

## ***Welcome to Vienna!***

It is a big pleasure for me as ENAT President to welcome you all to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ENAT International Congress in Vienna. My warmest thanks and appreciation goes to the Austrian Ministry of Economics, Youth & family, whose support made it possible to arrange this congress. I would also like to send a special thanks to Angelika Laburda and her team at IBFT, national ENAT coordinator in Austria; without all their work this congress could not have taken place.

This ENAT congress will welcome participants from 24 countries. I send a warm welcome to all the delegates and especially those from Austria and Germany who make up a big share of the audience. We are delighted to have you here and look forward to your participation.

The tourism industry is in the midst of difficult times. We have all experienced, in one way or another, the problems of the economic downturn caused by the global credit crisis. The lack of income affects the tourist trade directly and hard, and calls for extraordinary measures.

The crisis threatens businesses but it also poses a threat to the development and uptake of new solutions in tourism as a whole. I am thinking, about the advances that are needed **to make tourism accessible for all**. ENAT has a strategy against the crisis:

We must improve the quality of tourism offers, and find and develop new markets, by delivering and marketing products for people who want and need better access.

ENAT's mission is: to make European tourism destinations, products and services accessible to all visitors and to help promote Accessible Tourism around the world.

ENAT will continue to build alliances and work with those who support the goals of inclusion and respect for human rights. In this respect, I want to say, especially, how important it is for the tourism sector that the UN Convention of Right of Persons with Disabilities is now firmly in place, with a clear message that **people with disabilities have an equal right to access to tourism and leisure**. We are very pleased indeed that Mr. Muhammad Al-Tarawneh from the UN Convention Committee will be honouring our Congress with his presence and we look forward to hearing his words of advice.

I would also like to welcome Betty Dion, the President of GAATES, the Global Alliance for Accessible Technologies and Environments. ENAT and GAATES now have a 'Memorandum of Understanding' for collaboration, which we will celebrate during the congress.

ENAT will promote quality in tourism and continue to reach out to the market that needs accessible tourism. We will continue to foster the spirit and practice of collaboration by putting our collective knowledge at the service of our members and by inviting all businesses, consumer groups and tourism bodies to join us in this endeavour. This is what we mean when we say we are:

***“Working Together to Make Tourism in Europe Accessible for All”.***

I wish you all a most fruitful stay in Vienna, both at the Congress, in the excursions and in the wonderful City of Vienna.

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