

Hi Karl

The info you supplied us is very detailed, perhaps even too detailed at some points. The time line in particular may be a bit too much in my opinion. I think its important to stress that some of the items listed in those documents are suggested rather than required, or possibly even too much (e.g. arranging for welcoming desk at airport etc).

I'm providing some comments following the order of your topic below based on our own experience (needless to say this is my personal perspective, not the congress committee as a whole!). You can share with the Korean team, and also they are welcome to contact me if need be with questions.

* Congress Committee:

Size of the committee should be manageable: too many people can be as problematic as too few. If for "political" reasons you need to have some people on board, split up your committee in an actual working group and something like an advisory board where you can list famous people.

One key issue is to have enough people on the ground where the actual congress takes place. Canada is very large and the team spread across which means many tasks inevitably ended up being done by the two people who were based in Montreal.

* Theme:

Yes its good to have a theme, but of course no matter what there will always be papers that talk about BIG in general, and the idea is not to use the theme to exclude those. But its nice to give your congress a special identity in selection of keynote speakers that speak to the theme etc.

* Funding/Sponsorship:

In our case we managed to secure about \$5000 sponsorship, which roughly covered the keynote speakers flight/accommodation. We had quite a few small sponsors (\$250 and up) and most of our sponsors were academic centres. We approached many other possible sources but in part because of the current crisis we were not that successful. But it is worthwhile approaching many sources.

One source of "sponsorship" was keynotes partially subsidizing their own flights. Several of our speakers contributed to their own costs, keeping the funds required low. There is no harm asking when you approach them.

One source of disappointment is the lack of interest of publishers to spend anything on promotion, including dedicated basic income publishers like De Gruyter (Basic Income Studies) and Palgrave (BIG series). They were all keen to send material but nothing in support of us.

Given the low level of sponsorship our budget model was largely based on fees from participants. This worked quite well but largely because we were very

cautious/conservative in our budgeting, only spending some expenses when we were sure we had the funds in place. So organizing a fee-based congress is doable but risky.

* Keynote speakers:

We were keen to use our congress to invite at least some people who are new to the BIG debate. It is very tempting to go for the usual suspects (Guy Standing, Philippe Van Parijs etc) who will attend for sure, but a BIEN Congress is a unique opportunity to introduce BIG to some speakers who may have worked on the margin of the idea and equally to introduce some new arguments/perspectives into the BIG debate - all to keep us from becoming too self-referential.

Another key point is to try as much as possible to please the two big audiences at a BIEN congress: academics and activists. So you will want to make sure you balance speakers accordingly.

Gender balance and regional balance is really very important. Our congress unfortunately didn't manage the gender balance very well: we did invite a considerable number of female speakers but for various reasons they could not attend. And one of our remaining keynotes had to withdraw and instead sent a (male) replacement. This was unfortunate, but not of our design. Keeping gender in mind when designing the program is key though!

* Bursaries:

This is tricky. From the start we had a heavily reduced registration rate for low income/students etc but of course many require more assistance in order to be able to actually attend the congress. Since we didn't have much sponsorship we couldn't offer many of these. It is a good idea from the start to seek out sponsors that may be inclined to sponsor low income participants specifically (rather than keynotes) - .e.g, churches or poverty groups might be good for that.

In addition there is a real issue about how to allocate this funding as your demand will always be higher than what you can offer. I would seriously advise to start thinking about this early on in your preparations.

* Congress Fee:

If your congress fee is needed to pay for expenses you will have to set it high enough to cover your costs, but also keep in mind not all can afford high fees. Typically you'll want to differentiate fees for 1) institutional support (academic, government), 2) NGO, 3) students, 4) low income. Ideally the first two would subsidize the last two but it is hard to get accurate estimates on this.

One important part of differentiated fees is whether you use an "honour system" (letting people register in the category they see themselves to fit) or you require some sort of "proof" (e.g., copy of student card etc). The last option would involve quite a bit of administration (and go against the "spirit" of BIG) so we opted for the former. One problem we did have is that as a matter of fact many people registered for the

cheapest rate, independent of whether this was really appropriate. Some no doubt did this by mistake, but others just went for cheap. This is unfortunate but hard to avoid.

* Congress venue:

One of the hardest things at the start is to estimate in advance how many rooms you need to book and what size of an audience you need to capture. I suggest to book as much as you can in advance, but agree to adjust room requirements later on. In our case the rooms were free (sponsored by Faculty of Law) so there were no cost implications.

One thing to keep in mind: when possible avoid having to move across buildings too much for sessions, coffee breaks etc. This will eat into your scheduling but also makes it more difficult as some people may get lost. We booked our congress venue in part because of the ability to have all events within a clearly marked space.

* Website/advertising/promotion:

This is a big one! I strongly suggest you put together a dedicated promotion team that starts working from the start. Two tasks that can be sorted from the start are:

1) a strong logo and visual branding (ensuring that the congress has a strong visual identity from the start that can be used across all promotion material). this also includes a modern looking website. It also includes making good use of the new social media that are becoming more important (something I think we didn't do as well as we could have). Its really good to have an e-presence early on.

2) gathering of mailing lists, blog sites, contact info of relevant information etc. (getting this ready well in advance of doing the actual promotion). The general idea is that you want to get your congress info out as soon as possible.

* Programming (other than keynotes):

Something not really discussed in your guidelines, but of crucial importance. Several issues:

1) Make sure you set a deadline for abstract submission that gives you plenty of time to review them. Not bad idea to give some clear guidelines on what you expect to receive in Call for Papers (to avoid as much as possible submissions you can't really review). You will nevertheless get late submissions so think ahead what you want to do with that.

2) Set up a review procedure. In our case we had 3 people independently review papers, put them in categories A-D (A = excellent/priority scheduling, B= good, C = OK, take when there is space, D = unacceptable). There was a lot of convergence in our views so it was easy enough to select those that work. Criteria for selection include: quality of proposal, originality, contribution to current debate, link with theme.

3) Coherence of panels is a big issue (you want to avoid panels that have little to do with each other), and one way to do this is to first think in terms of 4-5 broad topic streams (e.g., "country cases", "theory/justification", "politics", "economics/finances"). And then you need to puzzle till you have 3-4 coherent papers in each panel. Make sure not to schedule similar panels at the same time: streams help with that, it makes it easy to schedule all "politics" papers after each other for instance.

4) Throughout the last 6 months of the congress you are going to get cancelations (no visa, no funding to attend, other issues) so keep a reserve list of proposals and be prepared to have to change your final schedule a few times to keep panels coherent. (Best to communicate to accepted papers that schedule is provisional in first instance)

5) Think about how much time each panel will be and how many papers they contain. There is always a trade-off between giving each speaker enough time and making sure many people can present their work. A standard approach is 15mins for each paper but obviously you can change that.

6) Its good to have a mixture of gender and region in each panel; bit more difficult may be mixing academics and activists, but that depends on the actual proposals.

7) Good panel chairs play an important role in making sure the panel runs smoothly: keeping speakers to time but also making sure people asking questions don't take ages etc. Panel chairs is also a good way to include people in the program who are not actually giving a paper.

* Coordination with BIEN EC

This is actually a big item as well. In my experience in the past (Dublin, Montreal and my involvement with the Finnish proposal) there immediately emerge questions about the relationship between EC and LOC (local committee). There exists confusion about the level of discretion LOC has across a host of issues, including selection of speakers or scheduling. I think a separate document (1 page) outlining very clearly what role the EC takes, what it expects from LOC and what LOC can expect from EC might be very useful and alleviate some worries from the start.

For the Montreal congress we took the view that EC has primarily an oversight role, which meant we kept them updated on major developments throughout the organization but didn't look for explicit approval. We did seek EC suggestions at various points, including drawing up a list of keynote speakers and made good use of those. Finally we did involve EC towards the end in some scheduling decisions and also asked some members to be involved in opening or closing remarks, chairing etc. But perhaps this should be explained a bit more in a document.

* Day of Congress

With lots of planning you can have many things avoided, but yes contingencies will arise. Two most important things is to have a central person who coordinates all (and make sure everyone knows who that is and how to find him/her) and in addition have enough people around the venue to assist with all sorts of problems (people getting

lost, technical problems during presentations etc). Key is to have a very central desk with people who can handle requests themselves or can pass onto coordinator. And yes this can literally be anything ...

* Communication!

One key thing is to have someone taking care of direct communication with speakers and participants. This means having a clear email for the congress and making sure you respond fast to enquiries etc. Make sure you acknowledge receipt of submissions for instance or else people won't know whether it has been received. It is also good to send out regular updates to those who submitted proposals or (later) are scheduled to speak, but without bombarding them with emails either. Good communication/information via web or email will avoid many people emailing you with the same questions etc.

* Visa info

It is a good idea to provide people coming from abroad with clear instructions or guidelines on how to apply for visa.

* Disability access/child care

These are two important items that often are not easy to address. Providing sign language interpreters for instance costs a lot of money but may be necessary. Similarly quality child care for those delegates who may need support also may be complicated. In our case we didn't require disability support (although we investigated the option) but we did get a request for child care that we investigated through our institution but couldn't accommodate.

* Registration

Have clear online registration instructions and please allow for multiple payment systems (e.g., credit card but also paypal). Find a good way to ensure that those registered provide clear accurate info you can use after for printing labels etc. We had some problems with this, which mean afterwards quite a lot of work to manually check this info. Worth checking out some options in advance.

If you use an online registration system have a laptop with wifi access ready at registration desk to allow checking registration or even for people to register at the day.

I trust all of this will help somewhat, feel free to get in touch with any specific questions. Good luck to the Korean team with the upcoming congress!

Jurgen De Wispelaere