

# RESPONDING TO THE CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS AND ECONOMIC RECESSION



Luc Maene

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL ARE AFFECTING ALL ACTORS IN THE ECONOMY - INCLUDING THE ASSOCIATIONS SECTOR AND RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS. FOR TRADE ASSOCIATIONS, THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN HAS BEEN ON MEMBERSHIP AND CONFERENCE DUES. THERE IS PRESSURE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF EVENTS, AND PARTICIPATION MAY DECREASE. SO FAR AT THE INTERNATIONAL FERTILIZER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (IFA), WE HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED SUCH A SLOWDOWN IN OUR ACTIVITIES. **TEXT LUC MAENE PRESIDENT OF ESAE AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL FERTILIZER ASSOCIATION**

However, there is a silver lining to every cloud. Now is the time for associations to take stock of past practices and develop innovative new ones. We ought to consider this period as one of great promise. Advances in technology will enable associations to continue to provide improved services to their members. For instance, some of the changes we have recently witnessed at IFA are shorter meetings, more interactive discussions and more finely tuned programmes. A whole range of innovative tools is now at our disposal with which to communicate, discuss ideas and exchange information, such as video

conferencing and web conferencing. These tools fulfill several purposes in our current context: cutting down on costs, reducing our environmental footprint and helping us to set better defined priorities in our work plans.

One challenge that associations have to bear in mind is that members now expect them to provide services that traditionally were carried out within the companies themselves. This requires an ever increasing professionalism on the part of association executives. Because of the global nature of our economy, and of the current crisis, it is time for all association leaders and members to work together for the

benefit of the sector. One thing I have learned in the many years I have been active in this field is that ultimately people still need to meet each other and work collectively. It is therefore important for associations, destinations, convention bureaus and the entire industry serving this sector to collectively reflect on how to bring about change and stimulate future developments. New tools are available and new opportunities have emerged. It is up to all of us to make use of these opportunities to overcome the current crisis situation and to emerge stronger than before.

[www.esae.org](http://www.esae.org)

## Save the dates: 21 - 22 October 2009

New formats, new institutions, new connections:  
Opportunities for associations in the new Europe

### ESAE Annual Congress

Hotel Amigo, Rue de l'Amigo | Brussels, 1000 | Belgium



*"How does the changing face of European institutions impact our associations, our industries and our members?"*



The face of the European Parliament is starting to look very different as a result of the recent elections, with sweeping changes across the board that affect how we all do business.

Venue partner:



Info: [info@esae.org](mailto:info@esae.org)