Vienna, 18th September 2023

**Messe Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center sets sustainability standards with the ESCRS Congress 2023**

*VIENNA, 18th September 2023. -* From 8th to 12th September Messe Wien hosted the 41st Congress of the European Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgeons (ESCRS). The event is the world's best-attended ophthalmology congress. This year the event attracted more than 15,000 international delegates to the Austrian capital with a clear focus at the ESCRS placed on achieving ambitious sustainability goals.

**Ambitious goals**

The congress paid special attention to the areas of food/catering and arrival/departure as part of the "Mission Zero" vision launched by Vienna ESCRS President Oliver Findl. More than half of the meals were vegetarian or vegan, significantly reducing the carbon footprint from food preparation. 70% of the food was sourced locally, within a radius of 160km, leading to significant savings in CO2 emissions – with suppliers travelling shorter distances and food being refrigerated for shorter periods. Furthermore, use of single-use plastic, polystyrene and PVC items, was cut by over 60%. More than one quarter of the delegates used climate-friendly means of transport for the journey to Vienna. Oliver Findl explains: “Our environmentally-friendly event formats reflect the desire to become a role model for social and ecological responsibility. Accordingly, we emphasised the issue of ‘making surgeries greener’ at our symposium in Vienna”.

**Sustainability as a guiding theme**

Martina Candillo is Director of Congresses & Events at Messe Wien: “A congress of this size, due to its complexity, creates challenges for the implementation of a sustainability concept. ESCRS had already cooperated with Global Destination Sustainability Movement consultants to draw up concrete plans for the implementation of the 'Mission Zero' vision. Messe Wien and its partner companies collaborated on event production, jointly developing solutions for resource-saving procedures and providing advice on a list of topics including waste avoidance, the reduction of energy consumption and optimised catering portfolios. In the process a lot of new experiences were made, and our processes were subjected to critical analysis. The newly acquired expertise will benefit future events. Messe Wien is proud to have hosted this groundbreaking congress and we hope that these sustainability measures serve as inspiration for other events in the industry.”

Guy Bigwood, CEO of the Global Destination Sustainability Movement, adds: “Messe Wien provided exceptional support to the event team. Having a dedicated sustainability officer, eco-certification and environmental impact reporting services definitely made our work to drive sustainability performance easier.”

Martina Candillo adds: “We are proud of our new Event Sustainability Report service. We can now be issue a report for each individual congress with organisers receiving a statement on their energy consumption and environmental footprint, CO2 emissions, water consumption, recycling rate, electricity and heating consumption.”

**The role of the responsible host**

Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center meets numerous sustainability criteria and has been certified with the independent Austrian Eco-label for Green Meetings and Green Events. 68% of its energy consumption is drawn from renewable sources and toilets are flushed using well water only.

**Congress characterised by a diverse programme and industry leadership**

The ESCRS Congress 2023 provided a highly varied programme of events during the five-day congress, presenting the latest developments in anterior segment surgery and ophthalmology. In addition to the traditional live surgeries, symposia and numerous courses, sustainability was a core pillar of the Congress's educational program. There were various keynotes on sustainability, a full green track of panel discussions and the launch of the Sustainable Healthcare Index for Cataract Surgery ([SIDICS](https://www.escrs.org/sidics)). The industry exhibition, one of the largest exhibitions in ophthalmology, featured over 250 companies.

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