



pioneer in marine science



**Bid by the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) to host
the Seventh World Conference On Marine Biodiversity (WCMB 2026)
17-20 November 2026 - Bruges, Belgium**

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INTRODUCTION

Update

The bid by the Flanders Marine Institute ([VLIZ](#)) to host edition 7 of the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity (WCMB 2026) was accepted by the International Association for Biological Oceanography ([IABO](#)) a few years ago. The offer at that time was to host the World Conference in September 2026, in the city of Ghent.

Due to covid-related delays on the renovation works of the originally proposed venue in the city of Ghent, there was no guarantee that those works would be finalized by the time of the Conference in 2026, which made VLIZ look for other possibilities.

VLIZ has now secured a new venue location in the city of Bruges. Bruges is about 50 kilometers away from Ghent, but has – as a small city – the same opportunities, possibilities, hospitality and (touristic) attraction as Ghent. Just as Ghent, it is also easily reachable by public transportation, so there are no limitations for participants to reach the venue.

The conference dates are set at **17-20 November 2026**. This slight change in originally proposed dates (Ghent – September 2026) was needed, linked to availability of the venue.

About your local host

The **Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ)** promotes accumulation of marine knowledge and excellence in marine research in Flanders. The marine research areas are the ocean and seas, the coast and the tidal systems. The target groups for knowledge accumulation are the marine research community as well as educational institutions, the general public, policymakers and the industry (within the scope of the blue economy).

The mission of the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) is clear: to strengthen science-based knowledge about our coasts, seas and the ocean and share it as widely as possible. That knowledge matters to everyone. The seas affect our lives. And we humans have an impact on the ocean, marine life and coasts.

Over the years, the institute has grown in its role of supporting organisation of marine scientific research in Flanders. VLIZ serves as a point of contact in Flanders, in order to increase the visibility of marine scientific research among the regional as well as the international community. VLIZ was established with a view to meeting the needs of researchers. It performs this task by providing a range of services for which scientists themselves lack the time and/or the means, but that are nevertheless essential for the success of their work.



About your local host

The responsibilities of VLIZ include the logistical support of marine scientific studies and particularly the deployment and equipment of a Flemish research vessel in partnership with VLOOT dab.

Scientists can make use of the VLIZ library services as well. This library, which initially consisted of the collections acquired from IZWO and ZWI, has developed into the largest collection of marine scientific literature in Belgium.

In addition, management of marine scientific data and information, science communication, the translation of research results on behalf of the government and the general public, the facilitation of scientific publications, the integration in international networks and the organisation of workshops and symposia belong to the core tasks of VLIZ. An important annual event is the VLIZ Young Marine Scientists' Day. The VLIZ Young Marine Scientists' Day has been organised since 2001 and provides a meeting place for marine professionals, students, policy makers and other interested people.

As a result of the international success of VLIZ, several European and multilateral organisations opened their offices in Ostend in association with VLIZ. At present, the IODE project office of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, the European Marine Board, Provinciaal Ankerpunt Kust (PAK) and the secretariat of the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) are housed under the same roof as VLIZ.

Recently, the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) has been [endorsed as a partner](#) under the UN Ocean Decade, due to its commitment to support the UN Ocean Decade by coordinating existing Decade Actions, catalyzing initiatives, leading targeted communications and outreach, and mobilizing resources.

VLIZ is also home of two endorsed UN Ocean Decade projects: the World Register of Marine Species ([WoRMS](#)) and [Marine Regions](#). Both systems have international recognition within the marine scientific landscape, and form an essential, basic component for a wide range of marine biodiversity-related projects and initiatives.



LOCATION BRUGES

The Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) offers to host the seventh edition of the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity, in 2026, in the city of Bruges.


Welcome to the World Heritage city of Bruges

Medieval, mysterious, unashamedly Burgundian and a global city for many centuries, Bruges is proud of its rich history and its UNESCO World Heritage status.

But the city also has great plans for the future. In Bruges, the ancient and the brand-new sit comfortably together.

It is also a city on a very human scale – all the sites of interest, hotels, restaurants, etc are within walking distance. Whether you are visiting the state-of-the-art Bruges, Meeting & Convention Centre (BMCC), the ground-breaking Concertgebouw Brugge (Concert Hall), an elegant five-star hotel or a heritage venue, there will be no need to waste time taking shuttle buses. It's all about optimising every moment and maximum enjoyment!

Perhaps you would like to visit the Bruges Royal Municipal Theatre, one of Europe's best preserved city theatres, or one of the city's many museums. Flemish Primitives or a ground-breaking contemporary exhibition? Only in Bruges will you find the historical and the high-tech so stylish interwoven.

An aerial photograph of Bruges, Belgium, showing a dense cluster of historic buildings with red-tiled roofs and white facades. The city is surrounded by greenery and a few modern structures are visible in the distance. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

**Bruges is one
of a kind and an
exceptional MICE
destination!**

UNESCO

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE



Bruges is a small city on a human scale, with a tangible architectural presence of its Hanze history, which transforms a walk from the hotel to any venue into a feast for all senses.

- World Heritage city with great plans for the future
- Walkable city: hotels, venues, restaurants are just a few footsteps away
- A diverse set of meeting facilities in the very heart of the city
- Excellent accommodation from luxury hotels to charming b&b's, to budget-friendly options
- A medical destination since Medieval times
- Sustainability is in Bruges' DNA
- A vivid cultural offer
- World class gastronomy from local fast food to Michelin-starred restaurants



Discover Bruges virtually in all its glory with a 360° tour



SUSTAINABLE

SUSTAINABLE



Bruges is a green & sustainable city

The green key quality mark award for accommodation and meeting rooms.



No need for cars

Everything lies within walking distance.



Air quality

Purest air quality of all Flemish cities.



Green everywhere

Parks, trees, green town rampart
(8 km of jogging track around the town)...



Accessibility

Easy by public transportation. More information
on the slides about accessibility.



Safe city

Crime rates almost 0.



SUSTAINABLE

SUSTAINABLE

5P's

PEOPLE:

Focus on welfare & education



PROSPERITY:

Sustainable economy



PARTNERSHIPS:

on a local, national, European and international level



PEACE

Focus on good service in a tolerant city

Bruges is a member of European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR)



PLANET:

Bruges Climate Plan 2030

Bruges aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 as an intermediate step to becoming climate-neutral in 2050.

6 guidelines on how Bruges will try to achieve this goal:

- 1) Fossil-free **heating** in Bruges
- 2) Bruges as a **city of renewable energy**
- 3) Bruges opts **for smart and healthy transport**
 - in practice: Charging stations for electric cars and Blue Bike
 - the ambition to become a **cycling capital**
- 4) Circular **production** in Bruges
- 5) Brugge Smaakt: **eat healthy, local** and with **respect**
 - in practice: Brugs Food Lab (founded in 2015 in the framework of EU Food Smart Cities for Development project) and Foodwinners
- 6) Bruges is **climate-robust**



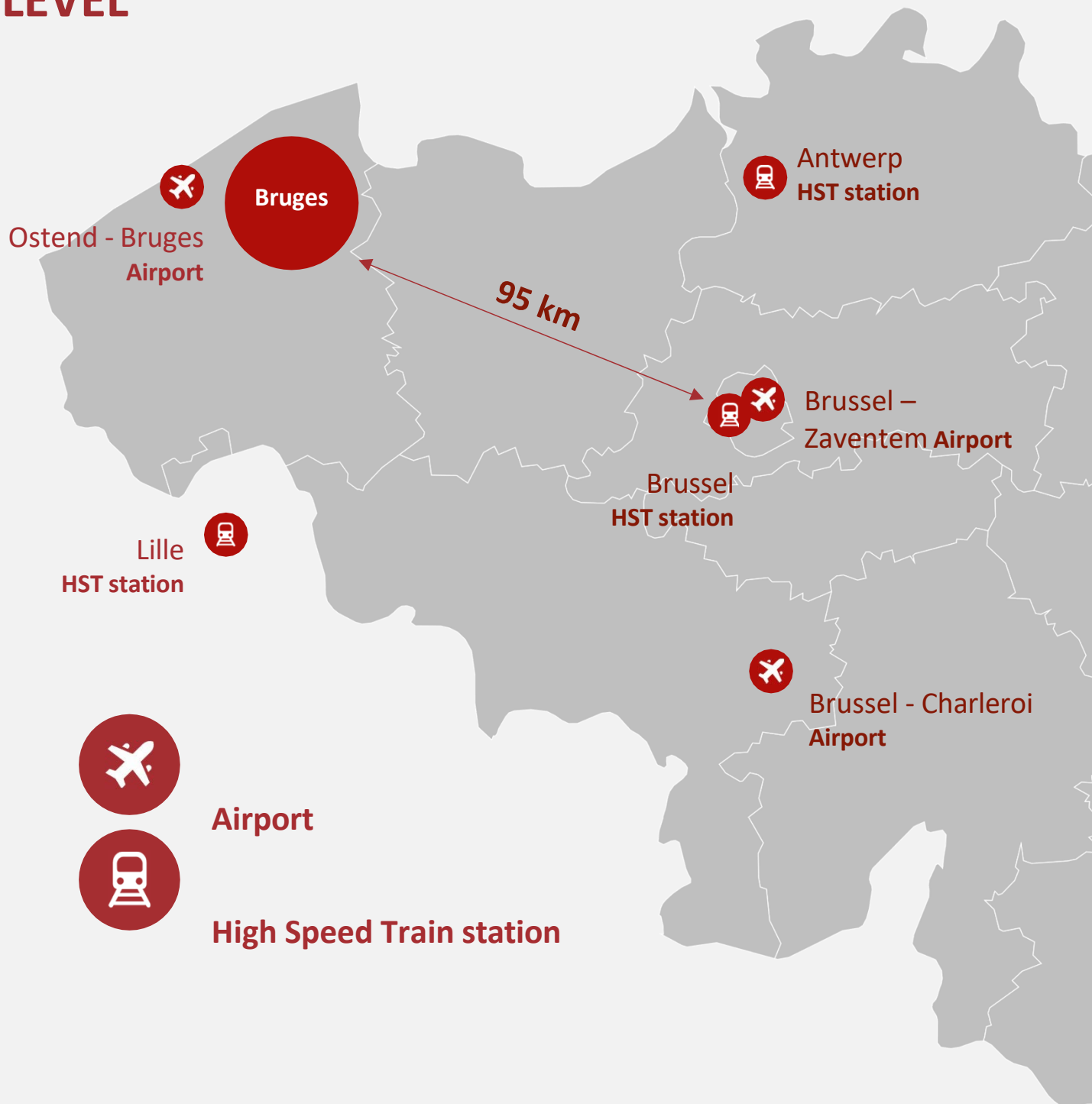
ACCESSIBILITY

**EUROPEAN
LEVEL**



ACCESSIBILITY

COUNTRY LEVEL



ACCESSIBILITY



Bruges is very easy to get to, either by car, train, plane or boat. It is just an hour's drive from Brussels and Antwerp and can be reached from Amsterdam, London, Cologne and Paris in under three hours by car or train.



There are three trains per hour from Brussels to Bruges and the journey takes around 80 minutes. There are also direct fast trains from Brussels Airport, the national airport, to Bruges (one every hour).



The national airport has daily flights to and from 66 different countries and over 200 different destinations. There is also a direct shuttle bus to Bruges Brussels South Charleroi Airport (Flibco).



For those wishing to get to Bruges by boat, there are ferries from Dover to Dunkirk and Dover to Calais.



In other words, there are many ways to arrive in style! Read more [online](#)
Once you're here, all you have to walk or bike !



MAP OF BRUGES



PROPOSED CONFERENCE VENUE

The Conference will take place from 17 – 20 November, 2026, at the **Concert & Congress Hall**, in the heart of the center of Bruges



THE CONCERT & CONGRESS HALL BRUGES

Within walking distance of the historic city center with its abundance of hotels and restaurants, easy to reach by car and public transport. The Concert and Congress Hall can seat an audience of 1,289 and is world-renowned for its exceptional acoustics. In addition to the numerous concerts that take place, the Concert Hall is suitable for the organization of various types of corporate events, such as (international) congresses, meetings, seminars, conferences, award ceremonies, annual meetings, sales meetings, customer events, staff meetings, private concerts ... The exceptional architecture gives a stylish character to your event. The Concert Hall is also supremely well equipped. It has excellent acoustics and all the technical facilities necessary to ensure optimal sound and lighting. It also provides the possibility of projecting across the full width of the stage. The Chamber Music Room is perfect for conferences and can accommodate 320 persons (250 with projection screen installed). Unique view of Bruges' city center and its surroundings from Forum 6 and 7.

Take a [virtual tour](#) and discover all the possibilities for yourself

ROOMS AT THE CONCERT & CONGRESS HALL BRUGES: CONCERT HALL



Assets

- Extraordinary acoustics
- 1289 seats on three levels
- Possibility of daylight in the room
- Good sight lines throughout the room
- Extensive technical facilities and know-how
- Maximum projection of 23 m X 11 m
- Spacious public foyers (ideal for a reception, lunch or walking dinner, stands, posters)

Capacity

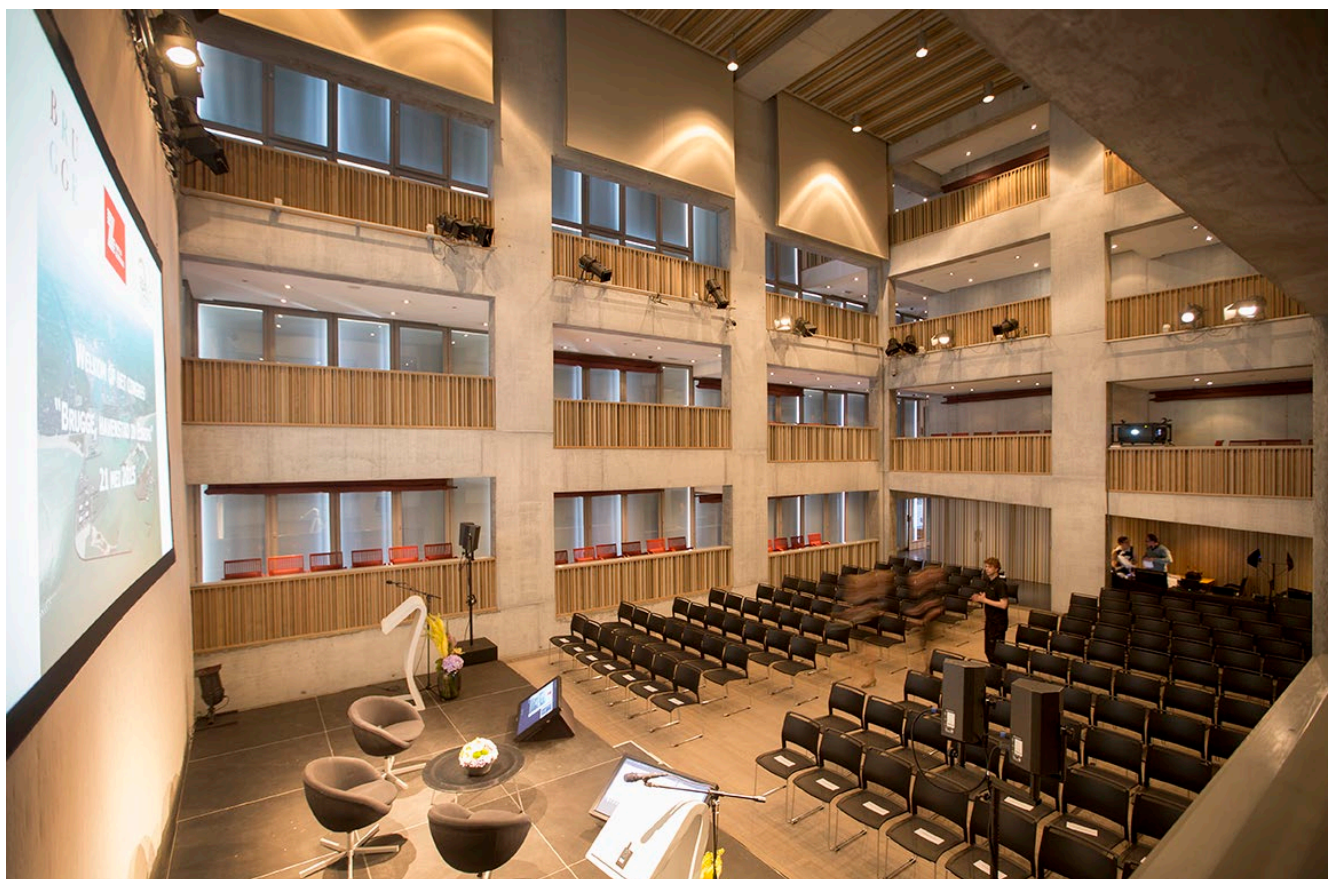
The capacity of the Concert Hall is 1.289 places spread over 3 floors. A reduced rental rate will apply when only the ground floor is used

PARTERRE	Max. 689
BALCONY 1	Max. 375
BALCONY 2	Max. 225

<https://www.concertgebouw.be/en/venue-rental/concert-hall>

CHAMBER MUSIC HALL

The Chamber Music Hall is suitable for concerts with smaller music ensembles and for congresses, conferences, symposiums, meetings, seminars, product presentations, training courses or company parties. You can also organize your own private concert.



Assets

- The Chamber Music Hall is suitable for a conference or seminar for up to 250 people
- Maximum capacity without projection: 350 people
- The hall can be blacked out
- Projection and basic sound are standard
- Different setups possible
- Perfect acoustics

Capacity

	WITH PROJECTION	WITHOUT PROJECTION
PARTERRE	Max. 142	Max. 142
BALCONIES	Max. 108	Max. 180
TOTAL	Max. 250	Max. 322

<https://www.concertgebouw.be/en/venue-rental/chamber-music-hall>

FORUM 6

From the 6th floor of the Lantern Tower of the Concertgebouw, you can enjoy a unique view of the historic city center. In the evening, the illuminated towers of world heritage city Bruges provide you and your guests with a breathtaking panorama.



Assets

- Beautiful view of the historic city center
- Roof terrace accessible to your guests
- Equipped kitchen next to the hall
- Tables and chairs included
- Sound installation and cloakroom

Capacity

	FORUM 6
RECEPTION	Max. 270
WALKING DINNER	Max. 200
SEATED DINNER	Max. 180

<https://www.concertgebouw.be/en/venue-rental/forum-6>

ACCOMMODATION

Something for everyone

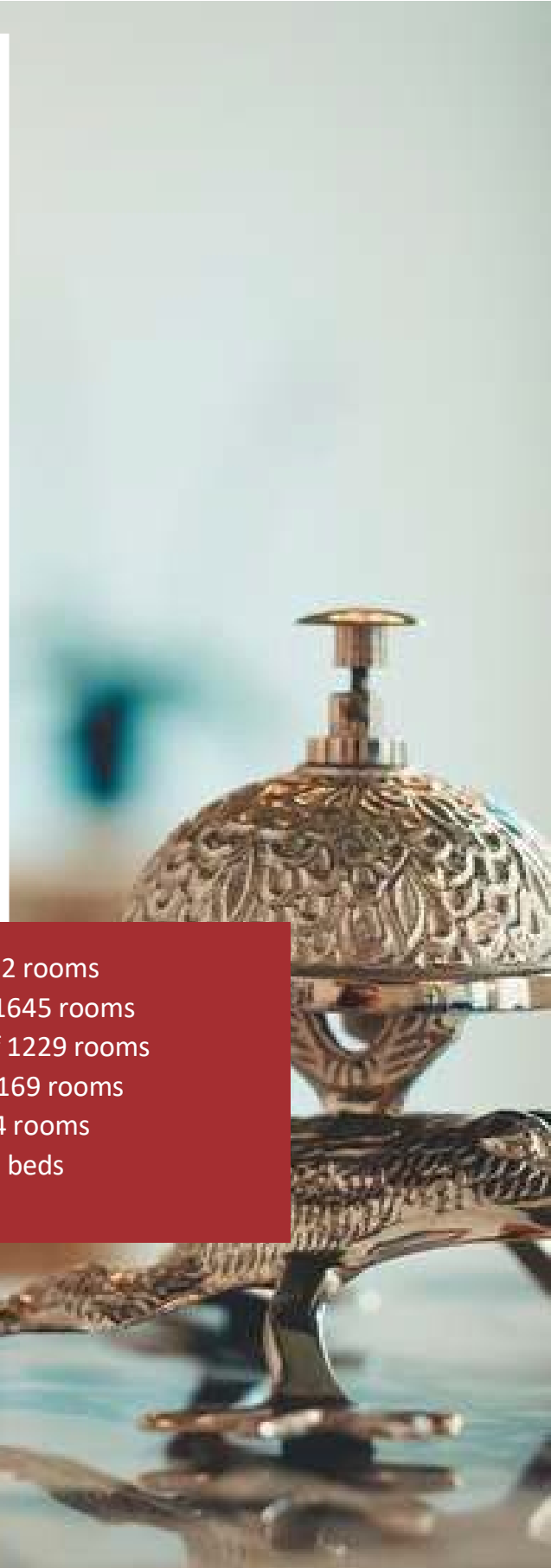
Are you looking for a luxurious five-star hotel or a quirky boutique hotel? Do you want to hold your meeting in a heritage meeting room or a charming b&b with a view of the Canals of Bruges?

We have a **wide selection** of hotels and **over 3000 hotel rooms**, so there really is something for everyone. Almost all hotels are **located in the historical city centre** and easily accessible, within walking distance of the venue(s).

Did you know that our Bruges accommodation options get an average score of 8.2 for quality?*

*Based on figures (2018) from comparative art city research in Flanders.

- 2 five star hotels with a total capacity of 132 rooms
- 29 four star hotels with a total capacity of 1645 rooms
- 40 three star hotels with a total capacity of 1229 rooms
- 12 two star hotels with a total capacity of 169 rooms
- 1 one star hotel with a total capacity of 184 rooms
- 8 youth hostels with a total capacity of 893 beds
- 98 B&Bs with a total capacity of 404 rooms



CONFERENCE INFO

Preliminary conference information

- The scientific committee for the Conference of 2026 will be composed during Autumn 2023. The organiser will take into account a broad approach in membership within this committee.
- The Conference theme(s) will be discussed by the scientific conference committee late 2023-early 2024, taking into account high-level and currently actual topics within the field of marine biodiversity.
- The scientific program will allow for keynote speakers, full and short presentations – both oral and posters. In addition, VLIZ will explore the possibilities to organize special sessions or side-symposia.
- The host institute – VLIZ, located in Oostende – will offer the opportunity to organize specific meetings at the Flanders Marine Institute itself, back-to-back with the Conference. This will allow dedicated in-person meetings of several initiatives. The Steering Committee of the World Register of Marine Species will eg. convene at VLIZ in that same period, allowing all members of the Steering Committee to also attend the Conference, without extra travel, thus limiting their carbon footprint.

BUDGET

— CONCERT — — GEBOUW — — BRUGGE —

Price quote 2026	Date price quote: 17/06/2023
17/11 - 20/11 2026	
WCMB Conference	

Description - Venu Rental	Number	Unit Price	Discount	Amount
Concert Hall	4	8.220,00 €	10%	29.592,00 €
Projection 15000 AnsiLumen	4	850,00 €		3.400,00 €
Set-up day	1	5.620,00 €		5.620,00 €
Chamber Music Hall + Forum 6	4	3.825,00 €	10%	13.770,00 €
LED-Screen 98 " Forum 6	4	250,00 €		1.000,00 €
Studio 1	4	1.375,00 €	10%	4.950,00 €
LED-Screen 85" Studio 1	4	150,00 €		600,00 €
Hosting staff estimation	200	40,00 €		8.000,00 €
	Total, VAT excl.			66.932,00 €
Catering by Cardinal Catering				
	650	212,00 €		137.800,00 €
			Total:	204.732,00 €

Concertzaal: plenary session up to 1260 people
 Chamber Music Hall: parallel session up to 250 people
 Studio 1: parallel session up to 150 people
 AV-Support not included

Hosting & Cloakroom: estimation

The prices/rates quoted do not include 21 % VAT. The Concertgebouw retains the right to revise the listed prices/rates.
 Please contact the Concertgebouw for a binding quote.

BUDGET

Extra note

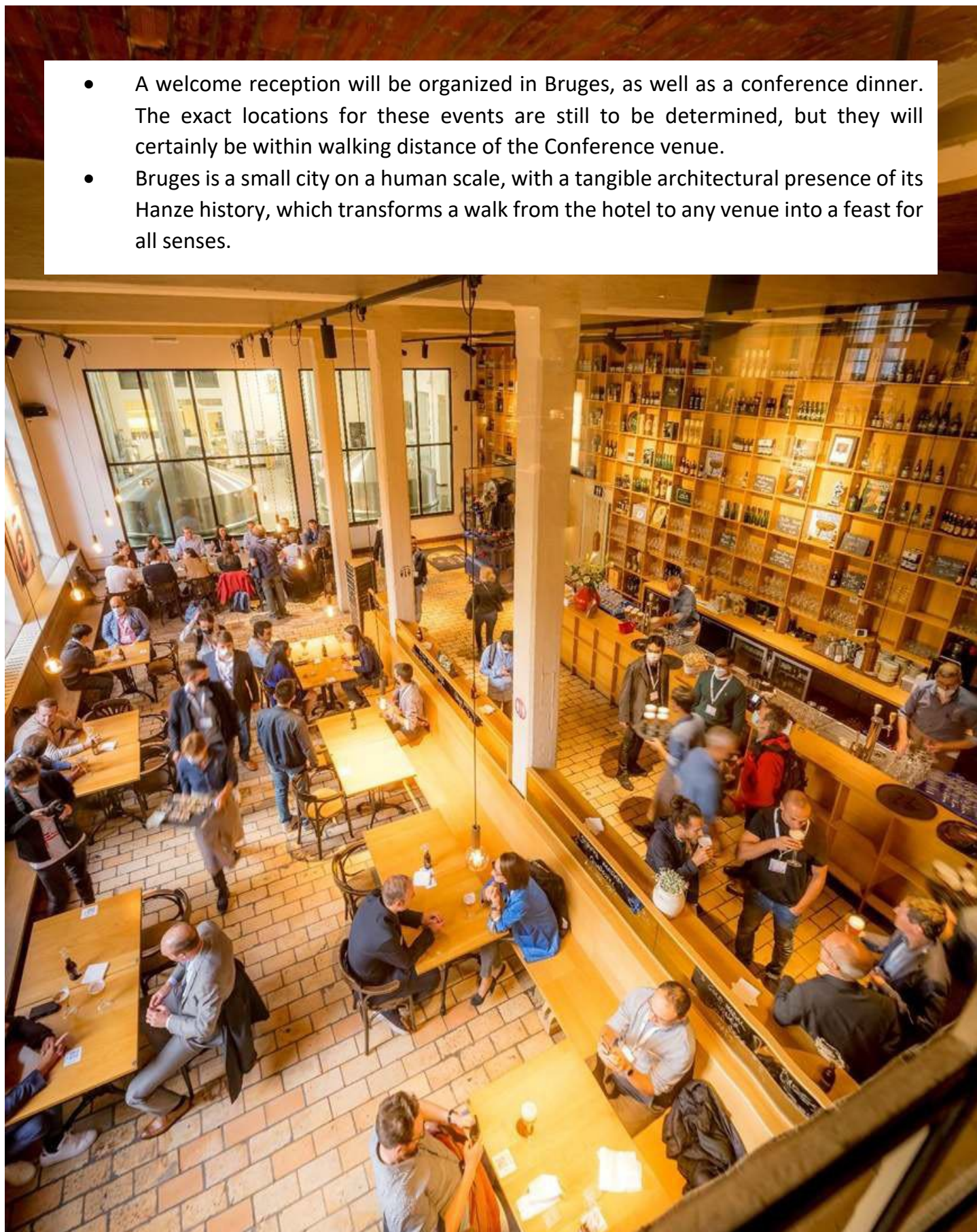
Costs not included in the price quote of the venue.

Fixed costs		650 pax	
Marketing/Communication		€	3,000.00
Speakers		€	10,000.00
Media		€	10,000.00
Admin		€	2,500.00
total fixed costs		€	25,500.00

Variable costs		650 pax	
Conference dinner (TBD)	€ 70.00	€	42,000.00
Conference materials (gifts ...)	€ 25.00	€	15,000.00
total variable cost		€	57,000.00

SOCIAL VENUES

- A welcome reception will be organized in Bruges, as well as a conference dinner. The exact locations for these events are still to be determined, but they will certainly be within walking distance of the Conference venue.
- Bruges is a small city on a human scale, with a tangible architectural presence of its Hanze history, which transforms a walk from the hotel to any venue into a feast for all senses.



HIGHLIGHTS OF BRUGES



The highlights of Bruges

1. Beguinage
2. Market square – Burg
3. Groeninghe Museum and its Flemish Primitives.
4. Museum of the Church of Our Lady – Michelangelo statue “Madonna with child”
5. Canals of Bruges (why not discover them by boat)
6. Minnewater (Lake of love)
7. Rozenhoedkaai
8. Concertgebouw (concert hall)
9. The hansa quarter of Bruges
10. Almshouses
11. ...



**We are looking forward to welcoming you to
the seventh World Conference on Marine Biodiversity
in Bruges, 17-20 November 2026**

