

Report: pan-European IR conference in Brussels

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July 27, 2012 | By Jana Sanchez

Delegates gathered from IR societies in Netherlands, France, Belgium, Portugal and UK

The inaugural Pan-European IR Conference in Brussels on June 11 and 12 brought together delegates from the IR associations of the Netherlands (NEVIR), France (CLIFF), Belgium (BIRA) and Portugal (FIR), as well as from the UK, in an event supported by NYSE Euronext.

The conference kicked off with a dinner in the Grand Palais de la Bourse, which included an entertaining keynote address delivered by Stephan Hollander, professor of accounting at Tilburg University, who talked about the hidden side of IR activities.

'We wanted a speaker from outside, with relevance to IR, but who could include humor and perhaps was controversial,' explained Marcel Schulze, MD of Tradinfo, which organized the conference on behalf of the IR associations.

The day began with the heads of the associations ringing the opening bell of NYSE Euronext Brussels before the first workshop got under way.

Focused on tracking and measuring the effectiveness of IR programs, it was chaired by Hans Buysse, president of the Belgian Association of Financial Analysts, which ranks and gives awards to Belgian companies based on their IR programs.

Unsurprisingly, there was plenty of time for networking built into the schedule, as one of the chief aims of the event was to help IROs network across borders, so Buysse's workshop was followed by a 45-minute coffee break.

Then the fireworks began: Marc Lefèvre, head of business development and client coverage in Europe for NYSE Euronext, and Mark Hemsley, CEO of MTF BATS Chi-X Europe, squared off in a lively discussion about

trading venues, new instruments and regulation.

After a long lunch, the group broke into two sessions. One of the most talked-about presentations was by Tjerk Huysinga, vice president of IR Europe at Royal Dutch Shell, who discussed social media.

He spoke in detail about the development of the Shell iPad application for IR, a particularly lively discussion given that many of the IROs in the group were in the process of developing their own iPad apps.

The feedback from delegates was positive, especially in terms of networking opportunities. Many said they were happy to have had the chance to get to know their colleagues from across borders, share best practices and learn from each other.

Hans Leufkens, head of client coverage for Netherlands/Belgium at NYSE Euronext, was extremely pleased with the turnout and positive feedback. 'We look forward to expanding the event next year,' he said.

Attendee feedback

'This was a great opportunity to have updates on current topics in IR and to engage with colleagues from other countries across Europe.' – Tjerk Huysinga, vice president of IR Europe, Royal Dutch Shell

'This first Pan-European IR Conference exceeded the expectations of most participants. It was a privileged moment for the debate between IROs from various countries about the most important current topics of common interest.' – Patricia Vieira Pinto, president of FIR

'The Pan-European IR Conference is an excellent opportunity to meet your international colleagues to discuss and share experiences about the same topics we all have to deal with in these volatile capital markets. For those who missed the inaugural 2012 conference, don't miss the 2013 event!' – Gerbrand Nijman, president of NEVIR

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