



October 2020

The MICE sector can't take it anymore! How to avoid a « *disaster* »?



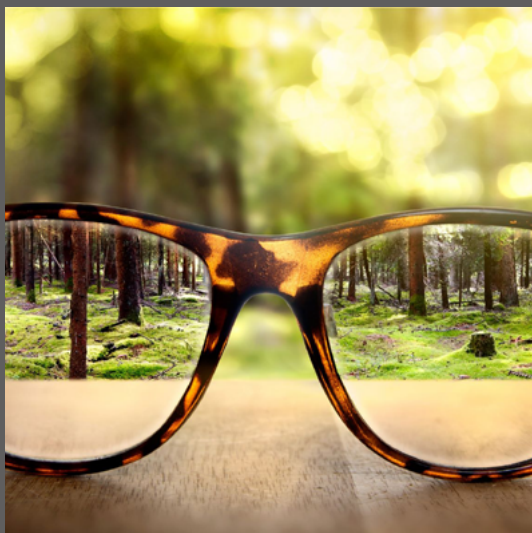
OPSMAN has, since April 2020, brought together a group of experts to assess the possibility of organising congresses and seminars while having to manage the COVID-19 risk. Is it possible to effectively control the risk for the people (staff & participants) present at a MICE event?



We are now in November 2020, the sector has been at a standstill for 8 months and ... everything is focused on the aid that the State can/should provide to companies in the sector! Don't get me wrong; they are indispensable! However, the sector will not survive, in the long term, with these aids... Let's not forget that many of them are intended to support people, through the right of way. Companies, apart from a *few* regional bonuses and accessibility to technical unemployment, do not have any aid enabling them to continue to meet their fixed costs? And this is where the survival of the sector is at stake! Rents, leases, bank reimbursements, ... all these expenses have been, for 8 months now ... unbearable for the majority of companies active in the events sector.



It is now essential to allow these companies - SMEs, independent, but also multinationals which are also starting to *brood in the dark* - to have a clear, coordinated and efficient plan which should enable them to understand how they can restart after this second wave! Because, let's be clear, the sector is not responsible for this «second wave» ... The blatant lack of preparation and coordination between the representatives of the sectors, the scientists and the authorities/governments, during the first deconfinement ... in June 2020 ... are the cause of



this new crisis we are currently going through!

A restart protocol can be prepared and managed over time ... it must be dynamic and allow for a step-by-step understanding of whether the sector concerned and the protocol envisaged for it are effective and allow the risk of accidental contamination to be controlled! This management plan has, and we are paying the consequences today, never even been developed! Sad, but *what is done is done* ... nothing can be changed! On the other hand, it is now urgent that everyone responsible for this *lack of prevention* understands the stakes and actively and efficiently manages a recovery plan that should allow the actors of the sector to understand how they will be able to recover in 2021 and thus avoid «dying»!

Not everything will be possible ... we will not return to the 2019 framework before ... a certain amount of time; we must be aware of this! However, continuing to accept and defend a logic of maximum gauge, without taking into account the available space, nor the operational management mode imposed on the organiser, is completely ineffective; Both in terms of health and economics ... To consider that a MICE/ institutional event organiser is going to release a substantial budget and thus enter into a contractual relationship on the basis of exceptions to be obtained a posteriori from the administrative authority of the place where the event is to take place ... is very naïve or unfamiliar with the MICE sector itself!

The proposal we made to the government to launch an effective plan to manage the restart of MICE event activities, and more precisely institutional activities, is divided into 4 stages:

- Distinction of institutional events from the general framework of risk management in events
- Development of a stable risk management plan, enabling the organisers (the institutions) to understand how the Belgian authorities will manage this risk over time.
- Implementation of a financial risk management plan for local organisers and their subcontractors (in the event of cancellation due to force majeure).



- Contact with EU institutions and representatives of the MICE sector to assess the possibilities for organising events in 2021. Definition of the assumptions linked to the evolution of the risk management plan; this will enable them to understand the risks taken when planning an event.



We do not claim that these 4 steps alone will save the sector... In risk management, humility is essential! We simply ask that, taking into account the enormous economic impacts, both on the sector itself and on Belgium and the Brussels region, a recovery plan be developed and put in place ... this in order to avoid falling back into unilateral gauges and, above all, into a third wave/crisis which would force the sector to return to quarantine during the first half of 2021.



[More information](#)