

# HANDBOOK FOR HEALTHCARE CONGRESS ORGANISERS

## INTRODUCTION

Eucomed represents the European Medical Technology (MedTech) Industry. Its mission is to improve both patient and physician access to modern, innovative and reliable medical technology.

Within the framework of the recent legal and regulatory developments regarding anti-bribery and anti-corruption legislation, Eucomed has taken the lead on ethical business practices across the healthcare sector. By committing to the Eucomed Code of Ethical Business Practice (hereafter the “Eucomed Code”), Eucomed members agreed to act with integrity, accountability and according to the letter and spirit of the law and ethical principles included in the Eucomed Code.

As stated in the Eucomed Code, MedTech companies who are members of Eucomed are committed to:

- Continued collaboration between healthcare professionals and industry in the development of new technologies, in ensuring the optimal use of existing technologies, and in improved patient care;
- Supporting training, education and the enhancement of professional skills;
- Ensuring that the results of clinical studies are properly communicated to the medical profession;

Medical congresses and third-party educational conferences are therefore crucial insofar as they facilitate continuous medical education as well as the spread of knowledge and exchange of best-practices.

At the same time, that collaboration between healthcare professionals and industry has the potential to create conflicts of interest and/or other ethical concerns.

Eucomed has therefore developed this “Handbook” to assist Healthcare Congress Organisers in understanding how the Eucomed Code can be applied in practice and implemented within the frame of congress organisation. It provides guidance on the organisational aspects of medical congresses, such as venues, hospitality, travel and accommodation costs, and exhibitions. Also included are considerations regarding congress venues, budgets and other financial considerations, such as exhibition space, delegate registration, congress-related publishing, satellite and sponsored meetings, social events, etc.

Adherence to such recommendations advantages all stakeholders by ensuring that:

- Congress organisers, potential delegates and sponsors alike do not risk exposure to legal action for unethical behavior through involvement in the congress;
- Congresses of appropriate high quality to the benefit of delegates and potential sponsors;
- Attendance, sponsorship and overall profitability of congresses are maximised by avoiding lack of support from individual companies on ethical/conflict of interest grounds.

One of the rationales behind the development of this Handbook is the “mushrooming” of congresses staged in certain specialist medical fields (e.g. orthopaedics). Eucomed would recommend rationalising congresses in a specific therapeutic area, to reduce an unnecessary multiplication of specialists’ congresses and make the event more relevant to an increased number of stakeholders (i.e. delegates and industry sponsors) with a view also to ensure broad dissemination of new scientific developments and creating opportunities between a maximum of stakeholders to exchange views and discuss such developments..

Finally, it is important to repeat that the MedTech Industry is committed to support training and education and also ensure that the results of clinical studies and advances in medical technology are properly communicated to the medical profession. Medical congresses and third-party educational conferences are therefore crucial in that regard, as they facilitate continuous medical education and the spread of knowledge and exchange of best-practices. On the other hand, scrutiny of the scientific content as well as the overall benefit of such events for the relevant stakeholders are increasing and will continue to increase. For that reason Eucomed and its members want to ensure that those congresses sponsored by the industry are not only scientifically relevant but also in accordance to the applicable rules and regulations. This is critical for the continued possibility of industry to continue to support training and education.

Please note that this Handbook has been prepared by Eucomed solely to assist Healthcare Congress Organisers. This Handbook does not make any recommendation concerning the appropriateness of any specific congress and is not intended to influence the decision of individual companies regarding specific congresses or negotiations between individual companies and specific healthcare congress organisers.

## I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### INFORMATION, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Since medical knowledge and continuing medical education are the “raison d’être” of medical congresses, the exchange of scientific and clinical information, which is not commercially sensitive, at such events should not be restricted to certain healthcare professionals only.

Promotional activities should comply with relevant national and European codes and regulations on product promotion. For example, such promotional activities should not be

combined with an agreement restricting the sale or advertisement of an individual company's products.

Moreover, the framework established by the Code on training and education should be considered at all times as a minimum ethical standard across Europe.

## SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVITY

Strict scientific criteria should be applied to the content of all medical congresses. The aim is to exchange balanced, unbiased and scientifically sound information. All such information must be accountable and substantiation should be provided in response to legitimate inquiries.

## CONGRESS VENUES

The venue of any congress should be chosen taking into account the guidance of the Eucomed Code, considering a range of facilities, as well as aspects such as access, security and costs.

Amongst other considerations outlined in the guidance, the use of locations perceived as resorts (e.g. ski, golf or beach resorts) should be avoided.

## HOSPITALITY

In line with the Principle of Separation included in the Eucomed Code, hospitality should always be secondary to the principal scientific purpose of a congress and should therefore be reasonable and of an appropriate nature and level.

“Reasonable” should be interpreted as the appropriate standard for a given location and must comply with local laws and professional codes of conduct.

## EXHIBITIONS

Exhibitions enable sponsoring companies to promote their products to the healthcare professionals. Promotional activities should comply with all national and international regulations on healthcare promotion and advertising. Activities inappropriate to the practice of medicine should be avoided.

## II. MEDICAL CONGRESS GUIDELINES

### 1. PREAMBLE

1.1 The purpose of this Handbook, as mentioned above, is to provide guidance to healthcare congress organisers and more generally encourage and enable them to attain the highest possible standards of quality of congresses for the benefit of congress organisers and delegates alike. Eucomed believes that the prime objective of congresses is the exchange of up-to-date scientific information, organised in a fair and professional way at a suitable venue (see section 3). Given the environment of increased enforcement of national, European and international anti-corruption and anti-bribery laws and codes of practice, it is the obligation, but also it is in the interest, of the industry to ensure that it complies with all these rules. However, as a matter of principle, Eucomed promotes a culture of integrity and ethical business practices across the healthcare sector. In addition to this industry exposure to non-compliant conduct, healthcare congress organisers who are not able or willing to offer events compatible with such legal and ethical requirements may fail to attract sufficient MedTech industry sponsorship.

1.2 Eucomed considers medical congresses an indispensable and effective platform for the dissemination of scientific knowledge, the exchange of experience, clinical outcomes and continuing medical education. Thus, their success depends on a partnership between the organisers, the delegates and the sponsoring companies who [directly and/or indirectly] fund the event. All stakeholders should expect the programme to be of high scientific quality, so the educational expectations of participants are met and the venue to be suitable to delegates and sponsors.

1.3 Eucomed recognises that the organisation of medical congresses is a challenging and expensive undertaking. Fund-raising to cover related expenses is a legitimate privilege of congress organisers. It has, nonetheless, to be recognised that the healthcare industry is one major source of income and should therefore be considered as a valuable and legitimate partner in the discussions around medical congress organisation.

1.4 Individual medical congresses should preferably be seen as self-supporting, financed, for example, through registration fees, sale of exhibition and advertising space sponsoring of symposia and surplus funds from previous congresses.

1.5 It is recommended to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced Professional Congress Organiser / Destination Management Company / Convention Bureau before any agreements are made.

### 2. SPONSORSHIP/FINANCE

2.1 Eucomed believes that it is in the common interest of all stakeholders to keep the costs of medical congresses within reasonable limits.

2.2 To enable congress costs to be factored into the budget planning process of the MedTech companies and to maximise sponsorship potential, organising committees are encouraged to provide a formal sponsorship bid document (the prospectus) well in advance, preferably 12 to 18 months prior, depending on size of the event. This critical document

should include a statement of the congress objectives from a scientific, educational, financial perspectives as well as sponsorship opportunities and costs.

2.3 With continuous internal and regulatory pressure on potential sponsors arising from healthcare compliance obligations, congress organisers are recommended to take note of the fact that sponsorship decisions may take time due to the complex corporate approval systems.

2.4 The prospectus should show, on one hand the demographics of previous events, with delegate attendance split by country, by day and by level of seniority, and on the other hand the expected attendance at the meeting for which sponsorship is sought. Attending MedTech industry representatives and non-healthcare professionals should not be included in either of these figures.

2.5 The prospectus should clearly state the pre-payment and cancellation policies that apply to both attendance and sponsorship by companies of satellite symposia slots, exhibition space and any other sponsorship items. Furthermore, it is commendable for all agreements to be covered by valid contracts, with no possibility of unilateral changes by the organiser.

2.6 The prospectus should provide itemised costs of satellite symposia, exhibition space and any other support opportunities which are available. "Packaged" activities leading to "gold" and "silver" sponsorship levels are discouraged. A fair and transparent system of value-for-money sponsorship in which itemised activities are available at a published price is preferred. Associated costs charged by the venue for services such as catering, electricity use, cleaning services, internet access, etc should ideally be included the prospectus to assist with budgeting. All prices and invoices should normally be in the currency of the host country.

2.7 When appropriate, the prospectus should provide an outline of the VAT recovery procedures in the country in which the meeting is being held. It should also detail any visa requirements, visa restrictions, health warnings and other aspects which may affect a significant proportion of potential participants.

2.8 As Continuing Medical Education (CME) accreditation is increasingly seen as an important factor for delegate attendance given that it shows the scientific value of the event. Eucomed would strongly encourage the CME credit status of the components of the event, along with the name of the awarding body should be indicated in the prospectus. For all European congresses, the recommended CME awarding body is the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME).

2.9 As legislation and industry self-regulatory codes governing the promotion and advertising of medical devices vary from country to country, the prospectus should be designed with a view to outlining any specific rules that might affect the activities of sponsoring companies, particularly with reference to exhibition activities.

2.10 It is considered good business practice that the prospectus indicates how any residual funds arising from the meeting will be distributed. This should include any support given to the host organising society.

2.11 As a principle, Eucomed discourages any agreements which discriminate between individual sponsors with similar financial involvement. Eucomed holds the view that the level of sponsorship should be considered as a more important measure of involvement than the identity of the sponsor.

### 3. VENUE

3.1 The congress venue should be chosen with care, with consideration given the rules set out in the Eucomed Code, taking into account the range of facilities available; in particular, the capacity of both the congress hall and meeting rooms, a sufficient number of appropriate quality hotel rooms, accessibility (ideally no more than one hour from a major international airport), security and costs. Eucomed strongly recommends that the location selected should not be the main attraction of the event and the organisers are well advised to consider at all times the image that may be projected to the public by their choice of location. For example, a congress located in a perceived resort location may influence the ability of the MedTech Industry to support the event.

3.2 Exhibition halls and rooms for sponsored symposia should be within convenient access of the main congress areas and should ideally be an integral part of the main congress location in order to facilitate the visit of delegates. Adequate freight handling facilities, suitable loading/unloading bays, and direct access to the exhibition area should preferably be available.

3.3 Staff at the venue who service and support the Exhibition and Congress attendees should be able to communicate in English.

### 4. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

4.1 The quality of the scientific programme is of paramount importance at all medical congresses. Eucomed therefore recommends that keynote lectures, plenary sessions, free communications and poster sessions should be integrated into the congress programme.

The scientific programme should correspond to at least 75% of a normal working day, or pro-rata for partial days. A programme that is perceived as including leisure time (for example, a gap of many hours between conference events) may influence the ability of the MedTech Industry to support the event.

4.2 Any satellite symposia should ideally be integrated in the main part of the scientific programme. There should be no restrictions on attendance at satellite symposia imposed by the organiser of the congress.

Eucomed defines “satellite symposia” as those planned, organised and staged by a sponsoring company to be held before, during or after the congress programme as planned by the third-party in charge. The sponsoring company generally determines the content of the program of such a satellite symposia but it is well advised to make sure that the subject is consistent with the overall content of the congress. Moreover, Eucomed considers it good business practice that the sponsoring company is responsible for faculty selection.

4.3 Should companies support the costs of holding a satellite symposium during the congress, items such as room rental fees, slide, computer and/or video projection, sound

amplification and competent technical assistance (in English) should be included in this cost.

4.4 Organisers should ensure that there is no duplication of scientific content throughout the course of a congress and that any delegate's social activities – when permitted under the Eucomed Code – do not clash with any part of the scientific programme (including satellite symposia).

4.5 Free communication and poster sessions are an important part of the scientific programme and are generally considered the responsibility of the organising committee. Eucomed recommends for an abstract or a summary of each presentation is made available, for example included in the published programme or on DVD/CD.

4.6 Eucomed considers that it is the responsibility of the congress organisers to ensure that speakers at all scientific sessions (including satellite symposia) are available as announced and do not have overlapping commitments.

## 5. EXHIBITIONS

5.1 As indicated in paragraph 3.2, the area allocated to exhibitions should be in an appropriate location with convenient access to and from the main congress areas the exhibition should preferably be planned as an integral and educational part of the congress.

5.2 The organisers are encouraged make every effort to maximise the delegate traffic in the exhibition hall. This may include locating, for example, the refreshment areas and catering, internet facility, opening ceremony and posters, within the exhibition area or managing the flow of delegates in such a way that they regularly pass through the exhibition hall. Appropriate time should be included in the programme for delegates to visit the exhibition area.

5.3 The allocation of exhibition space should be fair and transparent. This could, for example, be achieved by arranging a site visit for all exhibiting companies well in advance of the event. The exhibition regulations and floor plan should ideally be distributed to all interested parties at least one month prior to this meeting.

5.4 The congress organiser should produce a detailed exhibitor's manual ideally at least nine months prior to the event. In addition to accurate floor plans, this document should include contact details of the nominated contractors and an outline of any country-specific regulatory issues or local laws which may affect the exhibitors. It would be highly valuable if details of appointed customs brokers, agents, etc, are also provided.

5.5 The cost for exhibition space should reflect "Fair Market Value" and bear a relationship to the price charged at recent similar medical congresses at the same (or similar) venue.

5.6 Services provided – such as catering, electricity and water supply, internet or telephone lines, or equipment rental – should be of an acceptable international standard considering also local standard rates.

5.7 Exhibitors should be issued with complimentary exhibition passes for their sales and technical staff to man the exhibition stand. The number of complimentary passes should be

in relation to the size of the exhibition stand. Ideally, if an exhibitor requires extra passes in addition to the complimentary passes, these should be made available at a reasonable fee.

5.8 Adequate secure and convenient on-site storage including also secured access during the opening hours of the exhibition are critical aspects for exhibiting companies and should be ensured by the organisers, at reasonable prices for exhibitors. In recognition of the international aspects of these events, off-site truck parking should be provided for the duration of the event.

5.9 A minimum build-up period of 48 hours (24 hours for breakdown) are considered as necessary and consideration should be given to good access to allow loading and unloading. Where organisers sell individual exhibition space in excess of 100 sq. m. it should be recognised that build-up period of more than 48 hours may be required at no additional cost.

5.10 Space allocated to exhibition use should be provided with adequate fire fighting facilities, emergency exits and corridors between the exhibits to allow rapid evacuation. Eucomed considers it to be a good business practice that the congress organiser also ensures the provision of 24-hour security services.

5.11 If the organisers of the congress are contractually obliged to use contract suppliers (such as catering), it is their duty to negotiate fair and equitable prices for the provision of those services, which should be of an internationally satisfactory level (ref: paragraph 5.6).

## 6. EXHIBITION DURATION AND OPENING HOURS

6.1 Eucomed recommends that exhibition hours should reflect the timing of the scientific programme, but be not longer than a normal working day.

6.2 Independently of the duration of the scientific programme, the overall duration of the exhibition should not exceed 3 days, as this allows adequate time for all the delegates to visit all the displays. Preferably, the exhibition should be open only during the working week, avoiding weekends and national holidays.

## 7. REGISTRATION PACKAGE

7.1 Eucomed recommends that the delegate registration fees should include:

- The right to attend all lectures, sessions and exhibitions;
- ID badge;
- Congress bag (or similar), programme, abstract book or DVD/CD, etc;
- Invitation to participate in the opening ceremony;
- Public transport vouchers or a shuttle bus service if appropriate;
- Certificate of attendance;

And exclude:

- Programme or vouchers for any social, sporting or/and entertainment activities, tours or excursions, lavish gala dinner etc...;
- Gifts and mementoes.

## 8. HOUSING

8.1 The availability of a wide range and number of hotel rooms with easy access to the conference location should be considered when selecting the venue. The accommodation capacity should be appropriate and in line with the number of participants expected.

8.2 An appropriate quantity of hotel accommodation with a spread of different categories should be contracted by the congress organiser and offered to the participants at reasonable prices in a transparent way.

## 9. SOCIAL EVENTS

9.1 According to the Eucomed Code, it is not appropriate for MedTech companies, members of Eucomed, to sponsor official congress social events such as lavish gala dinners, touristic or entertainment events, etc. In addition, sponsors are discouraged from organising any social activities. Any social events arranged by the congress organising committee, should be modest, incidental to the main purpose of the congress and not conflict with the scientific programme (including satellite symposia).

9.2 Eucomed considers it inappropriate for either the congress organisers or the MedTech Industry to encourage touristic or other social events for delegates while the scientific programme is in progress (including satellite symposia).

9.3 The main purpose of the congress is the exchange of medical knowledge and experience. Therefore, it is not recommended to include any programme for accompanying person, guest or spouse, in the published congress programme. Furthermore legislation in a number of countries explicitly prohibits this.

## 10. EVALUATION

10.1 Eucomed considers the organisation of a meeting between the congress organiser and the exhibitors during the time of the congress as good business practice. The purpose of such a meeting is to review and evaluate all technical aspects of the congress and permit exhibitors to provide feedback in that respect. It would be useful if the local organisers of the next congress would be present. The timing of this meeting should be announced in advance, prior to the beginning of the congress.

10.2 The organisers are encouraged to provide to all sponsoring companies within one month of the conference ending a set of statistics which include delegate demographics. This should include delegate attendance split by country, by day, by level of seniority and any other available data. Attending industry representatives and non-healthcare professionals should be included in a separate category.

10.3. Eucomed considers it beneficial that a summary of the delegates' feedback gained as part of the CME accreditation process should be made available to the sponsoring companies.