

Thursday, 15 April 2021 09:13

Prolight + Sound BIZLounge closes successfully and with valuable insights

Event industry positions itself as a partner in virus containment

Photo: Paul Wassermann



Resuming event operations is possible if all hygiene and infection control requirements are taken into account and events thus become a safe space for visitors. This is one of the central theses of the panellists at the Prolight + Sound BIZLounge: the digital exchange format for the event industry celebrated its successful premiere on Tuesday, 13 April. In addition, international experts shed light on burning issues surrounding the effects of Brexit, sustainability and education in Corona times.

"Despite the corona-related cancellation of Prolight + Sound, the industry came together at the BIZLounge in the digital space for an immensely important exchange of ideas," says Mira Wölfel, Director Prolight + Sound. "The event industry has shown that it can pull together when it comes to finding solutions for the way out of the crisis and to not lose sight of important goals for the future. We are very pleased about the insightful discussions with top-class experts - and also about the many international participants who followed the programme from home and

enriched it with their questions".

Roadmap for the return to cultural business: Forum Veranstaltungswirtschaft presents its Restart Manifesto

The events industry is committed to a gradual return to cultural operations with a comprehensive licensing matrix that includes a progressive step-by-step plan and suggested wording for uniform regulations. Members of the "Forum Veranstaltungswirtschaft", an alliance of authoritative trade associations, gave an overview of the Restart Manifesto at the Prolight + Sound BIZLounge. Among other things, it illustrates the effects of applying individual packages of measures on the maximum permissible capacity utilisation of venues.

According to the panel, it is not only the cultural and economic point of view that is endorsing a restart, provided strict measurements are applied: The holding of events could also have a positive effect on the overall epidemiological situation. On the one hand, the risk of infection is lower at events with a strict hygiene concept than at uncontrolled gatherings that escape official supervision. On the other hand, testing before events is an important key to identifying infected persons and preventing further spread of the virus in private and professional contexts, panellists said.

The point was made that a low risk of contagion at events with a consistent testing concept has already been proven in recent weeks at model events, for example in the Netherlands. The development of new tests that deliver faster results and are more convenient for the test persons is also causing optimism in the industry.

Brexit poses many challenges for the industry

Representatives of the industry associations VPLT (Germany), PLASA (UK) and PEARLE (EU) discussed the immediate effects of the UK's exit from the European Union at the Prolight + Sound BIZLounge. Among the topics discussed were the need for customs declarations, different marking requirements for technical products (CE vs. UKCE) and the high bureaucratic effort of applying for visas.

When the pandemic-related travel restrictions are no longer in force, the effects of Brexit will only really be felt - the discussants at the Prolight + Sound BIZLounge agreed on this point. Significant negative influences for the touring business are to be expected above all from the cabotage regulations: for example, that after entering the mainland, only two transport services of a UK-based vehicle are possible before it has to return to the UK - and vice versa. The negotiating parties had not taken sufficient account of the operational reality in the events industry, according to the panel's assessment. What is desirable, it said, are exemptions for the cultural sector, both in transport and visas.

The future of the industry is green

The event industry must actively drive the change towards more sustainability: this commitment was reiterated by the participants of the third panel of the Prolight + Sound BIZLounge, which was made up of representatives of the EVVC, the European Music Council and the UFI Sustainable Development Working Group. In doing so, the participants referred to a broad concept of sustainability that takes into account not only ecological but also social and cultural aspects. For example, they said, it is part of sustainable action to counteract market concentration and the associated loss of variety in the event sector - as well as a commitment to diversity and gender justice.

One result of the discussion was that "green events" do not necessarily have to go hand in hand with more costs. For example, by reducing energy consumption, optimising transport logistics or dispensing with meat in catering, industry participants could both save money and make a contribution to the environment.

Christian Allabauer of the Austrian Theatre Technology Association (OeTHG) then presented the effects of the new EU Ecodesign Directive on the theatre and event industry. This has created legal certainty as to which light sources may be used in the future. It is now up to the industry to take responsibility for sustainable action on this basis, Allabauer said: for example, by consciously using the most energy-efficient solutions possible, taking into account the required light spectrum, consistently switching off equipment that is not in use, using replaceable or repairable light sources, recycling - and last but not least, by industry players actively keeping up to date with technological developments.

Industry and universities see successful training of event professionals ensured despite pandemic

Are students and trainees in the industry who acquire their qualifications during the pandemic at a long-term disadvantage? Representatives of the VPLT and various educational institutions rejected this hypothesis. It is indeed challenging to provide young talents with practical experience when hardly any events can take place at the moment. However, there are also opportunities for newcomers to the industry who are being trained in future topics right now - from hybrid events to virtual productions to safety and hygiene concepts. Likewise, the crisis competence of students and trainees would be increased against the background of the current challenges. In addition, learning the theoretical basics is ensured by the timely conversion to remote learning, panellists said.

According to the speakers, there is no doubt that the digital transformation is forcing educational institutions to change - and not just since the outbreak of the pandemic. Lifelong learning will gain in importance in the future. A decisive factor could be the system of so-called "micro-credentials". The term describes small-scale, Europe-wide certified and recognised learning sessions, which should enable faster access to further and continuing education.

Showcase projects in the spotlight

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The Prolight + Sound BIZLounge concluded with the presentation of two renowned industry awards. The "Sinus - Systems Integration Award" honoured the "Osram - World of Light" in Munich. The winning project of the "Opus - German Stage Award" was the production of Giuseppe Verdi's "Rigoletto" at the Seebühne Bregenz. In this context, Sanela Kolb, head of the "Neustart Kultur" project, gave an overview of support programmes supervised by the DTHG.

In the future, Prolight + Sound would also like to keep the entertainment technology industry up to date on current developments by digital means. The next edition of the BIZLounge is planned for 14 June 2021.

A short summary of the event is available on the [Prolight + Sound YouTube channel](#)

The next Prolight + Sound in Frankfurt opens from 26 to 29 April 2022.

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