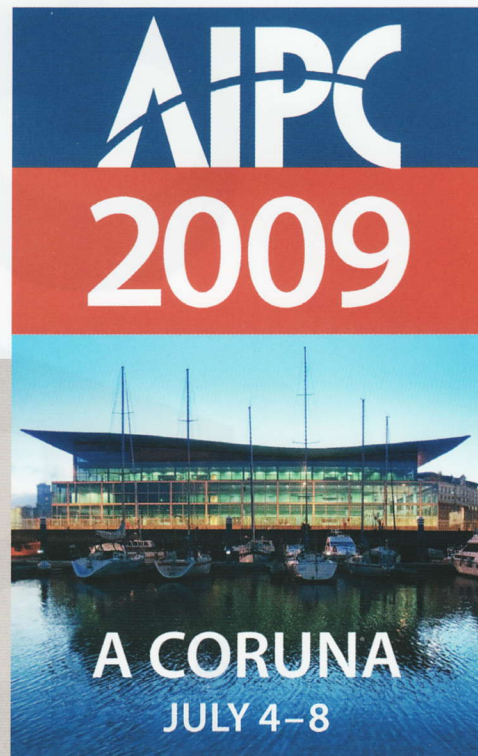


COMPLETE ACCESSIBILITY

The Malaga Trade Fair and Conference Centre has recently become the second Spanish conference centre to obtain the Complete Accessibility Certificate along with the Kursaal Centre in San Sebastián (Guipuzcoa). With this certificate, issued in this case by the Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification (AENOR), the Malaga centre also becomes the first building in Andalusia to be fully accessible.

AIPC TO HOLD ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN PALEXCO

The International Association of Conference Centres (AIPC) has chosen the city of A Coruña to host its next annual meeting, to be held from 4 to 8 July, in Palexco. This is billed as a key conference, given these challenging economic times, and the AIPC plans to take this opportunity to discuss what strategies need to be implemented in order to overcome the crisis. As well as presenting results, AIPC has organised round table discussions, talks and seminars that will deal with pressing questions such as: "To what extent has the crisis affected the conference centres?", "Where does this leave the Green Agenda and Corporate Social Responsibility?", "Local vs. International: where is the op-



portunity?" To complement the programme, various activities will be laid on in relation to Galician cuisine, its wines and its cultural wealth.

OPINION

Challenging times demand relevant responses

by AIPC President, Edgar Hirt*



AIPC's newest program offerings are providing very timely support to members in three areas that we've identified as being amongst the most critical concerns in the industry today.

The AIPC Academy, an annual professional development program now entering its third year of operation, is geared to providing an in-depth industry overview for new managers who need to be oriented to the industry as well as for existing managers who need to broaden their industry perspective in order to take on more senior responsibilities within their centres. It directly addresses the challenges

many members are increasingly having in attracting competent, experienced staff to their facilities in a time of growing labour shortages by helping advance the qualifications of their staff as well as providing an incentive for them to stay within the organization.

Along with providing solid training in key management areas, the Academy also facilitates the rapid development of international networks, as each Academy session brings together participants from centres all over the world. These networks can be invaluable when advice and support is needed in the ongoing process of maintaining and advancing a centre's operations.

The second very timely area of program development is in our new Quality Standards program. These standards, and the audit process that accompanies them, enables AIPC member centres to distinguish their performance in an increasingly competitive market as well as enabling CEO's to assess performance in key areas. The result is not only greater marketability but potential advancements in operating efficiency and staff satisfaction.

Finally, our Sales and Marketing Summit – again, an annual event, this one staged in concert with IMEX – has created a forum for both identifying new market challenges and developing skills and strategies to address them. In a time of rapid change, this kind of opportunity to share experiences and ideas with colleagues has become invaluable.

Challenging times demand relevant responses – from all of us!

* Edgar Hirt is the President of the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC); and Managing Director of CCH, Congress Center Hamburg
secretariat@aipc.org
www.aipc.org