Following the postponement of many international events this year, including ASIA 2020, ICOLD 2020 and others, we are naturally receiving questions about the plans and the format for HYDRO 2020 in Strasbourg. So we are pleased to pass on to all the latest update.

Provided there is no second wave of COVID-19, and travel arrangements become easier without general quarantining requirements, we are extremely optimistic that HYDRO 2020 will proceed as an in-person event, with various measures in place to provide a high level of safety for participants.

First, it is generally known that France has dealt with its COVID cases well, and that the country is now opening up for international visitors, and also conferences. The Strasbourg Palais de la Musique et des Congrès will re-open in early September, and plans to host an event later that month, ahead of ours.

We are particularly impressed with the comprehensive and extremely well conceived measures which they propose to implement. These are based on French Government regulations, which are regularly updated, as health risks are continuously assessed, and these are to be revised again later this month, and possibly again before the conference.

To reassure participants of the kind of measures which are likely to be taken (and will be standard practice for future large gatherings), and based on knowledge in mid-June the following is likely to apply:

- We will be aiming to hire almost twice the existing amount of space for the sessions and exhibition, to ensure compliance with new distancing guidelines (such as using alternate seats only in meeting rooms).
- There will be a system of one-way traffic around the centre (including the exhibition), with arrows marking routes.
- Coffee breaks will be staggered, ensuring fewer people at each catering point, and we may request groups of delegates to visit specific areas of the exhibition in each break. A benefit of this is that delegates will tour all areas, over three days.
- Lunches may be boxed (gourmet boxes of course!) to avoid self-service at buffets.
- At evening social events, food will be plated, and drinks pre-poured
- Masks and sanitizers will be available for all.
- Distancing of at least 1 m (the currently advised distance) will be possible at social events, so communications will still be easy. Masks could be worn for extra protection.
• Handshaking should be avoided: other signals of friendship can be devised!
• Deep cleaning will take place at the venue, and routine cleaning will be done with greater frequency. Staff will wear masks.
• Protective screens may be attached to the open sides of exhibition stands, and queues of more than 2 or 3 people at stands will be discouraged (as with current arrangements in shops). Delegates may be encouraged to pre-book some meetings, but spontaneous meetings will certainly also be possible. Through our event software, we can pre-alert delegates about what can be discussed with individual exhibitors, and help to arrange meetings.

While we hope the Coronavirus will not be a significant threat by late October, delegates will be far less likely to go home with a common cold, or other minor ailments which often follow three days of handshaking!

We plan to launch our programme at the end of June. As HYDRO 2020 takes place at the end of October, we hope and dare to believe that the world situation will have improved greatly. We will launch registration in early July, and to enable us to plan effectively, we ask speakers, delegates and exhibitors to act on the assumption that all will go well. Naturally safety is paramount, so if a second wave of COVID-19 should necessitate postponement of the conference, or prevent anyone from travelling from their home country, we would accept cancellations without charges, and make new plans for the future.

HYDRO 2020 will certainly include some logistical challenges, and a lot of arrow following, but we are so pleased to have chosen a large, modern, and above all spacious venue this year, which makes it possible for us to comply with post-COVID regulations.

We know that hydro and dam engineers enjoy a good challenge, as our team does, so we sincerely hope to bring the 'Hydro Family' back together for constructive discussions, from appropriately distanced seats, in Strasbourg.

Best wishes, and we hope to see you in October.

The Aqua-Media and EMS Teams

11 June 2020