

# EUROTOX 2017 will be held in Bratislava, Slovakia

*Interview with Ms Renata Somolova, the Senior Project Manager at GUARANT INTERNATIONAL*

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*Photo credit: Slovak National Theatre*

**Ms Renata Somolova** has been a part of the team at **GUARANT International** since 1998 with responsibility for the organisation of mid- and large-sized international events, as well as the management and coordination of all services expected from her role as a senior project manager. In addition to this, she is responsible for the budgeting and financing of projects, the final statements of accounts, and taking care of the management of project teams and of junior project managers, including their training and the responsibility for their projects.

*We had the chance to catch up with Ms Somolova and get more information on how they managed to prepare the organisation and consequently attract the **53rd Congress of the European Societies of Toxicology to Bratislava, which will be held from 10 to 13 September 2017.***

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**Q: How do you best prepare for a successful bid and who should be involved in its preparation?**

Apart from literally answering every single question asked in the brief, we need not only to have all the possible support from the city and the state authorities, but also from the scientific community. This is very important and it is something that will make the difference and increase the chance of winning. We are in competition daily with all the other congress destinations in Europe and across the entire world, so, we also need to concentrate on lobbying among all of the parties involved. To prepare a successful bid is not a one-man-show; we must create a team of all those involved in it, such as the sales manager, the client, the city, venue, AV supplier, caterer, social media specialist, scientific programme specialist and many others besides. With more people on the team, we increase our chances of winning.

**Q: What is the role of a PCO in the bidding process?**

The role of a PCO is crucial. What we like to tell to our client is for them to really concentrate on the scientific programme and its added values for participants, then we will take care of all the aspects related to the organisation of the event. Clients are not always fully experienced and are almost never specialized in the organisational details of events, so our role is to guarantee an event's success, regardless of its specifics, and not all events are alike. In fact, is it the contrary – each event is very unique.

**Q: Why did you choose Bratislava as a destination for the 53<sup>rd</sup> edition of EUROTOX and the Slovak National Theatre as the event venue?**

Our client EUROTOX is constantly looking for new destinations to host its major event and Bratislava is a 'yet to be discovered venue'. Due to the fact that our conference has specific demands, the Slovak National Theatre was an obvious choice from all existing possibilities.

**Q: Guarant International is an international PCO with much event organisation experience, so in your opinion what are the main advantages of Bratislava as a meeting destination?**

We see that Bratislava has the following advantages: two airports (its own and one close by in Vienna as well), good prices, good quality of services in general, an abundant capacity of centrally located business hotels, a charming atmosphere, and great people within the Bratislava meeting industry, as well as from the side of the Bratislava Tourist Board (BTB).

**Q: How many attendees will there be at the EUROTOX 2017 congress?**

We are expecting more than 1,000 attendees from all over the world.

Photo credit: EUROTOX 2017

**Q: In your view what are the benefits for the city when hosting a congress such as EUROTOX 2017?**

Congresses today don't just deliver a tourism-related revenue, but they also create the business opportunity to promote local industries, research and educational organisations. Due to its size our conference will be 'the conference' in Bratislava during this period, which means we will get enough attention from our members, the local authorities and the press. Furthermore our members are looking forward to discovering new destinations and establishing new contacts in countries they have not previously visited.

**Q: Just what does it take to organise such a congress, as in how many months of preparation and how many people involved from the beginning through to the very end?**

We worked on preparations with the client for approximately three years, starting with all of the necessary promotion for the congress, such as the congress programme, marketing materials, graphics, websites, and social media channels. We communicated with the venue/suppliers and we built the team that takes care of participants before, during and after the congress, and much more besides. With a proper team and good planning we are able to guarantee a smooth course and the success of the entire event, and for this almost 40 people participated in the different stages of the preparation for this event.

**Q: What is the 'secret ingredient' for a fruitful relationship between the client and the organiser?**

The secret of a good relationship with a client lies in proper and transparent distribution of tasks and responsibility, and a swift and smooth communication line from both sides. During the marathon-like process of preparations, we spent a lot of time with the client, either personally, on the phone, skype, or in the form of exchanging dozens of emails, so we needed to build a close relationship to understand each other's needs. This sometimes leads to the outcome that friendships are also formed from an initially purely business relationship.

**Q: How important is it to include networking events when organising a congress? Do you have anything special planned for EUROTOX 2017?**

The congress is not only about the exchanging of scientific information, but also about meeting people and networking. I therefore consider organising social events as almost as important as the congress itself. During EUROTOX 2017 we prepare a Welcome Cocktail hour, which will be held at the very beginning of the congress. The other social event will be the Congress Dinner, which will take place on the grounds of the Schloss Hof in Austria. As an additional programme, there will be some sightseeing tours prepared for attendees. We believe that the balanced programme will give participants a relaxed ambience for meeting new colleagues.

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