

Registration Is a Guided Journey: How Congress Websites Shape Registration Decisions



The real issue: information without direction

Many congress websites are designed as digital brochures rather than conversion-oriented platforms. Visitors encounter content like programme details, venue descriptions, speaker lists, accommodation options, but often lack a clear path through the decision

making of their congress registration: 'Why should I register, and why now?'

Team members from CPO HANSER SERVICE and its IT subsidiary GLOBIT analysed several congress websites and identified common friction points:

- Value propositions that are hard to spot
- Content that is not aligned with specific target groups
- Information overload that delays decisions
- Calls to action that are easy to miss or inconsistent

The result? Page visitors leave the site without registering, even when they are fundamentally interested in attending

The registration is a decision journey

The team reframed ticket purchase as a decision journey, not a single action. Participants analysed a real congress website from the perspective of different attendee types and a list of decision-making factors, including:

- Need. Orientation: 'I want to quickly understand whether this conference is relevant to me and my professional role.'
- Decision factor. Relevant content: 'The programme addresses exactly the topics that interest me.'
- Objection. Lack of time: 'I would participate, but I hardly have any time – is it worth the effort?'
- Want. Networking: 'I want to meet like-minded people and exchange ideas with other professionals.'
- And many more questions which require answers: 'Is this congress relevant to my research and reputation?' (Professor) 'Will this help me solve real-world problems or advance my career?' (Expert) 'Is this accessible, affordable and worth the time investment?' (Student/Early Career Researcher)

Each perspective comes with different needs, motivations and objections, yet many websites address all audiences with the same generic content.

The focus of the meeting was on how websites need to address and support visitors in each of these phases with targeted communication.

From passive to active communication

A key takeaway is the shift from passive to active communication. Instead of waiting for users to search for

relevant information, websites should proactively guide them through decisions.

Effective websites:

- Clear value propositions visible at every stage
- Prominent and repeated registration calls to action
- Transparent pricing and ticket options (including travel expenses and possible grants opportunities)
- Simple, frictionless registration processes
- Trust building signals such as partner logos, testimonials and past attendance data

The goal is to remove hesitation, provide better-structured orientation and reduce cognitive effort required from website visitors.

A strategic mindset shift for congress marketing

We concluded that successful congress marketing requires a strategic rethink: websites must guide decisions, rather than being digital brochures.

By aligning website communication with visitor decision processes, organisers can improve registration rates significantly, often without increasing marketing spend.

At the end of the meeting, a consensus was reached: **'Traffic doesn't create attendance. Guided decisions do.'**

Even small structural changes in website communication can lead to measurable gains, making targeted digital guidance a core competence for modern congress organisers.

Inge Hanser, Managing Owner of CPO HANSER SERVICE: 'The findings were immediately applied to current congress website projects, refining structure, messaging and calls to action'.

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