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## **Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary internationally with visitors to IMEX**

- **Three new members added to the network of 50 partners**
- **Unique organisation in the German MICE industry**
- **New claim “Upgrade your Event”, new website and new Monday feature on the net**
- **Four times the expertise in Rhine-Neckar at IMEX 2018**

**Strength in business and science, a rich cultural and natural environment, sun-drenched vineyards, elegant cuisine, excellent transport communications and an impressive variety of locations and supporting programmes underpin the Rhine-Neckar region’s success. Its ability to compete for “Meetings, Incentives, Congresses and Events” (MICE) against Berlin, Hamburg and Munich is also, in part, due to the work of the Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar. From 15 - 17 May 2018, the Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar will also celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with visitors to the international trade fair IMEX 2018 in Frankfurt am Main, where it will be participating for the seventh time.**

At the beginning of 2008, the European Institute for the Meetings Sector (EITW) conducted a study of the conference, convention and event industry in the Rhine-Neckar region. It confirmed that although it had enormous potential, there was little awareness of this within the MICE industry. It was at this point that nine regional players in the industry had an idea: why not join forces, create a common brand, network more closely and make the conventions, meetings and event sector a growth engine for the entire region? Things then began to move very quickly: the Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar was founded on 1 August 2008.

The founding members were BASF SE Wirtschaftsbetriebe, Congressforum Frankenthal, Palatin Kongresshotel, Stadtholding Landau, m:con Mannheim, LUKOM Ludwigshafen Kongress- und Marketing-Gesellschaft, Heidelberg Marketing, Verband Region Rhein-Neckar (association for the Rhine-Neckar region), and Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar

GmbH. New members soon joined and the network grew steadily over the following years.

Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar currently has around 50 partners – some with several locations. Altes Hallenbad Heidelberg (a former indoor swimming pool), eventfabrik a2 in Weinheim and the country estate Landgut Lingental in Leimen are the most recent additions. The network not only includes large convention centres and conference hotels, but also smaller retreats and boutique hotels, off-locations, companies in the technology and digital sectors, event agencies, caterers, stand builders, translators and pyrotechnic specialists. The service office is run as a non-profit organisation and stands ready to assist all event planners, event experts and congress organisers free-of-charge. It forwards enquiries on their behalf, solicits offers, recommends programmes of accompanying events and develops all-inclusive packages.

The Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar remains unique to this day because it is regional. “The Rhine-Neckar region is exceptionally diverse and compact. It is never more than a few minutes’ drive from a vibrant city centre to a romantic village idyll,” says Daniela Hirsch who sees this regional character as its great strength. The combination is very appealing to event planners because it offers them scope to create events in a variety of environments for their customers.

“For example, you can run a meeting at the Worms Conference Centre during the day and enjoy the beautiful scenery of the River Rhine in the evening on board one of the ships of the Weisse Flotte Heidelberg. Or vice versa. After a closed meeting at Kurhaus Trifels with a panoramic view of the verdant Palatinate Forest, the participants can enjoy a trip to the hip bar of the Staytion music hotel in Mannheim in the evening.” These location changes not only add variety to the seminar, workshop or conference day, but also engage the participants on an emotional level in various ways. They provide the optimum conditions for achieving lasting success in the meetings industry.

### **New “Upgrade your Event” website attracts curious customers**

To sharpen its profile as an accessible, dynamic MICE region and create demand among target groups, the Convention Bureau Rhein-

Neckar runs regular fact-finding trips for event planners, attends national and international trade fairs such as IMEX on behalf of the region, and also visits local companies to present its extensive portfolio of products and services. In addition, digital media play a key role in contacting and communicating with event planners. With the relaunch of its website [convention-rhein-neckar.de](http://convention-rhein-neckar.de) and social media activities, the network aims to boost the conference destination's image still further during its anniversary year of 2018 and gain new prospective customers by offering them useful information.

The new claim "Upgrade your Event" is reflected in every aspect of the new campaign. "More comfort, more choice, more quality – all these factors resonate in the word upgrade," explains Hirsch. It also dovetails perfectly with the "Upgrade your Life" and "Upgrade your Business" campaigns which the Metropolitan Region Rhine-Neckar is using to target specialists and investors in its location marketing. In addition, the Convention Bureau presents a new anniversary design: a gold-yellow triangle and two front page photos visually represent the intersection of three Federal States in the Rhine-Neckar region. Large, emotional photos also feature throughout the design of the new website.

The new website is clearly structured – enabling MICE planners to gain an overview and quickly find the information they need about venues, organisers and service providers. Precisely these users will benefit from the new weekly feature "Upgrade your Monday" which offers valuable information about the MICE business in Rhine-Neckar. It provides portraits of entrepreneurs and young professionals, news about state-of-the-art digital gadgets and technologies, stories about unusual venues, training tips, surveys, and much more. At the same time, the Convention Bureau looks outside the box, examines new event trends and discusses how people will meet in the future.

### **The future: in the region for the region**

In retrospect, the founding partners showed great foresight. "Rhine-Neckar – Germany's most inspiring and diverse region for conferences and events" – this message would have been unimaginable without them and the work of the Convention Bureau. The close cooperation

between all players in the sector through partnerships, knowledge transfer and synergies, and the many major events which Rhine-Neckar has been chosen to host, underlines the success of their plan.

In 2017, the first Digital Summit, organised by the German Federal Government, took place in the Pfalzbau in Ludwigshafen and other venues in the surrounding area. This year, the Digital Education Festival (4 July) and the EduAction Education Summit (25/26 October) will be held in Rhine-Neckar. As a national conference, the latter will bring over 100 influential thinkers and more than 1,500 participants to Mannheim to discuss the future of education and the importance of key competences. Other highlights include the German Pain Congress (17 - 20 October), the Annual General Meeting of Südzucker AG (19 July) and the Cybersecurity Conference (29/30 October). The organisers of this last event specifically chose the Rhine-Neckar region because it has a high density of IT companies and hidden champions.

Where will the Convention Bureau be in five years? “Even higher up in the personal destination list of many MICE managers,” says Hirsch confidently. In addition to customers from outside Rhine-Neckar, there is also enormous potential within the region itself. The marketing and service platform is thus looking to inspire local company managers in sales, human resources and event planning, as well as local agencies and associations, and showcase the jewels of this versatile MICE region. After all, when businesses host events locally, the added value stays at home. A second key aim is to make the network even stronger by adding more partners.

**Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar from 15 - 17 May 2018 at**

**IMEX in Frankfurt am Main (Hall 8, Germany Stand F100 / 4 + 5)**

**Four times the expertise in Rhine-Neckar**

International and national MICE planners will find four expert organisations from Rhine-Neckar at the Germany stand. The region will be represented not only by the Convention Bureau, but also by its network partners m:con, Chester Hotel Heidelberg and Güterbahnhof Heidelberg.

**Competition**

To mark its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Convention Bureau Rhein-Neckar invites the IMEX guests take part in its competition. Everyone who lands on the “Upgrade your Event” field on our wheel of fortune will win a suitcase belt and be included in the main prize draw. The lucky winners will receive vouchers for selected locations in the Rhine-Neckar region.