

WILL WE MISS EMIF IN 2012?

by Bruce Taylor

The chances are that most of us will.... even if EMIF never realised its full potential in all its 10 years. But it was the best we had and, under new management which understood the meetings & events industry, it had at last started to turn the corner.

Mind you, if you Google EMIF you get a completely different definition; External Memory InterFace. If you go deeper to *EMIF Brussels*, you would not be wrong in thinking that EMIF is alive, well and taking place in 2012. The EMIF LinkedIn group appears in first position. Strange no-one has made a link to the new fair!

The one thing EMIF did, despite all its shortcomings, was to bring the Belgian meetings & events industry together for two days a year in one place. It was also an important showcase for Belgian MICE products from across the country. The industry has now lost this focus and will become much more fragmented at a time when trends at a global level are towards cooperation & collaboration (see Rob Davidson's EIBTM Industry Trends Report 2011). <http://content.yudu.com/A1usv2/EIBTM-2011-REPORT/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.eibtm.com%2Fpage.cfm%2FLink%3D1%2Ft%3Dm%2FgoSection%3D1>

SO WHAT ARE THE MICE ALTERNATIVES?

EMIF has left a gap, and people are fighting to fill it, but they will all be smaller and more national affairs. However, one thing is striking. There seems to be very little for association planners in the association capital of Europe.....

So far, we have the following:

MICE & Event, Brussels Kart Expo, 16 February 2012

This down-to-earth 'cut the crap' (not my expression, guv!) one day event is very Dutch and direct selling. Whether the concept will work in Belgium has yet to be seen. Anyway, it's unlikely to replace EMIF as it will not bring the whole industry together, mainly because of issues associated with its location and the fact that the industry in Belgium thrives on the so called 'crap'.

The venue, near the Brussels Ring, is however accessible to car drivers although those using public transport will have a harder time.

Business & Meeting Solutions, Brussels Expo, 21-22 March 2012

This is apparently the official successor to EMIF. A company called Conceptum is the organiser and they took over the Artexis/easyfairs database. The new title of the fair sounds very 'corporate' and will include much more than just meetings & events. Apart from Promo Factory & business gifts,

there are 'solutions' for offices, catering & exhibitions.....It has also moved back to soulless Brussels Expo and one wonders if that's really a good idea for a small B2B fair....

With just over two months to go, there's not much hard info available on the website about who is taking part and how they are marketing the exhibition. As an industry journalist, I have yet to receive any communications from the new organisers.

BTEXPO, Square, 12-13 December 2012

As we said in our last edition, BTEXPO is essentially for travel agents. There's some special group business for DMCs with good market representatives, but it's not MICE.

JUST WAIT & SEE

The Belgian rumour machine is working at full steam. I understand Flanders & Wallonia will be taking part in Business & Meeting Solutions. The big mystery is Brussels. They are rumoured to be doing their own thing....with Washington perhaps? One hasn't heard much about that particular partnership since the big fanfare at EMIF 2011 ;-)

We will just have to wait and see. But two things are certain.

One: The Belgian MICE panorama will be radically different for 2013.

Two: Belgium has finally lost its claim to have a European/International MICE show.

SMALLER MORE TARGETED EVENTS

At a more micro level, there are also several possible alternatives, depending on the target group.

BBT Online's 4 Destination Workshops have proved a very successful formula for destinations and their suppliers to meet, educate and network intensively with Belgium's top incentives, events & meetings agencies at the highest level. Five workshops are planned for 2012 and are almost fully booked.

The Corporate Planner's Inspiration Seminar for corporate decision makers in December was by all accounts a success and an inspiration.

Meetopolis for meeting planners took place at Square in September last year, although very little information seems to be available about this first edition. There are certainly no results I could find online. The website still invites you to register for 2011 and has not been updated since. Will there be a second edition in 2012?