



IFPMA Note for Guidance on Sponsorship of Events and Meetings

Introduction

Advancing medical knowledge and improving global public health remains a priority for the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) representing the research-based pharmaceutical industry. Collaborations between healthcare professionals and the pharmaceutical industry are essential and ensure that patients have access to the medicines they need and that healthcare professionals have up-to-date comprehensive information about the diseases they treat and the medicines they prescribe. IFPMA members remain committed to activities that provide scientific and educational content to healthcare professionals and advance their medical knowledge and expertise. These activities may take place through various means and media.

The IFPMA Code of Practice sets global standards for industry business practices and includes guiding principles of ethical conduct and promotion as well as requirements for the promotion of medicines to health professionals and interactions with healthcare professionals and other stakeholders. The pharmaceutical industry provides various types of support for a wide range of local, national, and international meetings including sponsorship of healthcare professionals' attendance, provision of grants to medical societies organizing events, hiring of exhibition space, provision of speakers etc. The involvement of pharmaceutical companies also varies and includes arranging its own meetings such as in a local hospital or a clinic to running a satellite symposium at an international meeting organized by a medical society. These activities are covered by Article 7 (Events and Meetings) of the IFPMA Code. The prime reason for attending such meetings should be the educational value and not other factors such as the location, venue, hospitality or timing of the meeting. The choice of location and venue must be appropriate, conducive to the educational objectives and modest. In determining whether to support an event consideration should be given to the educational program, overall cost, facilities offered by the venue, justification for the location, nature of the audience, hospitality and for certain situations, security arrangements. The impression given by all the arrangements should be kept in mind. Pharmaceutical companies might find it helpful to clearly document the reasons as to why they decide to support or run a meeting. Member Associations' codes and member companies' policies and procedures are often even more prescriptive than the IFPMA Code in relation to arrangements for meetings.

The purpose of this document is to provide more information in relation to relevant requirements of the IFPMA Code of Practice. In this respect, the guidance intends to:

- assist all stakeholders, including pharmaceutical companies, member associations, other national trade associations, medical societies, third party event organizers, etc., in the factors to consider when determining whether locations and venues are appropriate, for meetings organized by pharmaceutical companies or third parties such as medical societies and
- provide direction for pharmaceutical companies in the process of assessing the appropriateness of their own meetings and their involvement in supporting meetings organized by others, such as medical societies, (e.g. by sponsorship of expert speakers, paying for healthcare professionals to attend or other type of assistance such as providing a grant, renting exhibition space, etc.).

1. Criteria to consider when assessing the appropriateness of the Location of an Event (non-exhaustive)

- The geographical location is in or near a city or town which is a recognized scientific or business center and is easily accessible for the intended audience.
- The location should not be primarily known for its touristic or recreational offering;
- The location and venue should not be the main attraction of the event or be perceived as such.
- The time of the event should not coincide with local or internationally recognized sporting or cultural events taking place in the same location, at the same time and preferably not just before or just after the meeting.
- The location is appropriate in respect to the geographical scope of the event (e.g. a European congress should not take place outside of Europe).

Note: Capital cities and other large metropolitan cities considered to be commercial hubs are likely to be reasonable and appropriate locations for meetings. The appropriateness of a location may be assessed differently for strictly local events attended by local healthcare professionals as opposed to regional or international events. The program for an event may justify a particular location if there are valid and cogent reasons for that location such as the availability of relevant expertise, for example, research or manufacturing facilities.

2. Criteria to consider when assessing the appropriateness of a Venue of an Event (non-exhaustive)

- The venue is conducive to the scientific and educational purpose of the meeting.
- The venue has the necessary business and technical facilities to accommodate the meeting and its participants.
- The meeting facilities should only be accessible to intended audience.
- In the case of cities which are both major scientific or business centers and locations highly desirable for tourists, it is important to select venues which are away from the main tourist spots.
- The venue must not be renowned for its entertainment, sports, leisure or vacation facilities (e.g. golf club, health spas, Beach /River/ Lake side locations or casino).
- The venue provides safe & secure accommodation when considering the chosen location.
- The venue must not be lavish even if the cost is low compared to other venues. (e.g. ranking by the tourism department of the country and/or the average ranking by travel agencies can help with this assessment).

3. Criteria to consider when deciding whether to support an event organized by a third party such as a medical society (non-exhaustive):

a. Scientific Program (Article 7.1.1 of the IFPMA Code)

If the answer to any of the questions below is 'no', then pharmaceutical companies should consider obtaining further information or suggesting amendments before agreeing to any involvement with the meeting.

- Is the scientific program available on the event organizer's website well in advance of the meeting?
- Does the scientific program cover the whole duration of the event with content generally filling the business hours each day?
- Is the program content scientifically grounded and adapted to the targeted audience?

b. Entertainment, leisure activities, meals (Articles 7.1.5 and 7.1.6 of the IFPMA Code)

If the answer to any of the questions below is 'yes', then pharmaceutical companies should consider obtaining further information or suggesting amendments before agreeing to any involvement with the meeting.

- Is any entertainment (such as sightseeing tours or leisure activities) organized in connection with the event either before, during or after it/Is there unreasonable or frequent traveling for meals during the event?
- Are meals arranged in tourist or heritage/cultural attractions?
- Are any of the descriptions on the program such that they appear to be excessive (e.g. champagne reception, gala dinner, etc.)?

c. Accompanying Persons (Article 7.3 of the IFPMA Code)

If the program mentions accompanying persons/guests of the healthcare professional attendees, consider the following:

- Are they required to pay the full reasonable costs which are not subsidized in any way?
- Are healthcare professionals expected to participate in the meeting rather than encouraged to join any program for accompanying persons?
- Is it clear that attendees are not being encouraged to arrive before the meeting starts or stay on after it ends?

If the answer to any of the questions above is ‘no’, then pharmaceutical companies should consider obtaining further information or suggesting amendments before agreeing to any involvement with the meeting.

4. Other criteria to consider – Official meeting materials and websites

The description of the meeting is often an indicator of whether the location/venue and other arrangements are appropriate. Language about the event being located at “world renowned resort” with “beautiful beaches nearby” or other similar language is an indicator that the prime purpose may not be educational and the location/venue may not be appropriate. The following questions could be considered:

- Does the website focus purely on the educational merit of the meeting or does it promote tourism or hospitality as one of its attractions?
- Does the website mention pre or post event activities?
- Who is mentioned as a supporter of the event? Is it medical societies, or similar, or the local tourist board, etc.?

In addition, information on the proposed venue’s website may give a further indication of the suitability of the location/venue.

Existing Tools and Resources

In addition to the IFPMA Code, national and company codes, there are a number of existing tools and resources to assist companies in deciding whether or not to support a specific event.

- **Farmaindustria Congress Assessment Platform** <http://www.codigofarmaindustria.es>
- **EFPIA’s e4ethics platform** - <http://www.efpia-e4ethics.eu>
- **EUCOMED Congress Assessment Platform** - <http://www.ethicalmedtech.eu/>

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