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Adaptation & innovation in crisis time for Tourist Information Centres



140 Tourist Information Centres' professionals representing 42 leading European cities joined the Digital ECM TIC Expert Meeting on September 30 – October 2, 2020 to exchange knowledge and best practices of adaptation and innovation on Tourist Information Centres!

The 7th ECM TIC Expert Meeting on adaptation & innovation in crisis time

The TIC Expert Meeting traditionally takes place physically over the course of two days but due to the pandemic, the event dedicated to TIC managers & staff (whether they are ECM members or not) was transformed into a digital event.

*“This year’s event has been focusing on the crucial topic of **“Adaptation & innovation in crisis time”**, providing the attendees with a mix of best-practices from ECM members (**Rotterdam & Helsinki**) and exclusive presentations by inspiring speakers (**Patrick Chen from Shanghai & Jordi López from Sant Carles de la Ràpita**). The digital event attendees were also given the opportunity to discuss and exchange in smaller groups on a specific topic during digital breakout sessions. This has been a strong opportunity for participants to keep on the dialogue and get some inspiration from their European peers on how to cope with the crisis and its impacts, as customer service providers.”* explained **Pablo Ortega Novillo**, Chairperson of the **TIC Knowledge Group** and Responsible for the promotion of the Network of Tourist Offices of **Turisme de Catalunya**.

Discussion topics for attendees were **“TIC Strategy”**, to exchange on the current and future role of TICs, but also where to play & how to adapt to the trends we are now facing, and **“TIC Tactics”** so they could share at a more practical level what kind of innovations, new activities and big ideas they have been implementing as they adjust to the challenges of Covid-19 and look to maximise the potential of their domestic markets:

- Although keeping a face-to-face contact is crucial for all members, they are doing efforts to implement more and more digital communication tools to interact with their visitors (chatbot, WhatsApp, video chat, etc...), and also to replace most of the paper documents such as maps or

brochures into digital ones (shared by email or QR codes) for sustainable and health prevention reasons.

- One of the new roles some TICs have been having in the past months is to provide information about the Covid-19 situation in their destination to visitors.
- The main adaptation they have been implementing is to adjust their products to the domestic market (specific marketing campaigns, new itineraries, ...) and encourage tourists to visit the 'safest' places in the current situation (museums with online reservation, outdoors activities, ...).

The ECM TIC Hostmanship Award rewards best service offered to visitors



For the 5th year in a row, prior to this year's edition of the TIC Expert Meeting, European Cities Marketing organised a friendly competition amongst its members, who were asked to nominate a member of their TIC staff who gave added value to their work on customer services. The winner of the **ECM TIC Hostmanship Award 2020** was revealed during the Expert Meeting. Among all of this year's applications, the TIC Knowledge Group jury voted for **Morana Suton** from **Zagreb** for being present at the Zagreb Airport Visitor Center on the day of the earthquake, to greet, encourage and guide visitors in extraordinary circumstances.

Along with this award, Morana was granted a gift box from other TICs of Europe plus a 2-day work experience at Girona's TIC in 2021 before attending for free the next edition of the TIC Expert Meeting.

Morana Suton commented on her award: *"On behalf of Zagreb Tourist Board and myself, I want to express that I am very happy and truly honoured to win the TIC Hostmanship Award 2020. It was a great pleasure for me to be able to represent Croatian capital Zagreb at the TIC Expert Meeting and to meet TIC experts from other countries. I also want to thank my office, Zagreb Tourist Board, for nominating me for the TIC Hostmanship Award, thus giving me the opportunity to be a part of this year's meeting and competition. TIC Expert Meeting 2021 in Girona is already in my calendar and I really look forward to attending it next year. It will be my pleasure to get in touch with other people doing the same job as I do and sharing professional experience. It's always interesting to meet my European colleagues and talk about the similarities of our job, while learning at the same time how to improve our work in order to give the best in representing our city to the visitors."*

The ECM TIC Best Covid Pivot Award rewards excellence in action in the face of Covid-19

Due to the exceptional COVID-19 crisis this year saw also the creation of a special award to recognise an individual's contribution to the new challenges we face. Hence it will reinforce the can-do behaviour we would all like to see from our staff.

The winner of the new **ECM TIC Best Covid Pivot Award 2020** was **John Ringh** from **Uppsala** for its enthusiasm and high level of professionalism in contributing to the different alternatives to give the best possible service to visitors under the global pandemic.



"I am very thankful that we'd won the ECM TIC Best Covid Pivot 2020 Award. All the different ways we'd made for the visitors to explore more of Uppsala are important. Both this Covid-19 year but also for the

future! I'm also very proud to work with a fantastic team at Destination Uppsala!" commented John Ringh.

The application for the 6th edition of the ECM TIC Hostmanship Award will be sent during summer 2021. Next year's host destination is Girona, Spain. The winner will also get the opportunity to work 2 days at Girona's TIC and will have free access to the next TIC Expert Meeting in Girona.

European Cities Marketing is a non-profit organisation improving the competitiveness and performance of leading cities of Europe by providing a platform for convention, leisure and city marketing professionals to exchange knowledge, best practice and widen their network to build new business. European Cities Marketing is promoting and linking the interests of members from more than 110 major cities in 39 countries.

ECM Knowledge Groups are expert teams focusing on specific aspects of city marketing and urban tourism development. They discuss issues, share best practices, prepare reports, conduct surveys and, in certain cases, undertake joint marketing activities. These teams of experts focus on specific areas such as City Cards, City Marketing, Digital Destinations, Meetings Industry, Research & Statistics, Sustainability or Tourist Information Centres.

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