



Events that Move the City – Annual Events as City Boosters

Foreword

The annual student competition of HAPCO & DES, launched several years ago, has now become an established institution and an important initiative aiming to highlight, support, and give a platform to the new generation of Meetings Industry professionals — the emerging talents who will shape the future of our sector.

Our ambition is to provide students with a real field of application for knowledge, creativity, and strategic thinking, allowing them to approach the design of conferences and professional events not merely as gatherings, but as multifaceted tools that shape and elevate the potential and future of destinations.

In an era where international competition between destinations is intensifying and cities are seeking new pathways for growth, conferences, professional, athletic, cultural events, exhibitions, and incentives emerge as critical catalysts for transformation. They strengthen the economy, foster scientific progress and knowledge exchange, promote cultural identity, and create a stable, measurable footprint on destinations.

With this year's theme, **Events that Move the City – Annual Events as City Boosters**, students are invited to delve into how a well-designed annual event (conference, exhibition, or other type of event) can become a driver of urban revitalization and international visibility. This process encourages participants to combine strategy, creativity, business logic, and evidence-based reasoning in order to develop proposals that are not only inspiring but also realistic, sustainable, and implementable.

The competition aspires to be a meaningful educational experience, cultivating the ability to think in terms of measurable impact and long-term value essential skills for those who wish to become future leaders of the international Meetings Industry.

Competition Theme

The 2026 HAPCO & DES Competition invites students of Tourism, Marketing, Business, Meetings Industry studies, and Strategic Communication to explore the role that such events can play as catalysts for destination development.



Theme Title: Events that Move the City – Annual Events as City Boosters

Participants are invited to investigate how a well-designed annual event can contribute significantly to:

- tourism development
- economic growth
- destination brand differentiation
- cultural identity building
- strengthening social cohesion
- creating new job opportunities

The competition is designed as an exercise in strategic thinking, creativity, and business logic, encouraging students to think *out of the box* and propose ideas that are measurable and feasible.

Competition Scope

Participants are required to:

A. Select a destination in Greece or Cyprus

(city or island) which they consider ideal for hosting a major annual event.

B. Design an event that functions as a “City Booster”

with the aim to:

- enhance the destination’s image
- increase awareness and visibility
- create job opportunities
- mobilize local stakeholders
- connect with global trends and markets
- support economic development
- establish the event as an annual institution
- demonstrate potential for future scaling and growth

C. Justify their choice based on:

- unique destination characteristics



- existing infrastructure and proposals for new ones (in partnership with public or private sector)
- accessibility
- cultural & social profile
- destination attractiveness for international events

D. Present a fully developed proposal including:

- Event concept & title
- Objectives & expected impact
- Stakeholder mapping & management
- Sustainability & inclusion plan
- Marketing & destination branding strategy
- Expected benefits for the destination
- SWOT analysis
- Indicative high-level program

Additional Deliverables *

As part of the comprehensive evaluation of submissions, participants are required to include a detailed **five-year budget**, covering:

- the annual cost of organizing the proposed event for each of the five years, and
- the estimated total economic impact on the destination (direct, indirect & induced impact).

Note: This is a mandatory requirement for postgraduate students, but undergraduate teams will receive extra credit if they include it.

Eligibility

The competition is open to:

- Undergraduate and postgraduate students in Hospitality Management, Tourism, MICE, Business Management, Communication, Marketing, and Cultural Management.
- Participants may apply individually or in teams of up to 5 or more members.

Submission Guidelines



1. Main Submission – Full Project File

One unified submission including:

- **Word:** Detailed written proposal and project description
- **PowerPoint:** Visual presentation of the proposal, including destination elements, graphics, and any marketing collaterals
- **Excel:** Project budget and all numerical data

The submission must include:

1. Proposal title
2. Abstract (concept overview)
3. Table of contents
4. Introduction
5. Justification of destination choice
6. Methodology
7. Main body — including sustainability / inclusive design elements, destination branding strategy, and projected impact
8. Conclusions
9. Names of participants
10. Bibliography

Submission language: Greek or English

2. Onsite Presentation | Finalists Only

Following the evaluation phase, selected teams will be invited to present their proposal highlights during the final day of the HAPCO & DES Annual Conference in Ioannina.

Requirements:

- Electronic presentation: PowerPoint / Prezi or other digital tool
- Duration: To be announced based on number of finalists
- Oral presentation: **English**
- Slides: **English**

Evaluation Criteria

- Innovation & creativity



- Feasibility of implementation
- Strategic thinking & analysis
- Impact on destination branding
- Integration of sustainability & inclusion
- Academic rigor & quality of evidence
- Quality of presentation & visual communication (for finalists)

Special emphasis is placed on measurability and evidence-based reasoning.

Deadlines

- **Submission of questions:** until 10 December 2025
- **Final submission of projects:** Friday, 20 February 2026
- **Applicants to be informed on:** Thursday, 5 March 2026
- **Winner announcement:** at the HAPCO & DES Annual Conference, **17–18 March 2026, Ioannina**