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AARHUS

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CITY OF SMILES



Aarhus may be Denmark's second largest city, but there's nothing else second-place about it. This small metropolis on the Jutland Peninsula is fast becoming a major destination for meetings and conventions, particularly those with a science focus, and it's also a leading light in sustainability.

'Capitals talk, 2nd cities act' is a catchphrase come true here; without the distraction of being the nation's capital, Aarhus has been able to quietly focus on productive collaboration and excellence. Named European Capital of Culture in 2017, it's a modern city, and thanks to its high student population and portside location, it's a youthful, vibrant and international city too, offering culture and retail therapy in abundance. However, it's also proud of its heritage.

Aarhus was founded around 770 and originally called Aros ('river mouth'). The Vikings recognised its position at the mouth of the Aarhus River as ideal for a harbour and trading post, and houses gradually spread up the river to Immervad and down to Mejlgade Street (which still exists). The city expanded, first around the Cathedral and then around the large merchant houses after the Reformation. In the nineteenth century, with the harbour expansion and the opening of the railway line between Aarhus and Randers, Aarhus became a goods and transport hub and soon, Denmark's second-largest city.

Some of this history can still be seen. The impressive Aarhus Cathedral was built in 1201 and enlarged between 1450 and 1520, while Møllestien Lane, a picturesque cobbled street dating back to the Middle Ages, is lined with tiny, half-timbered houses built around 1870-1885. These characteristic, beautiful, coloured houses with their hollyhocks and rambling roses make the Lane well worth a visit. To find out more about the history of Aarhus, visitors can drop into one of the excellent heritage museums, including the Viking Museum, the Old



Town Museum and MOMU Moesgaard Museum.

Today, Aarhus is in joint 22nd place on the Global Destinations Sustainability Index and among the top 75 destinations in the world on the International

Congress and Convention Association (ICCA's) scale, often hosting conferences with over a thousand plus delegates. But Aarhus is just as proud of its ability to host smaller sustainable events. It wants to leave its

unique mark on visitors and ensure their memories of their time there, whether for business or leisure, are all positive. Since Aarhus, the 'City of Smiles', is a shining example of Denmark's welcoming, tolerant

attitude and high standards, that should be easy.

It's all about accessibility and sustainability

It's said that everything is within walking distance in Aarhus, and that's no exaggeration. It's a compact city and nothing is more than a few minutes away. However, there are plenty of green public transport options providing great coverage of the city and beyond, and city bikes that are free to rent. The streets in central Aarhus are pedestrianised, but there are plenty of cycle paths through the city and out to the Marselisborg woods, the Deer Park or local beaches. By bike, within 15 minutes you can be at the beach, at the harbour or in the forest. Visitors can now swim or have a sauna at the world's largest sea water pool, the Harbour Bath, designed by architect Bjarke Ingells and built from sustainable Swedish pine.



Aarhus is within an hour's drive of Billund and Aarhus airports, which offer direct flights to 540 destinations. For a greener option, regular buses take you swiftly to the city from both airports.

The AarhusCARD offers free transport by bus and the Letbanen (Denmark's first Light Railway) all over Aarhus and the surrounding Central Denmark Region, including some local trains and airport shuttles to and from Aarhus and Billund Airports. It also offers free admission to more than 25 museums, attractions and activities in and around the city and discounts on shopping.

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Denmark, Aarhus recognises that its goal to become CO2-neutral by 2030 needs to go hand-in hand with responsibly planned commercial development and urban growth, and that the majority of the city's CO2 emissions are not under its control. That's why its ambitious sustainability strategies, including its Climate Plan 2016-20, were developed in consultation with business and the public sector.

Aarhus provides citizens and businesses with green biomass heating and electricity. Around 1 in 20 of Denmark's 8000 electric cars can be found in Aarhus, and a quarter of those (around 100) are used by employees of the Aarhus Municipality. The opening of the Light Railway in 2017 replaced diesel trains and buses on the same routes, and there's an ongoing plan to extend its routes. Citizens have free access to 450 urban cycles and numerous cycle routes. The city council is also introducing Intelligent Traffic Management, upgrading streetlights with LEDs,



and working with 'Smart Mobility', which works to change transport habits through innovative means.

The Council are committed to 'green renovation' of existing buildings and sustainable construction of new, energy-efficient ones. Another key strategy is the planting of more woodlands, not only to produce biomass but also to 'bind' CO2 and offset emissions. True 'waste' is rare here. Recyclables like glass, metal, plastic, paper, cardboard and batteries, plus general waste, are all separated by residents and collected on their doorstep, with the general waste then burned and turned into district heating. There



are also innovative projects like the Swapping Market and ReUse, ensuring clothing and household items are swapped, reused or donated to charity.

It's all about unique, sustainable event options

The VisitAarhus Convention Bureau, in cooperation with the Council and local providers, make it easy to hold any event in Aarhus and can help organisers coordinate different venues, providers and accommodation. With so many hotels, venues and restaurants in a small space, it's easy to use multiple venues to create the perfect event. This year it will host a range of high-profile events, including the IoT (Internet of Things) Week, which expects over a 1000 delegates. The World Economic Forum believes the Internet of Things could be a game-

Salling ROOFTOP Terrace and MOMU Moesgaard Museum are both great locations for welcome receptions. Salling ROOFTOP terrace has fantastic 360-degree panoramic views of the city. Delegates can enjoy tapas and wine just minutes from their hotel and event venue. The Moesgaard Museum offers not just striking architecture and fascinating exhibitions, but also a marvellous location in beautiful natural surroundings, overlooking the woods and sea. Delegates can enjoy a guided tour of the Museum and then a delicious picnic and wonderful views on the grass-topped roof. And the green doesn't stop at the roof: this is one of the world's most energy-efficient museums, built with sustainability in mind from the start.

The ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, right next to the



IMAGE: MOESGAARD MUSEUM



changer for sustainability, with most current IoT projects contributing to the UN's SDGs (sustainable Development Goals) and its 2030 mission.

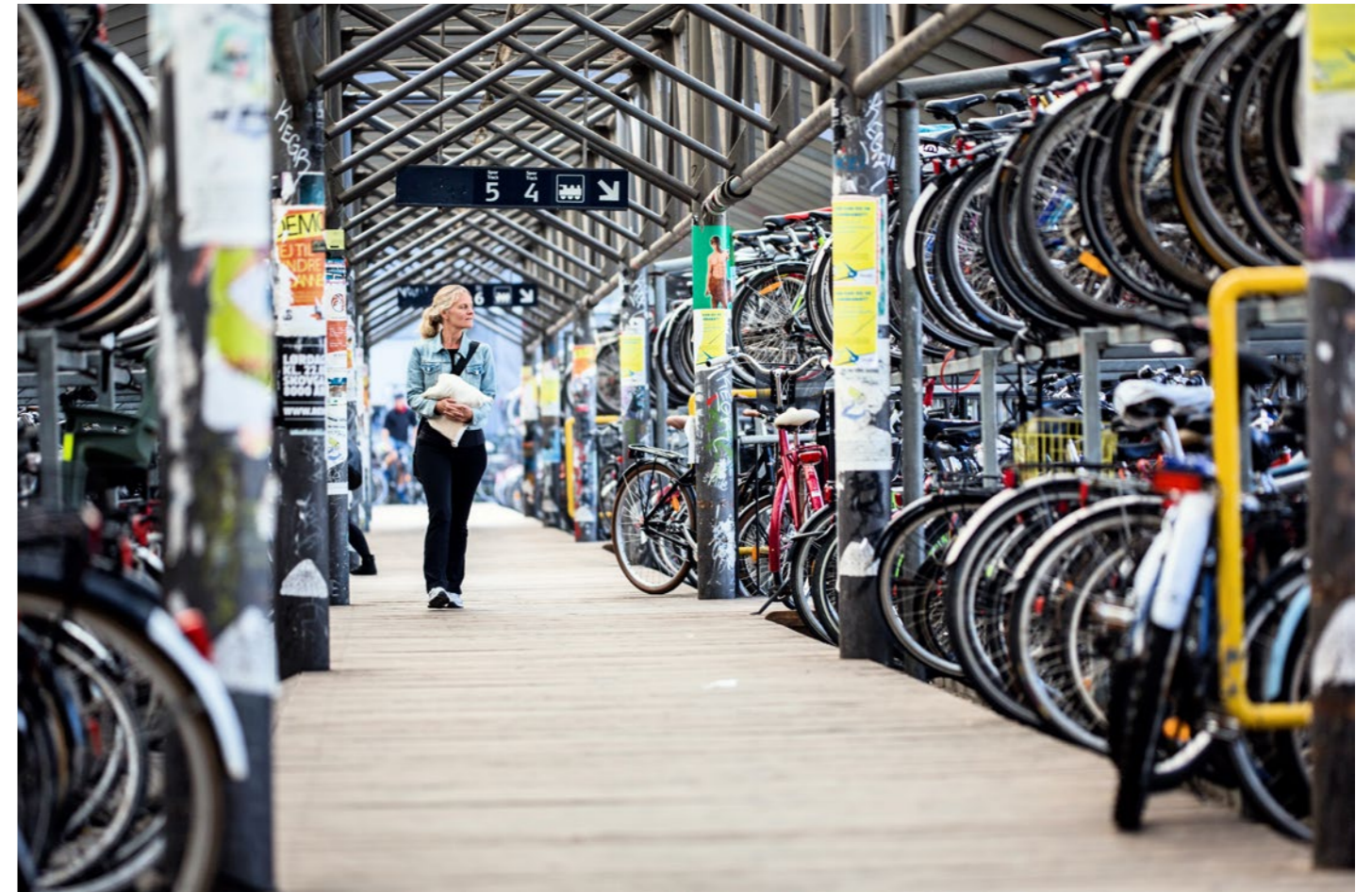
The Council and VisitAarhus Convention Bureau recognise that sustainability isn't just a logical and moral imperative for Aarhus, but also, increasingly, a competitive parameter for leisure and MICE tourism. Sustainability is also a focus for Aarhus University, which implements initiatives such as providing delegates with reusable bottles rather than plastic, single-use water bottles, replacing conference packs with a selection of printed materials delegate can choose to take, and ensuring much of the food is organic and locally sourced. The University organises a great many events in the city and is therefore an important 'customer'!

However, this demand for sustainability isn't a problem for Aarhus, as it's increasingly competitive in this arena. It offers flexible, high-quality venues in the city centre within walking distance of over 2000 hotel rooms, with 1000 more rooms on the outskirts of Aarhus. 83% of these rooms hold an official eco-certification, as do all of the city's convention venues. There are 10 convention venues that can accommodate over 500 delegates, some of which can accommodate up to 2000. But the locations available for meetings and conventions in Aarhus aren't all... conventional.



Concert Hall, will open exclusively for events and has a conference room seating 170. The restaurant (seating 175 people) is located at the top of ARoS with spectacular views of the city and Aarhus Bay. For 175-600 delegates, dinner can be served throughout the museum while delegates tour the museum, enjoy the views from the rooftop terrace and take a walk in 'Your rainbow panorama' - a 150 meter long, circular path with 360° views of the city. The Museum takes sustainability seriously. Around 95% of its lighting is LED, as are all screens and projectors. Its Food Hall and Art Café focuses on seasonal, organic local produce, and serves Fairtrade tea and coffee. Its food waste is collected by Daka Refood, a company that collects and recycles organic waste, and its coffee grounds are used for mushroom cultivation. The Museum implements many sustainable, environmentally-friendly practices, including use of sustainable, eco-friendly materials and cleaning products; reduced paper usage; and internal use of electric bikes.

For a truly unique venue, the Tivoli Friheden amusement park is just a 10 minute trip away by shuttle bus. Its conference venue accommodates 800 guests, but there are smaller meeting rooms and various food options. The park's 'Climate Portal' allows guests to see how much power Tivoli Friheden uses versus the power produced by a 3kw wind turbine produces and some



of the rides that can be opened to guests are green too. The Freedom Carousel runs on renewable energy, and the Liberty Carousel is powered by a 'wind tree' and three 'sun trees'. A battery system stores excess energy, meaning the carousel won't stop when the sun goes down! The sun trees also power the park's information screens and lighting of the entrance area.

If you want to go more conventional, Conference Campus encompasses the two largest venues: the eco-certified Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel Aarhus and Aarhus Concert Hall. Each venue accommodates up to 1,600 conference delegates and offers numerous plenary and break-out rooms.

Currently, a new state-of-the-art conference centre and 500-600 room hotel is being built by the waterfront with room for more than 2,000 delegates, operated by the Nordic hotel brand Scandic and designed by Danish star architect Bjarke Ingels (BIG).

It's all about sustainable, top-class cuisine

Aarhus is an epicentre hub of food innovation and quality, named the European Region of Gastronomy in 2017. Lonely Planet say Aarhus is "where to go in Denmark if you place food above all else." Why?

Firstly, it boasts 4 Michelin starred restaurants: Frederikshøj, Gastromé, Substans and Domestic. Also, in Aarhus, it's easier to list what's not on the menu than what is: you can find kombucha, seaweed pesto, fried insects, and a range of biodynamic wines. Aarhus' position, next to the ocean and surrounded by farmland, means fresh seafood and produce is always on hand, and ecology, animal welfare, sustainability, and local produce are key to the majority of the city's eateries—of which there are many. Aarhus isn't nicknamed 'The City of Cafés' for nothing!

Great food isn't just found in the restaurants and cafés, though. Aarhus has many street markets and culinary events. The annual Food Festival is the biggest food event in Northern Europe, attracting around 30,000 visitors and offering everything from gourmet picnics to sausage-making workshops.

The city also does well when catering for large groups. Centralværkstedet, built in 1862, was once a Danish State Railways repair shop but can now provide an authentic atmosphere and great food and serve as a meeting venue for up to 900 guests. Dinner can also be served for up to 150 guests in one of the buildings at the Old Town Museum or for 300 at an exclusive opening of the Aarhus Central Food Market, where delegates can choose from the stalls of street market vendors.

It's this gastronomic expertise and its reputation as one of the best convention destinations that led to Aarhus hosting the launch of the Michelin Guide Nordic Countries in February 2019 – the first time a city that's not a capital has hosted this prestigious event.

This combination of sustainable credentials, top-class facilities and cuisine and a warm Danish welcome make Aarhus the ideal location for modern, green business events of all kinds.

Find out what makes Aarhus a world leader in green events by visiting: <https://www.visitaarhus.com/en-int/denmark/conference-and-meetings-in-aarhus>

"IT IS MUCH EASIER TO MAKE SUSTAINABLE CHOICES THAN YOU THINK"

Anders Frølund is Head of Events and Communications Support at Aarhus University. As part of this role, he is responsible for helping researchers organise high quality, professional conferences and is also the primary point of contact for the city, the Convention Bureau and the local meeting industry. He has launched initiatives to make conferences at the university more sustainable and set a goal for Aarhus to become one of the leading European universities in sustainable conferences.



How do you collaborate with the VisitAarhus Convention Bureau in the development of Aarhus as a sustainable meetings destination?

For three years, we've had a joint interest in focusing on sustainable events and Aarhus as a sustainable meeting destination. As VisitAarhus helps our researchers to attract conferences to the city, it's clearly in our common interest for us to work together to fulfil the demands of researchers and conference organisers, who increasingly prioritise sustainability as one of their key parameters when choosing a city for their conference.

What, in your opinion, makes conferences in Aarhus more sustainable than in other popular meetings destinations?

We can offer a meeting destination with all major venues (conference venue, hotels, restaurants etc.) in walking distance. There's seldom a need for fuel-based transport during conferences. The major venues and the city collaborate closely together in order to think sustainably – meaning that the hotels, restaurants and venues are very keen to focus on initiatives such as minimising food waste and increasing energy efficiency etc.

Talk us through Aarhus' new, recently published sustainability strategy and some of its main aims and objectives.

The main reason for creating this strategy is to make it possible for ALL event creators and conference organisers to act – to actually DO something in order to be more sustainable. The strategy is made

by organisers, for organisers – not made by politicians for event organisers – and that means the focus is on potential actions and what is possible for the local organiser. This is why it is laid out in themes like transportation, food/beverage, waste, energy and volunteering – and within each theme we try to be very concrete in our guidance. The local event or conference organiser should be able to grab the strategy and actually take action tomorrow.

Can you please tell us a little more about the upcoming WETPOL 2019 conference and how sustainability is being embedded into the event?

The conference organisers have from the beginning tried to think about sustainability in all aspects of the conference. They have made choices to minimise printed material and say no to non-reusable drinking bottles and non-eco-friendly transportation etc., and together with us and other advisers, have tried to come up with solutions to these choices. In many (but not all) cases, it is possible to make more sustainable choices that aren't more expensive. Together with VisitAarhus, they have made a short video to tell the participants about their efforts to create a sustainable conference, such as the provision of reusable drinking bottles for all delegates, allowing them to drink Denmark's tap water.

What advice would you give on how to promote sustainability initiatives both before and during conferences?

First: Do it—it is much easier to make sustainable choices than you think! Next: Tell delegates about it before and during the conference – always make the participants co-creators of a sustainable conference. Make them use the reusable drinking bottle, make them think about reducing food waste (e.g. suggest they tell you in advance if they won't be attending a lunch), make them walk instead of taking a taxi, etc. It is very much a question of communication, and we believe (and have seen, in our experience) that most people like to take part in sustainable initiatives if they are nudged to do it.

And brag about your efforts!



"SUSTAINABILITY IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT AS A BUSINESS DRIVER"

Nina Carlslund has been the General Manager of Scandic Aarhus City since its opening in 2012. With 228 rooms, nine conference rooms, two restaurants and 50 permanent employees, Scandic Aarhus City has been built from the ground up with sustainability and social responsibility at its core. Nina also serves as the Sustainability Coordinator for Scandic Hotel's Sustainability Group, which implements and communicates both environmental and CSR initiatives across the hotels.



What are the main challenges for hotels when it comes to striking a balance between profitability and sustainability?

The main challenges are surprisingly not in operations but more in marketing and sales and in the meeting with our customers. We are still waiting for the change in demand, and we wish that there could be a ranking of environmentally friendly hotels, making sustainability more visible and thereby increasing demand. To change habits is hard, so we would like to be part of the solution to make the sustainable choice of accommodation easier.

Can you please tell us a little more about the green credentials of the Scandic Aarhus City?

Scandic Aarhus City is an eco-labelled hotel. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a voluntary eco-labelling scheme that evaluates a product's impact on the environment throughout the whole life cycle. The label guarantees, among other things, that climate requirements are taken into account and that CO2 emissions (and other harmful gasses) are limited - where it is most relevant. Unlike other eco-labels, the Swan label concerns the entire hotel service, including sorting of waste, chemical discharge and energy consumption.

Sunshine turns on the TV: On the roof of the hotel, we have installed 240 solar cell panels that supply 85-90 percent of the energy consumed by the hotel rooms each year. The remaining energy requirement is generated by water and wind energy from Norway. In addition, we have reduced our power consumption significantly by installing energy saving lighting and removing 220 minibars from the hotel rooms. Thanks to some of these solutions, Scandic Aarhus City has reduced its CO2 emission to only 2 kilos per guest stay over. Hotels without an eco-label generally emit over four times as much CO2 – 8.4 kilos.

Our own bees on the roof: Next to the solar cell panels on the roof, we keep our four beehives. Together, the 280,000 bees provide nectar for 200 kilos of honey, which is made by our head chef. The honey can be enjoyed as part of the morning buffet and by our Scandic Friends.

These are just a few of the many green initiatives here at Scandic Aarhus City. If you wish to know more about our sustainability work, please ask at reception. Our sustainability ambassador will give you a guided tour around the hotel.

Inclusion and diversity:

Today, Scandic employs people from no less than 120 countries. At this hotel, our 100 employees are of 23 different nationalities. All employees are treated with consideration and respect, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Scandic regards diversity as a unique competitive advantage for its brand.

Accessibility is an integrated part of our business. We have a checklist with 139 different action points to be considered in our everyday operation so that every guest, including our guests with disabilities,

experience the same level of comfort.

In 2015, Scandic also signed the UN Global Compact's ten principles for sustainability. Scandic is therefore required to make continual progress in several areas and our sustainability efforts are supported by and evaluated against a number of long-term goals in four areas.

What role do the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play in Scandic's approach to sustainability?

Scandic has an established Code of Conduct that applies to all employees.

The code is based on UN Global Compact principles that address anti-corruption, work environment, the environment and human rights. Scandic is a signatory of Agenda 2030 and the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. While Scandic works towards most of the goals, the company has a specific focus on the following four:

Goal 5: We analyse and take action to achieve gender balance in recruiting through internal programs as well as internal and external recruiting.

Goal 8: We offer equal conditions and follow up in our work environment. Scandic has a Global Compact for suppliers. We offer work experience programs for people outside the labour market.

Goal 10: Scandic offers equal conditions regardless of gender, disability, ethnic background, etc. through value and leadership development. We also offer work experience for people outside the labour market and have a focus on Fairtrade products.

Goal 12: Third-party environmental certifications of all hotels and Individual products. This means less use of energy, water and chemicals, and less waste. We have environmental requirements for all suppliers.

You also double up as Sustainability Coordinator for Scandic Hotels. Which main trends do you observe regarding the hospitality industry and sustainability right now, and how is Scandic keeping abreast of the trends and needs of the sector? Key trends in sustainability affecting the hospitality industry in the Nordics today:

- Increasing expectations on business to integrate sustainability, with a view to 2030
- Concern over climate and plastics are driving a shift to circularity and more sustainable consumption
- More and more actors see the shared value case for diversity and inclusion
- A holistic view of health and wellness is driving a shift from fitness to happiness, and integrates environmental and health concerns in dietary choices
- Sustainability is increasingly important as a business driver, and key for employer branding

We try to keep ahead by moving from philanthropy to engaging with issues closer to home and by driving a shift towards more sustainable consumption, e.g. banning plastic straws etc. Furthermore, integration becomes or already is key to recruitment and employer branding. We also try to keep a holistic focus on well-being by moving the focus from gyms to a curated sleep experience, as sleep is increasingly recognised as an important factor for well-being.

"IN AARHUS CONGRESS CENTER, SIZE AND FLEXIBILITY ARE THE KEY WORDS"

Helene Hallre is the General Manager of both Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel in Aarhus, Denmark and the Aarhus Congress Center. Helene has worked for the Radisson Hotel Group in both Norway and Denmark for 14 years and holds a bachelor's degree in Hotel Management and a Master's Certificate in International Management and Global Leadership. Helene is one of the Nordic hotel industry's most award-winning talents and recognised as one of the best Norwegian young leaders. She was awarded the 'Young Leader of the Year' 2012 at Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel in Oslo, and in 2015, 'Young Leader of the Year' at HSMIAI Chapter Norway Awards. In November 2016, she was ranked as the third best leader talent in Norway by E24, the most prestigious talent award in Norway.



One of the first things that people will notice about your hotel from the exterior is its impressive size and innovative contemporary design. Can you tell us a bit about the building design?

We are proud that Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel and Aarhus Congress Center is situated in the wonderful 'Scandinavian Center' building, located in the city centre in Aarhus, Denmark. The building, with its magnificent architecture, is well-known in the city and was designed by the architects Friis & Moltke. The building was opened in 1995 and the hotel opened in the same year, meaning we have now been warmly welcoming our guests for 24 years.

Can you please tell us about Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel's approach to sustainability and how sustainability is incorporated into your hotel's daily operations?

At Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel in Aarhus and Aarhus Congress Center, we are committed to caring for our people, our communities and the planet.

We believe this is essential to running a thriving business and part of our responsibility as global citizens. We work with sustainability based on 3 pillars of our Responsible Business program:

- Think People – Caring about people in our hotels and value chain
- Think Community – Meaningful contributions to communities around the world
- Think Planet – A better planet for all. Reducing our carbon footprint, energy use, water and waste

In our daily operations, this means that we have a set of actions designed to reduce and control our waste and our use of energy and water. The continuous focus on energy actions has led to an energy reduction year to date in 2019 of 10,8% vs same time last year. Another great initiative we have done at the hotel is an installation to liquify and reduce organic waste. We have these focus areas in mind as we see this as a key responsibility for us as a hotel being a large player in the local market. Our sustainability activities are supported by an exciting training and development program for all of our employees, which is held several times each year. The hotel proudly holds a 'Green Key Certification' granted by 'Green Key International' back in 2015 and this certification is audited every year checking our hotel on close to a 100 criteria's related to all areas of sustainability.

Once a year, we host our annual 'Responsible Business Action Month' where guests and employees are invited to join in on activities where we raise money for our global collaboration partner, 'SOS Children's Villages'. Throughout the year, our guests and visitors can choose to take an active part in reducing their carbon footprint when visiting the hotel. All meetings at our Congress Center or hotel are automatically green, at no cost to the meeting planner. Our company has a target of worldwide plastic free Meetings & Events by 2020, and at Radisson Blu Aarhus we are already ahead of the game. As a guest at the hotel one can use the Hotel Bikes instead of a car or a taxi when getting around Aarhus or exploring the city via our walking and jogging 'BluRoutes'. Our overnight guests are also encouraged to reuse their towels to reduce water usage and through this they participate in our 'Just A Drop' programme where donations from our entire company have ensured that a total of 24,000 children are provided with Safe Drinking Water for life. When planning our food servings and menus we focus on local, seasonal and sustainable food offerings and our 'Super Breakfast' is designed with this in mind.

Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel in Aarhus is also the only Safe Hotels Certified Hotel in Jutland and proud to be among over 240 Radisson Hotel Group Hotels to have received this important certification.

As members of VisitAarhus' Conference Cluster, what options for large-scale events such as conferences or trade-shows do you offer?

At Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel, we have 33 meeting rooms in various sizes that can be used flexibly to match almost any need, hosting everything from day meetings to gala dinners.

In Aarhus Congress Center, size and flexibility are the key words. Here, you will find events as diverse as conferences for 1,600 delegates, concerts for 4,100 music lovers and banquets or gala dinners for 1,400 guests, as well as trade fairs and exhibitions.

Aarhus Congress Center offers more than 2,000 sqm of fully-equipped meeting, conference and event facilities. Due to its unique flexibility, the facilities can easily be adapted to individual events and capacity needs. Our versatile centre is open for any kind of event, including meetings, conferences, fairs and exhibitions, banquets, concerts, product launches to name a few.

We pride ourselves in a professional and welcoming environment and our ability to fulfil whatever event-related needs our guests may have. As a signature service, we appoint a personal event coordinator for each and every event. The event coordinator works closely with event organisers, right through the planning process, the holding of the event itself and the event evaluation.

Our dedicated experts are ready to assist organisers with lots of creative ideas and suggestions, based on their experience of hosting more than 2,000 successful meetings, conferences and events at Aarhus Congress Center and the Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel, Aarhus every year. They coordinate everything from audio-visual equipment to catering and service, as well as making hotel reservations and setting up social programs outside of the congress centre for delegates.

What would be your advice to meeting planners and event organisers looking to brand their event as sustainable?

Setting targets and working with transparent and honest partners. I believe tangible targets are key in order to be able to move the needle in regard to planning, hosting and executing successful sustainable events. By having clear targets, we can implement good initiatives, including and engaging employees, guests and collaborating partners so that we can make changes together.

In the Radisson Hotel Group, we take pride in our sustainable way of thinking and working. We have been target setting for sustainability for many years and this has been key in progressing and making a difference in this area. Taking responsibility for the environment and local community has been an important part of Radisson Hotel Group's broader commitment to sustainable development since we launched our first environmental policy back in 1989.

Our award-winning Responsible Business program is fully aligned with the company's core business objectives. It effectively increases our awareness and readiness to handle risks – and it works to reduce costs. It is also designed to help us capture every available opportunity as we work towards our goal of being an industry leader with solid, long-term profitability.



"IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT AARHUS IS CALLED THE CITY OF SMILES"

Karsten Dehler is Chief Commercial Officer for It-Forum, a network of over 470 companies, private and public organizations, colleges, and local, regional and state authorities in Central Denmark Region and Southern Denmark. He's also Project Manager for the IoT Week 2019 in Aarhus, Denmark.



The Internet of Things (IoT) is the current emerging market trend that promises to merge the physical and data worlds together. What benefits do you think IoT brings to individuals and society in terms of sustainability, and how has Aarhus managed to become known as its innovation capital? Many individuals and society in general (no matter if it's public organisations or private companies) are struggling with making smarter, better decisions. The ones that want to make a change often have a hard time explaining where and how big the impact or result of a given solution or decision is, because the underlying data—the before and after data—is missing.

This is exactly what is being changed with IoT devices, especially via the data they gather. When we gather data, our impact on a given problem or area is quickly available via that data, and we can see if things are moving in the right direction, with the positive changes we aimed for. And when we work together across 'classic industry borders' and involve private companies (well established ones, as well as start-ups) in cooperation with cities and communities, we can create a positive impact much quicker. It's a classic example of synergy effect at its best, where the sum of all parties equals much more than the worth of each initiative on its own.

Aarhus created 'Smart Aarhus' several years back to facilitate exactly this kind of cooperation, bringing public and private players together to try new joint solutions quickly, see if they work, and then use them to make better decisions and choose what to scale and how. They also supported 'Public Data Denmark', where cities and public authorities share data to anyone that can use it, e.g. data gathered in the city regarding road temperature, pollution, rain, smog, cars in traffic, bikes and so forth is made available to anyone that could use it to come up with suggestions to benefit us all. Many other cities in Denmark are following Aarhus and many have joined Danish, Scandinavian and Global smart city initiatives.

Aarhus will be hosting this 2019's IoT Week 2019. Back in 2017, participants of the IoT Week Geneva signed a declaration promoting the development and adoption of IoT technologies in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We hear that the SDGs are to play an even bigger role during IoT Week Aarhus this year. Can you please tell us a little more about this?

Definitely. First of all, we have created a series of tracks under the overall topic that we call international cooperation and SDGs, because if we are going to make a positive impact on the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to work together across additional industry borders, across traditional sectors and definitely also across international borders. For a small country like Denmark, if we just focus on ourselves, we won't have much impact. So we're very much hoping to inspire other countries, both within the public sectors and private sectors, to work together. We're hoping the international cooperation and SDGs track will reach out mainly to the strategic decision makers and actually show them with cases and concrete examples how companies today are assisting in reaching the goals even faster—in the fastest possible way, basically.

We have also created an area between the public expo open for everyone and the venue side where you have to pay to get in. In this area, we are introducing our new way of serving water, food and drinks to the participants. One of the three food stations we have is being dedicated to making food related to the SDGs, so it will be zero-meat and use as little water as possible. We will also be handing out, in person, glass bottles to be reused by each participant so they are filling up glass bottles and actually taking them home with them, instead of using the traditional plastic bottles that create a lot of garbage for us to recycle. We're also working very hard to predict more precisely the number of participants, so we can reduce the amount of food that often goes to waste during an event like this. And if we do have food waste, we have already made deals around Aarhus to reuse the food and give it to shelters and so forth, where people can come and collect food that hasn't been used or eaten by the participants.

The Concert Hall is working to reduce energy use in general and use what they save to create better events, whilst making a positive impact on the environment. We are also working on both our start-up competition (for companies that already have a solution or product in the market and are ready to scale up and go global) and our Hackathon, which is for students and very new companies with just an idea. We're bringing the Hackathon participants together to 'hack' current problems that we need to find new approaches and solutions for. For both the start-up competition and the Hackathon, we have singled out Sustainable Development Goals for them to focus on. So for the start-up competition,

we have singled out SDG 3 good health and well-being, SDG 6 clean water and sanitation and SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, so we are looking for companies with new products and solutions related to solving the SDGs within these areas. For the Hackathon it'll be almost the same: SDG 3, SDG 11 and SDG 13 Climate Action.

As a follow up to the declaration that was made back in 2017, this year we will see the participants signing a new declaration that will take it a step further and challenge companies and the public sector, in cooperation with cities, to reach the goals even faster. So we will use this follow up to challenge the traditional differences between companies and cities and get them working together, highlighting that by working across borders, we will reach the goals even faster. Something relating to this follow up declaration will be in the public area and we're hoping participants, partners, cities and everyone signs the follow up, but I can't reveal the final name for our declaration yet! However, I can promise that the Public Expo as well as the inside Exhibition is something that our guests can look forward to experiencing as we are dedicating such a big part of the event this year to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals - just wait and see.

What, in your opinion, makes Aarhus a great destination for sustainable meetings and events?

On the venue side, the general feeling in Aarhus is that people are more "doers" and willing to help and assist. For example, we have large numbers of volunteers based within Aarhus, so we don't need to bring in assistance and helpers from around the country who would need to travel here, potentially causing CO2 pollution. And what I have been working on this last year is making the conference inspire the city and reach beyond the venue. For many years, I've been going to conferences where the conference would live entirely inside the venue and not actually reach out to the participants in the city surrounding the venue. And since we are focusing on the sustainable development goals and they should be on top of everybody's minds, that is one of the reasons why we have created the public expo—to sort of open up the conference, with an open air, free access area for everyone, where they can all come in to see the different ways in which IoT devices can help us make better decisions, based on data rather than gut feelings. All of this would not be happening were it not for the help and support of the City Of Aarhus. What makes Aarhus even better is that it's a small city that has everything close by. It's located so that you have water, beaches and the sea, forests and beautiful nature close by, and we have a lot of initiatives, many of them started by Smart Aarhus that we talked about earlier, which help participants to walk to local venues and find their way around the city without having to use public transport. Because it's a smaller city than London or New York or Paris, they will have an experience where they can see all of these things working and that participants in the different municipalities are working together with the different stakeholders in the city.

For instance, they will see the electric city bikes that are talking to street city lights, so that if you're using one of these electric bikes you'll be helped with green lights whenever possible during your trip around the city. We are actually creating a bike tour around Aarhus so visitors can see and experience all these different proposals and initiatives at work around the city: everything from utility to water handling to using alternative routes in the city and transport options you can use instead of parking your car here. We have different solutions where we are gathering data from the sidewalks and the bikes paths, because Aarhus is a biking city; biking is very popular. We are gathering temperature data so we can see when we will need to salt the roads, and if it's icy, we can reduce the amount of big trucks going around spreading salt on the roads. So there will be a lot of concrete examples.

It is no coincidence that Aarhus is called the "City of Smiles" and I will guarantee that our guests and visitors will experience a city of doers, willing to go the extra step to create a unique experience. Just to give you another example, we have the local running communities that have offered help related to SDG 3 Good health and well-being; they are creating running routes so that our conference participants can go out running together each morning and experience the city with people that know the area. They will see how we are ensuring that people can get their exercise, even though they're in a new city and maybe not used to being able to run on their own. But Aarhus is a very safe city and there will be a lot of assistants helping and guiding our guests during the event.

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