

GL9 Conference Welcome

Koen Helsen

Chairman of the Antwerp Convention Bureau and Provincial Councilman, Belgium

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honor for me to welcome some 60 delegates from 18 countries worldwide to the Province and to the town of Antwerp.

A pleasure because I am the chairman of the Antwerp Convention bureau which is a free service association promoting our province for international and national conferences and for seminars and incentives.

Being in the heart of Europe we hope that your travel arrangements were easy and we want to show you in the next days the best we can and the variety of culture and leisure possibilities we have to offer;

It is an honor indeed to have in this House of the Province an international congress on a topic which is dear to all of us who work in municipalities. I am aware of your issues, since I have been a mayor and now a council member for the province.

The Province of Antwerp is complex but blooming. The province consists of 70 towns and is an area of almost 1/10th of the country. Because of our location and our port we are a major player in the middle of the most important western economic area in the heart of the European Union. With 568 inhabitants per square meter we are certainly one of the more densely populated areas in the world.

This congress, dear delegates, is extremely interesting and is a challenge. The themes that were discussed today and those that will be discussed tomorrow, the high level of the speakers and the audience, as well as the excellent organisation and support of all who have contributed to its success.

I realize your subject matter is complex. I see it in the different government departments dealing with grey literature in this very building. It has re-opened my eyes.

I clearly see that a conference on Grey literature that seeks to map the infrastructure in which grey literature is embedded is not a luxury. The themes I noticed on the programme should give sufficient possibilities for you to go home with new ideas and possibilities to develop your interests.

This brings me to what I consider very important in international congresses like this one: the opportunities it provides for intense networking. I consider networking to be the key to success in the meeting sector.

However, I would also like to invite you - in particular our foreign guests - to dwell not only on the intellectual level of this meeting but also to enjoy the culinary, cultural and social facilities of the city of Antwerp - taste, visit, and experience Antwerp and Belgium outside these council walls. This will no doubt enhance the image you have of Flanders - a vivid, active, and enterprising region; and, the organisers of this congress offer you plenty of opportunities to this end.

Ladies and gentlemen, May I wish you all a very pleasant stay in our province and an excellent Ninth International conference on Grey Literature.

I attach special importance to initiatives that aim at developing a future vision with a sufficiently critical sense. Hopefully this congress will also obtain that aim.

