



POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY
OF ECONOMICS
AND BUSINESS



CONTEMPORARY ROLES OF CONVENTION BUREAUX

Research report

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign literature is paying more and more attention to convention bureaux (CB), yet stress is mainly put on Northern American entities [e.g. Getz, Anderson, and Sheehan 1998; Morrison, Bruen, and Anderson 1998]. A number of publications present various roles that CBs can perform in cities and local meetings industry. These include for example the function of [Wang 2008]:

- destination/community marketer/promoter,
- destination image/brand developer,
- industry coordinator,
- advocate/supporter/facilitator of tourism projects,
- economic driver,
- builder of community pride,
- partnership/alliance builder,
- destination planner/manager,
- destination product developer.

However, it has not been pointed out yet which of these roles should prevail over others, which means that it has not been stated what roles should be CBs' priorities. In addition, it has not been determined whether tasks and roles will be the same for each CB or whether they will differ for example depending on the extent to which local meetings industry will be developed and how long a particular CB has been functioning in it.

With reference to the above, a study was carried out with the following research subject in mind: what is the relationship between the roles played by a CB and competitiveness of cities in the international meetings market? In this case, competitiveness was measured

Goal: To find what roles CBs play in local meetings industry divided into institutions operating in cities with a varying number of international meetings.

based on the number of international meetings according to an ICCA ranking (International Congress and Convention Association). The aim of the project, in turn, was to find what roles CBs play in local meetings industry divided into institutions operating in cities with a varying degree of competitiveness. The study conducted enabled identifying tasks and organizational solutions which should help raise city competitiveness in the meetings market. The project was carried out on a sample of 73 CBs operating in ICCA ranking cities between May and September 2016. Analysis focused on tasks performed by those CBs.

The author of the report would like to offer her thanks to representatives of convention bureaux from the following cities:

Adelaide	Cascais	Halifax	Minneapolis	San Diego
Amsterdam	Christchurch	Hamburg	Moscow	Santiago de Chile
Anchorage	Concepcion	Helsinki	Muenster	Santiago de Compostela
Arequipa	Curitiba	Innsbruck	Napoli	Seattle
Athens	Dresden	Istanbul	Nara	Sevilla
Atlanta	Dublin	Kuching	Nashville	Strasbourg
Auckland	Fort Worth	Las Vegas	Opatija	Stuttgart
Barcelona	Frankfurt	Lausanne	Oulu	Sydney
Belfast	Freiburg	Lima	Philadelphia	Tallinn
Birmingham	Geneva	Linz	Pittsburgh	Uppsala
Bogota	Genova	Lisboa	Prague	Vancouver
Bratislava	Gijon	Lucerne	Reykjavik	Vienna
Bristol	Gold Coast	Luxembourg	Rio de Janeiro	Vilnius
Budva	Gothenburg	Lyon	Saint Petersburg	
Campinas	Graz	Madison	San Antonio	

who have decided to take part in the study.

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I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINE

The study took account of CBs operating in ICCA cities. At the end of June and July in 2016, the questionnaire was e-mailed to CBs' managers, who were seen as experts in the way the entities operated. Based on the literature on the subject, CBs' 12 main tasks were singled out (Table 1). Respondents were to assess on a scale from 1 to 5 how important these activities were and to what extent they were carried out in the institutions that the respondents represented. Each task was, in turn, assigned to CBs' five principal roles: that of the agent, image developer, leader, coordinator, and representative of the meetings industry (Table 1).

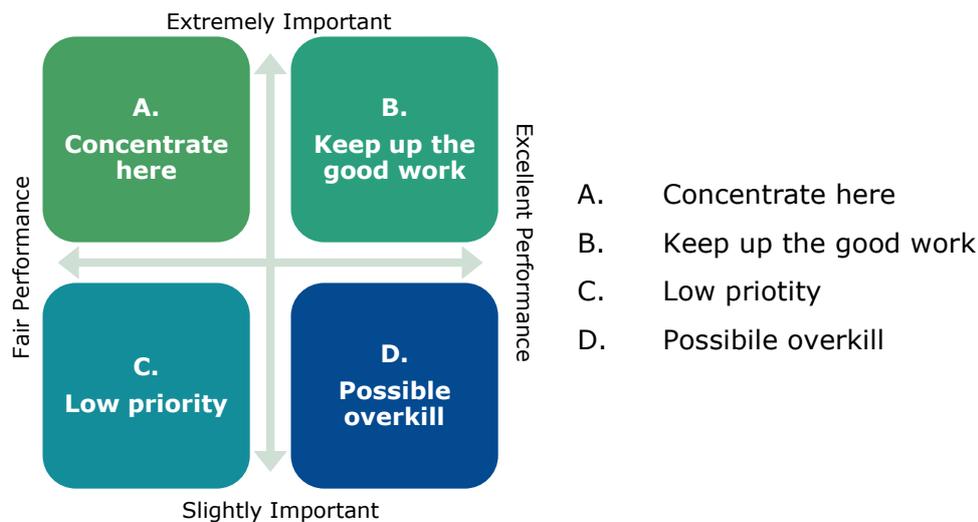
Table 1. Roles and tasks of convention bureaux

No	Tasks	Roles
1	Answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts	Agent Vendor
2	Searching for request for proposals and making bids	
3	Mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry	
4	Cooperating with other convention bureaux	
5	Providing direction for local meetings industry's development	Leader
6	Conducting research on local meetings industry	
7	Creating the destination meetings industry product (combining the local entities' offers)	Coordinator
8	Coordinating local meetings industry's activities and creating local cooperation environment	
9	Indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city	Representative Mediator
10	Mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government	
11	Mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (e.g. finance, culture, recreation)	
12	Promoting the destination meetings industry product	Marketer Image Developer

Source: own elaboration



In order to analyse the data obtained, **the IPA (Importance-Performance Analysis) method was used**, which consists in calculating the average score of importance and performance for each task. The results were gathered in a graph that created an IPA grid [Martilla and James 1977]. The boundaries of its quarters are determined by the point of intersection of arithmetic averages of the score of importance and performance. The location of the results from particular tasks in one of the four quarters is interpreted as the need to take one of the following courses of action:



Attention should mainly be paid to quarters A and D, because it is important to modify the way in which these have operated so far – to abandon effort or initiate and even intensify activities in specific areas. Quarters B and C are linked to the continuation of the current strategy.

The IPA grid is sometimes supplemented by a line with an incline of 45 degrees which connects points with the same importance and performance score. The results above the line should be given priority, because they have a higher score of importance than of performance.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONVENTION BUREAUX

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Out of 290, CBs 73 entities took part in the study. Each institution was assigned to one of the six groups created earlier based on the ICCA ranking (Table 2). As is the case for the general population, the most international meetings were held in cities found at the top of the list. In almost 10% locations, as many as 39% of all events in the sample was organised, and an average of 142 was organized in each leader city. In the last group the proportions were opposite and the average number of meetings equalled 7.

Table 2. Division of sample cities into groups

Group	I	II and III	IV	V	VI	Total
Number of cities	7	7	17	12	30	73
Percentage of cities	9.59%	9.59%	23.29%	16.44%	41.10%	100.00%
Average no. of meetings	142	77	33	18	7	35
Percentage of meetings	39.17%	21.23%	22.17%	8.62%	8.81%	100.00%

Source: own elaboration

European CBs dominated in the sample, whereas Australian and Asian entities were the least numerous (as shown in the infographics on the next page). The studied entities had operated for an average of 24 years (n=68), employed an average of 25 full-time employees (n=73) and had the budget of over 9.2bn USD (n=57). Each CB dealt with securing business events. More than a half of the institutions also sought the possibility of organising political and sports events, and almost the same number of entities were interested in cultural events.



CONVENTION BUREAUX



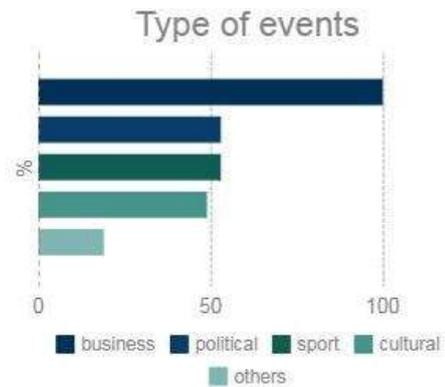
years



full-time employees



budget



Own elaboration in Piktochart

GROUPS CHARACTERISTICS

A more detailed set of characteristics was developed for particular groups. First, attention was paid to CBs' spatial diversification (Fig. 1.). Group I and IV comprised almost only those institutions that operated in European cities. The Old Continent's entities were less numerous only in the combined group II and III, in which the majority of CBs came from South America. Along with group VI, this group was also the most diversified geographically. Northern American institutions, however, were the most heavily represented in groups V and VI.

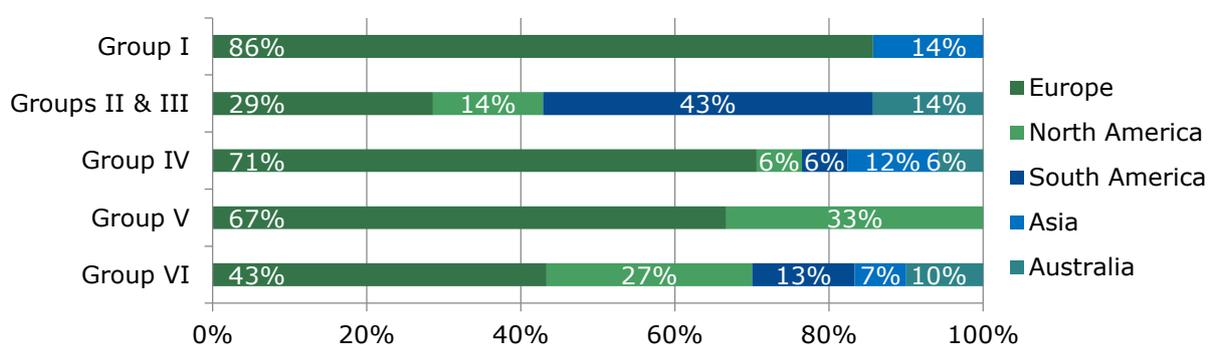


Fig. 1. Geographical locations of cities in which the CBs under examination operate

Source: own elaboration

It was also checked according to what organizational form the CBs in each group function (Fig. 2.). A non-profit public and private partnership and a CB functioning in the structure of local authorities were the most often cited. Respondents often chose the answer "Other", which meant that they see CBs as for example a non-profit foundation and institution that is wholly financed from public or private sources.

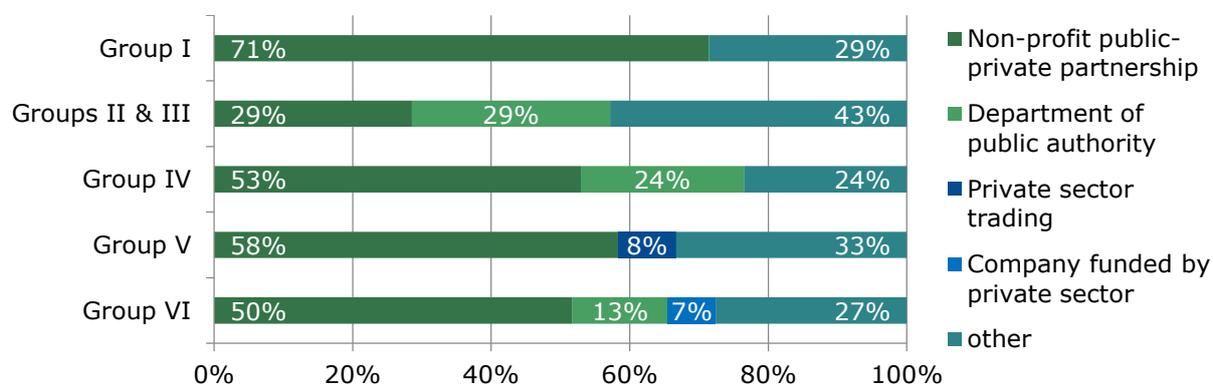


Fig. 2. CBs' organizational forms

Source: own elaboration

Differences between groups were also present in the average period of operation (Fig. 3), the number of full-time employees (Fig. 4.), and the yearly budget that the CBs had in 2015 r. (Fig. 5.).

CBs from groups II, III and V have existed the longest – an average of 34 years. Group IV institutions, however, have the least experience. In the same group the least number of full-time employees were taken on average. As concerns the number of employees and the size of the budget, group V stands out considerably. The figures for the group were heightened by only one CB and when it was left out the average number of employees would amount to only 23 people and the budget would stand at about 9mn USD, which would exceed the totals for the other groups anyway.

It could be expected that group I CBs (ICCA leaders) have the most experience and budget to carry out their activities. Meanwhile, the length of employment and the number of employees were similar to the average ones in the samples, whereas these entities had the relatively the lowest yearly budget compared with the other groups.

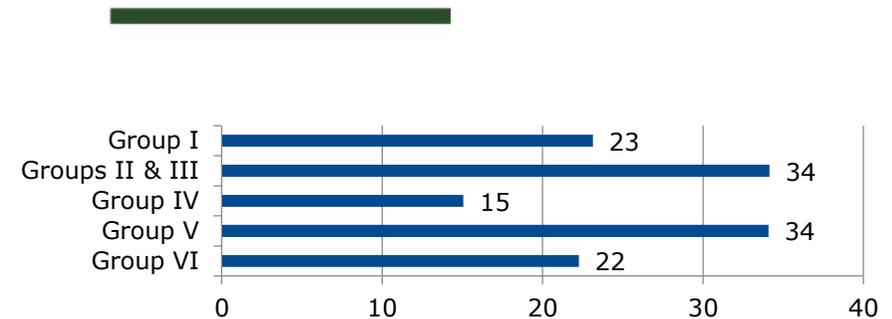


Fig. 3. Average time of operation [in years]

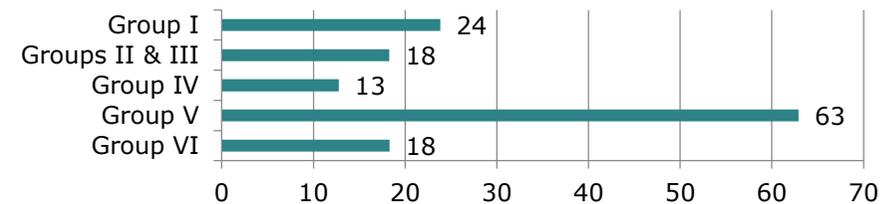


Fig. 4. Average number of full-time employees



Fig. 5. Average yearly budget [in mn USD]

Source: own elaboration

The last element considered in the characteristics were events that CBs sought to organize (Fig. 6.). All researched institutions strive to secure various business events, which makes group I representatives focus their attention on them. A higher degree of dispersed activity was noted for group V and VI, because more than a half of the respondents assigned to the groups also pointed to seeking political, sports, and cultural events. Responses "Other", however, considered for example scientific and private events.

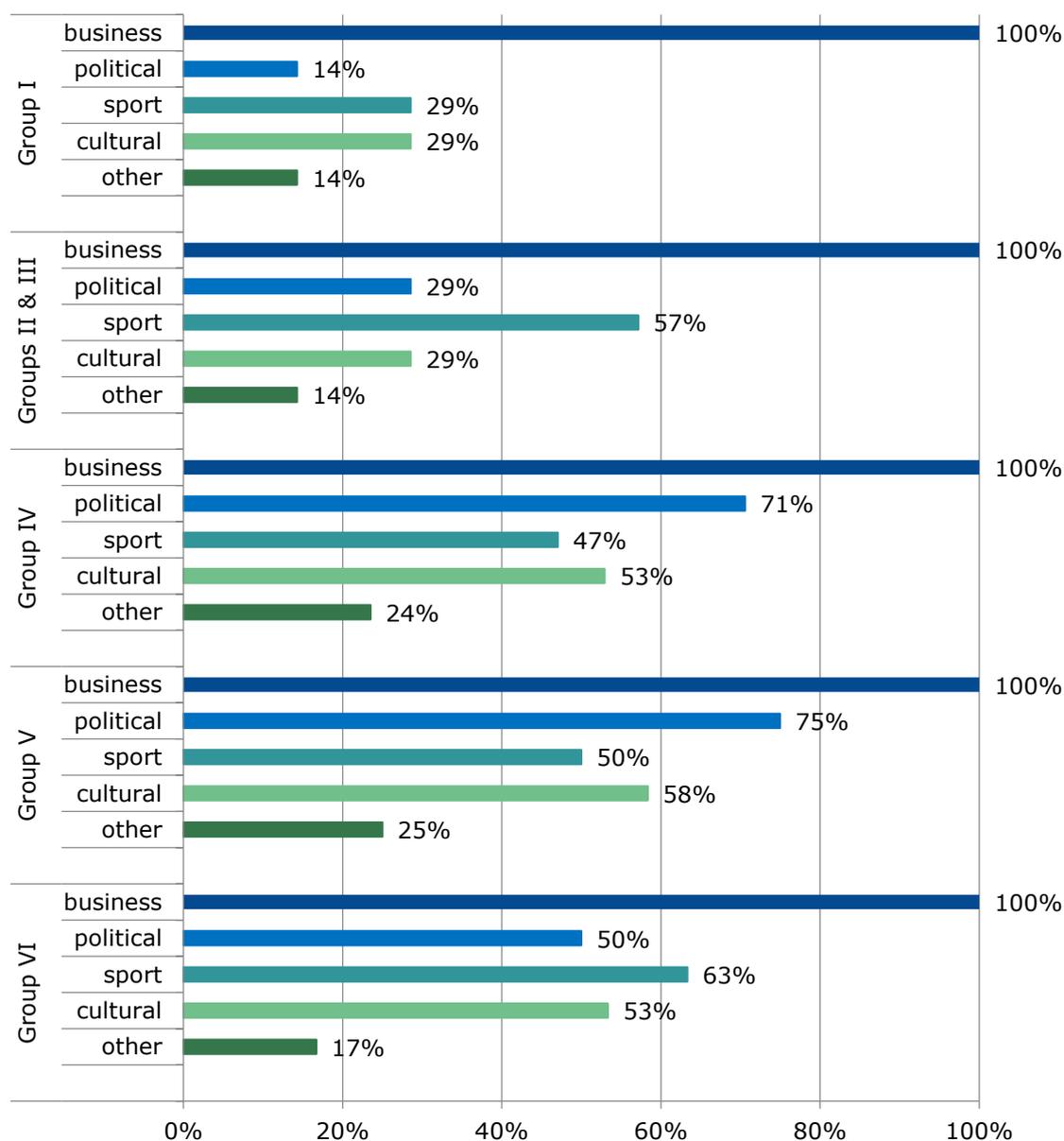


Fig. 6. Type of events secured by CBs

Source: own elaboration

III. ROLES OF CONVENTION BUREAUX – RESEARCH RESULTS

GENERAL RESULTS

Among those CBs' tasks mentioned in the questionnaire, securing meetings passively, or responding to organisers' inquiries was the most often cited (1 – Fig. 7.). High scores were also given to promotional efforts (12), indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9), and the active securing of meetings (2). In respondents' view, CBs' least important tasks include cooperating with other convention bureaux (4) and mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (11).



Fig. 7. Tasks' importance

Source: own elaboration

When it comes to the completion of particular tasks, two turned out to be the most significant, namely answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (1) and promoting the destination meetings industry product (12 – Fig. 8.). The least attention, however, is paid to the least significant task, namely mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (12). Scores below 4 were also registered for creating the destination meetings industry product (7), conducting market research (6) and cooperating with other convention bureaux (4).

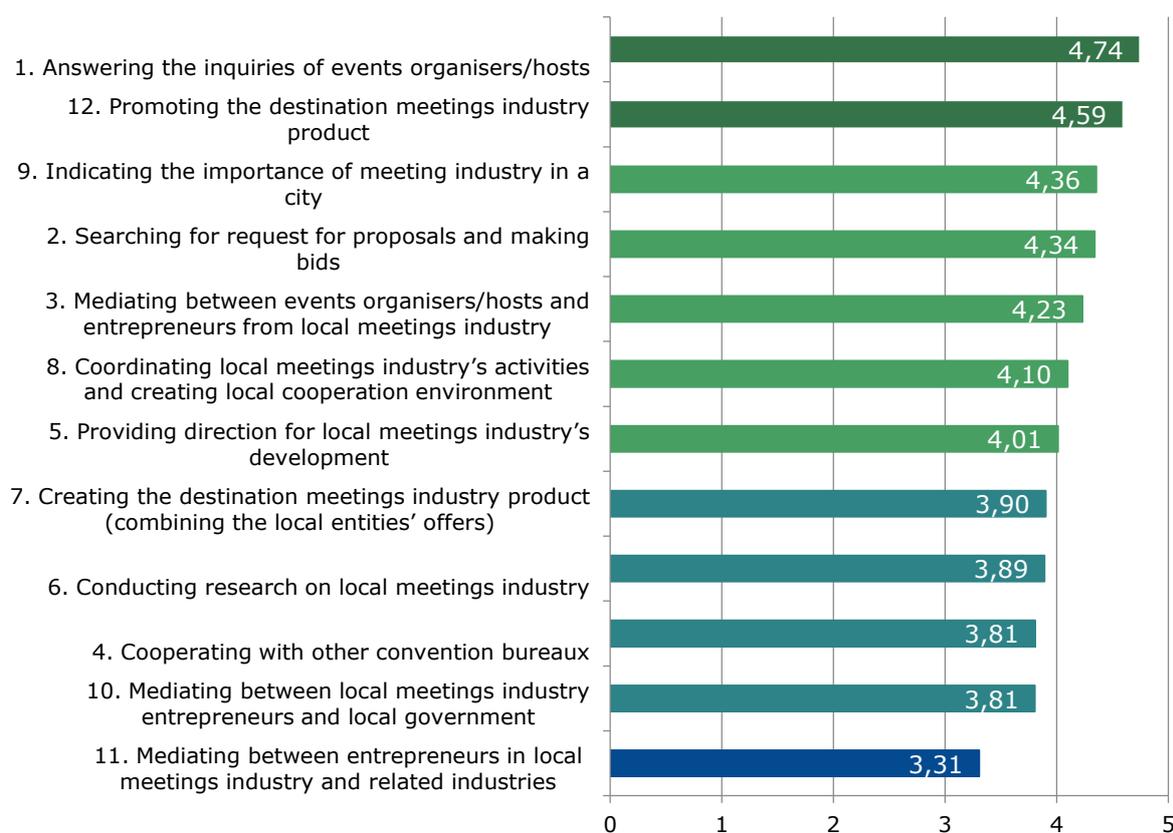


Fig. 8. Convention bureaux' performance in fulfilling the tasks

Source: own elaboration

The above results are also reflected in the IPA grid (Fig. 9.). It should be noted that both importance and performance scores are fairly high (all values above 3). In relation to that, interpretation of the IPA grid should be more about determining which tasks should be given more or less attention rather than definite recommendation which tasks should be continued or discontinued altogether.

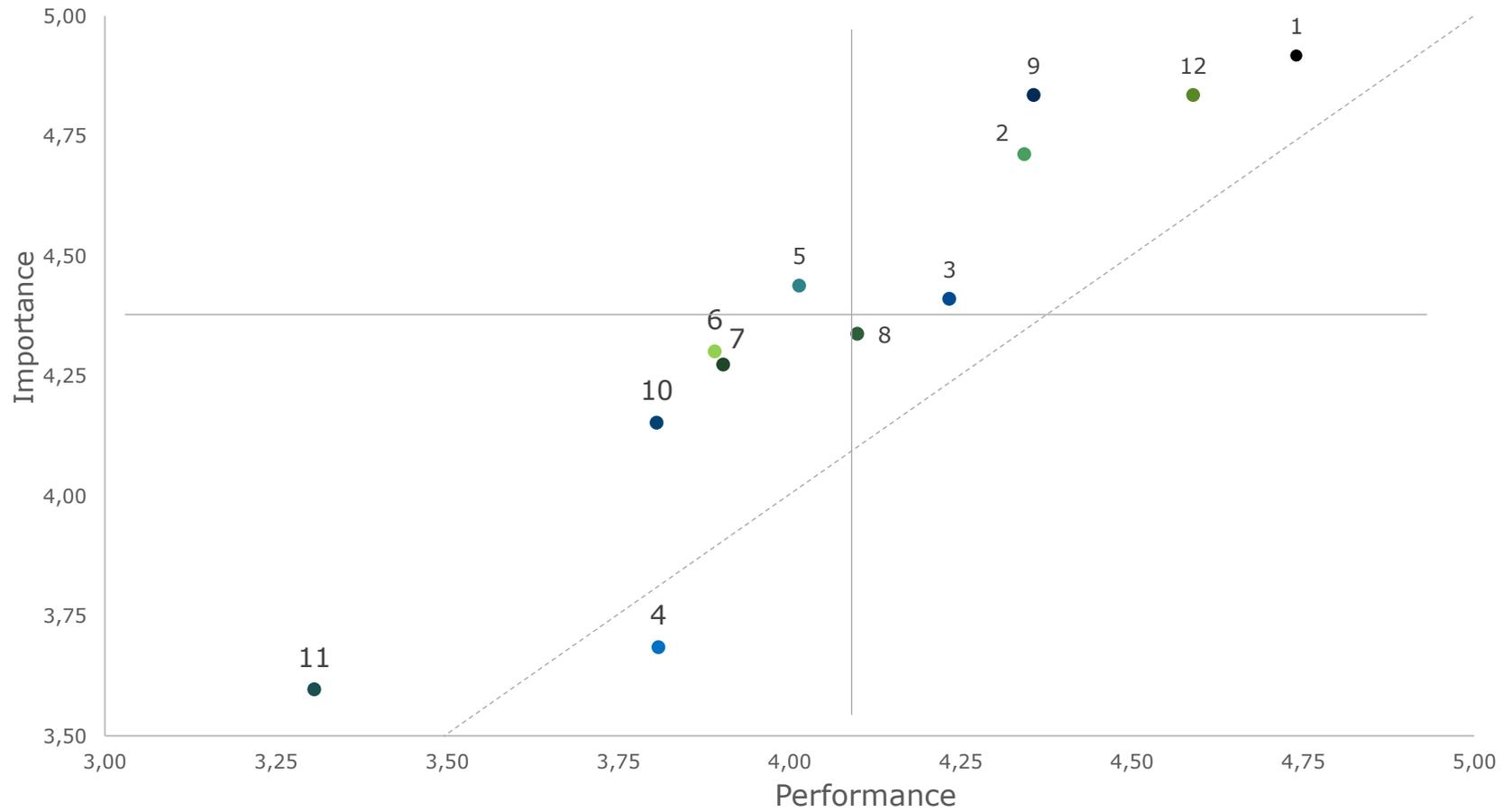


Fig. 9. IPA grid
Source: own elaboration



There was only one task in quarter A: providing direction for local meetings industry's development (5) and it is this field that CBs' representatives should concentrate on to a more extent than before (Fig. 9.). The action taken so far, however, should be continued as concerns answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (1) and promotion (12), which stems from the interpretation of quarter B. The field also has results of the following studies: indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9), searching for request for proposals and making bids (2), and mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3). This quarter is therefore dominated by tasks assigned to the role of the agent.





Coordination of activities in the industry and creation of cooperation conditions is a task that, in turn, probably takes too much effort in relation to results (8 – quarter D in Fig. 9.). Activities that should be given less attention included mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government (10) and other entities (11), cooperating with other convention bureaux (4), conducting research on local meetings industry (6), and creating the destination meetings industry product (7), however, the results of two last tasks mentioned were located mainly close to quarter A, so recommendation in their case may not be unambiguous.

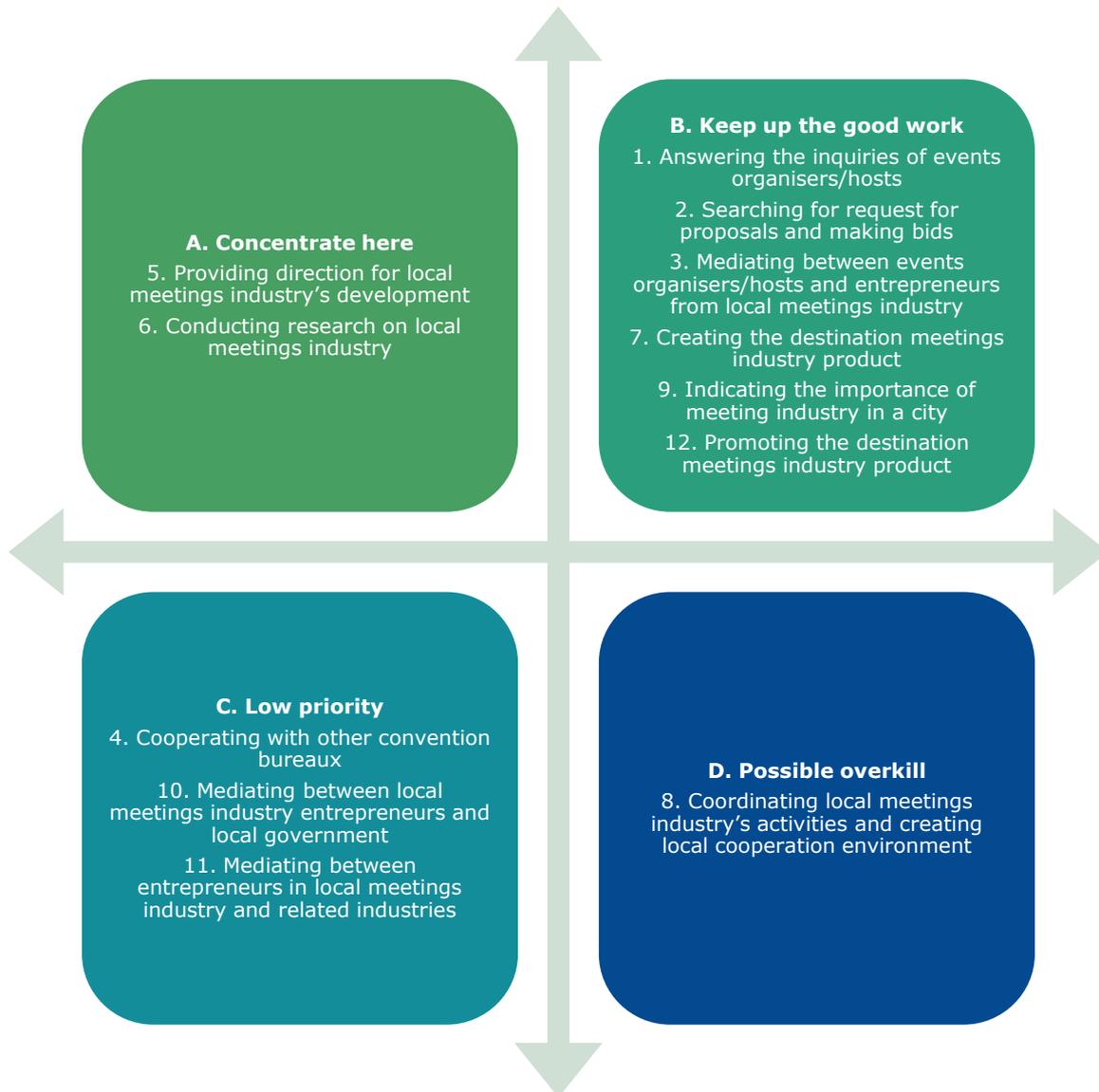
GROUP I

Cities: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Dublin, Istanbul, Lisboa, Prague, Vienna.

Average no. of meetings: 142
Average time of activity: 23
Average no. of employees: 24
Average budget: 1.5bn USD

Group I included CBs operating in top ICCA cities. In

Fig. 10, boundaries of quarters are shown as averages for the group (solid lines) and for the entire sample (broken lines). Leaders of the international meetings market assigned the most importance and performance to the promotion of destinations (12) and answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (1). CBs' functions include the roles of marketers and agents in this case. As compared to the general results of the sample, quarter B was assigned the scores of a task related to creating the destination meetings industry product (7). Interestingly enough, below lines with the incline of 45 degrees there are results of as many as three tasks. Generally, in the study cooperating with other convention bureaux (4) was given a low score. Coordination of activities in the meetings industry may also be linked to putting in more effort against the produced results. What may come as a surprise, however, is the assessment of the realisation of a task consisting in securing meetings actively (2) that goes beyond its score of importance, because in the sample, seeking organisers and submitting bids was seen as fairly important, but performed to a lesser degree (Fig. 10.).



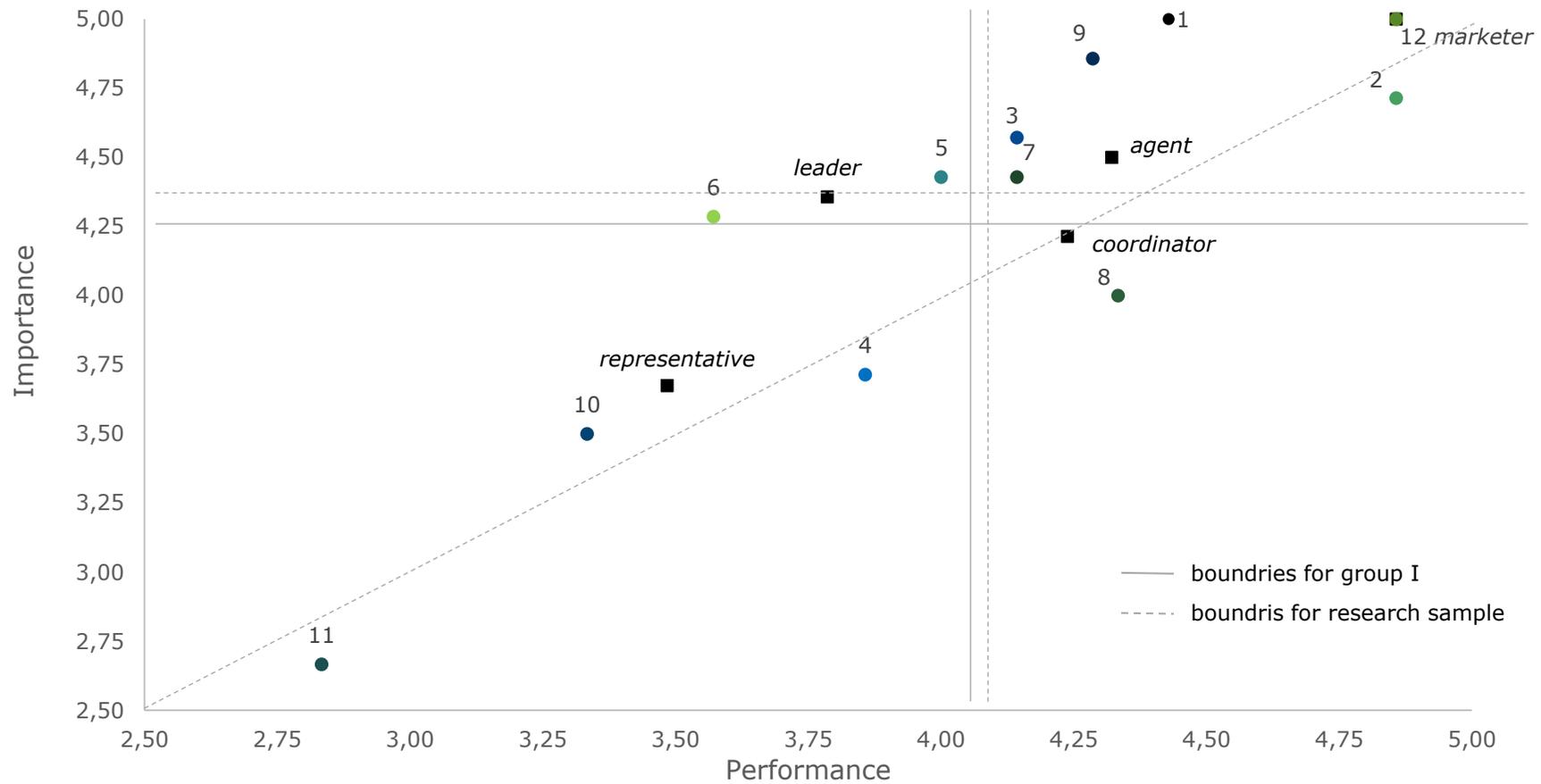


Fig. 10. IPA grid – Group I
 Source: own elaboration

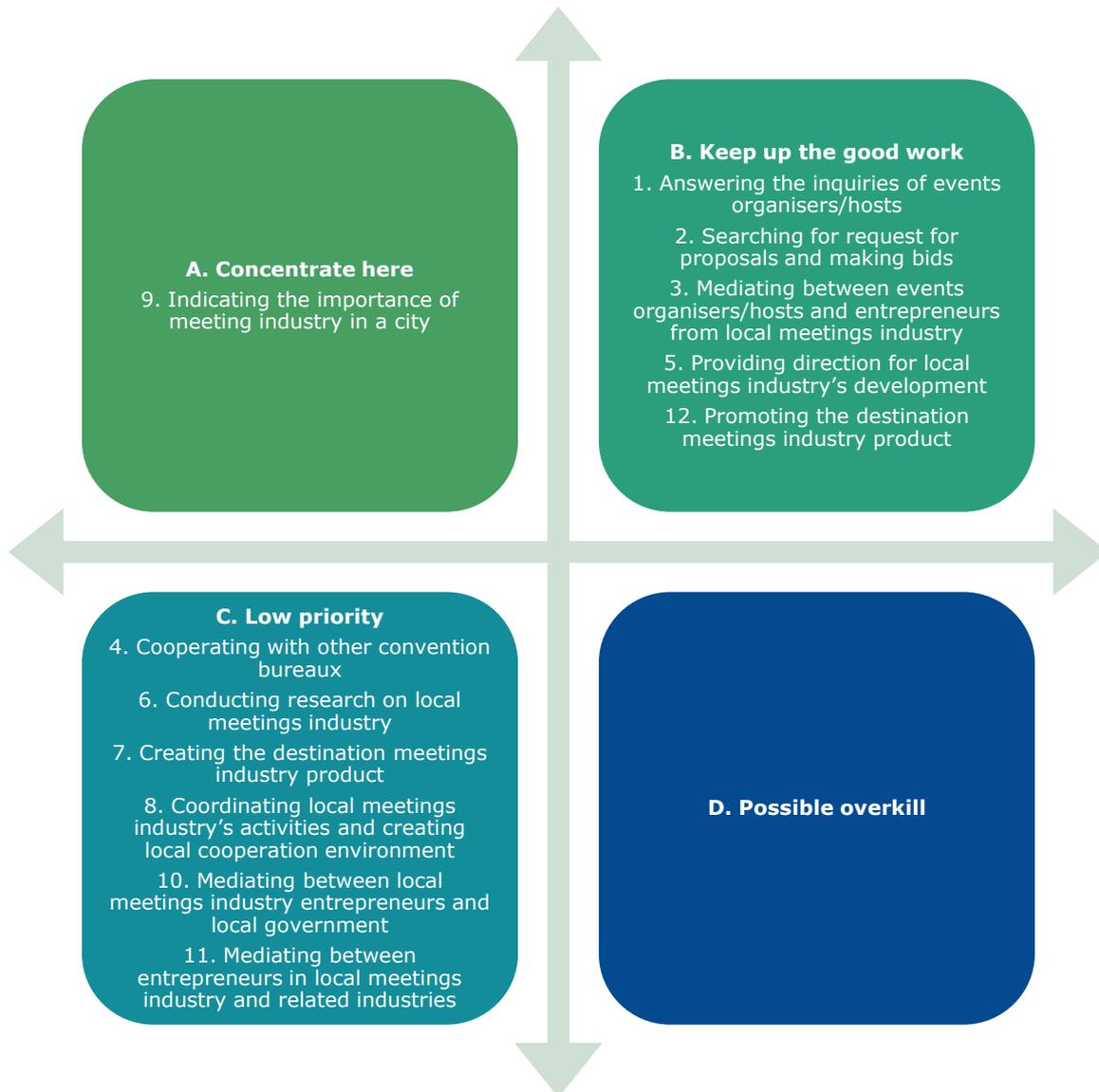
GROUP II AND III

Cities: Athens, Helsinki, Lima, Santiago de Chile, Sydney, Rio de Janeiro, Vancouver

Average no. of meetings: 77
Average time of activity: 34
Average no. of employees: 18
Average budget: 2.9bn USD

Scores for the combined group II and III were placed almost only in two quarters: B and C (Fig. 11.). One exception concerns indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9), because the scores for these tasks were found in quarter A, which means they should probably be given more attention. Similar results were observed for the average score for tasks assigned to the role of leader, which mainly stemmed from the high scores for the need to provide direction for local meetings industry's development (5). The role of the agent turned out to be equally important, yet this function was performed by CBs to a greater extent.

Answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (1) was seen as basic activity by the respondents, which at the same time is the task that they perform to the greatest extent. Moreover, like in the case of ICCA ranking leaders (group I), the results of several tasks were found below the line with an incline of 45 degrees. Again, this concerned tasks 4 and 11 (although it is the fourth task that was given the highest scores) in quarter C, and tasks 3 and 12 were located in quarter A. This certainly does not mean the need to quit mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3), nor promotional activities (12), because in both cases scores for importance and performance were high. However, thought should be given whether the relationship between effort and results is satisfactory (Fig. 11.).



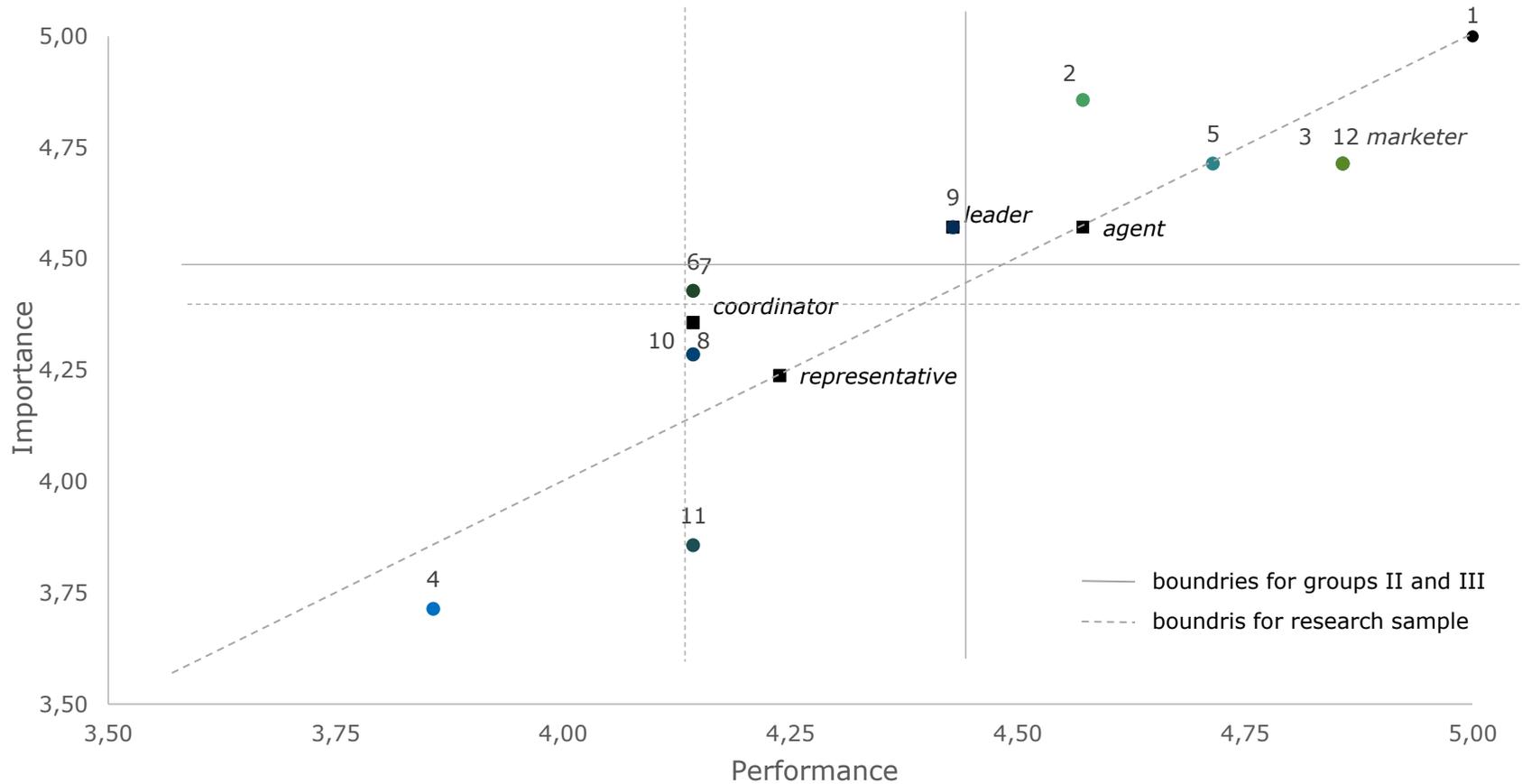


Fig. 11. IPA grid – Groups II & III
 Source: own elaboration

GROUP IV

Cities: Auckland, Bogota, Dresden, Geneva, Gothenburg, Graz, Hamburg, Luxembourg, Lyon, Moscow, Reykjavik, Saint Petersburg, San Diego, Sevilla, Tallinn, Uppsala, Vilnius

Average no. of meetings: 33
Average time of activity: 15
Average no. of employees: 13
Average budget: 3.3bn USD

In group IV, like in groups II and III, the highest priority was given to tasks assigned to the role of agent, leader, and marketer, and the lowest to the function of coordinator and representative (Fig. 12.). It needs to be noted that the averages for this group approximate the averages for the sample. It is, however, one of the first discussed groups in which the result of mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3) is found in quarter C rather than B. This means that seeking a meeting on the part of a CB is limited to securing the meeting, and further talks between the organiser and local providers take place without them participating. For this reason, assessment of the role of the agent is found on the boundary of quarter B and D. In addition, respondents assigned the most attention to indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9), rather than promotion (12) and passive (1) and active (2) sourcing of meetings. In turn, more focus must be put on providing direction for local meetings industry's development (5) and coordinating local meetings industry's activities and creating local cooperation environment (8), and also maybe mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government (10), because the result of this task can be found on the boundary of quarter A and C. Compared with the previous groups, definitely lower scores were given to task 7, or creating the destination meetings industry product. Moreover too much attention is probably devoted to conducting research (6 – Fig. 12.).



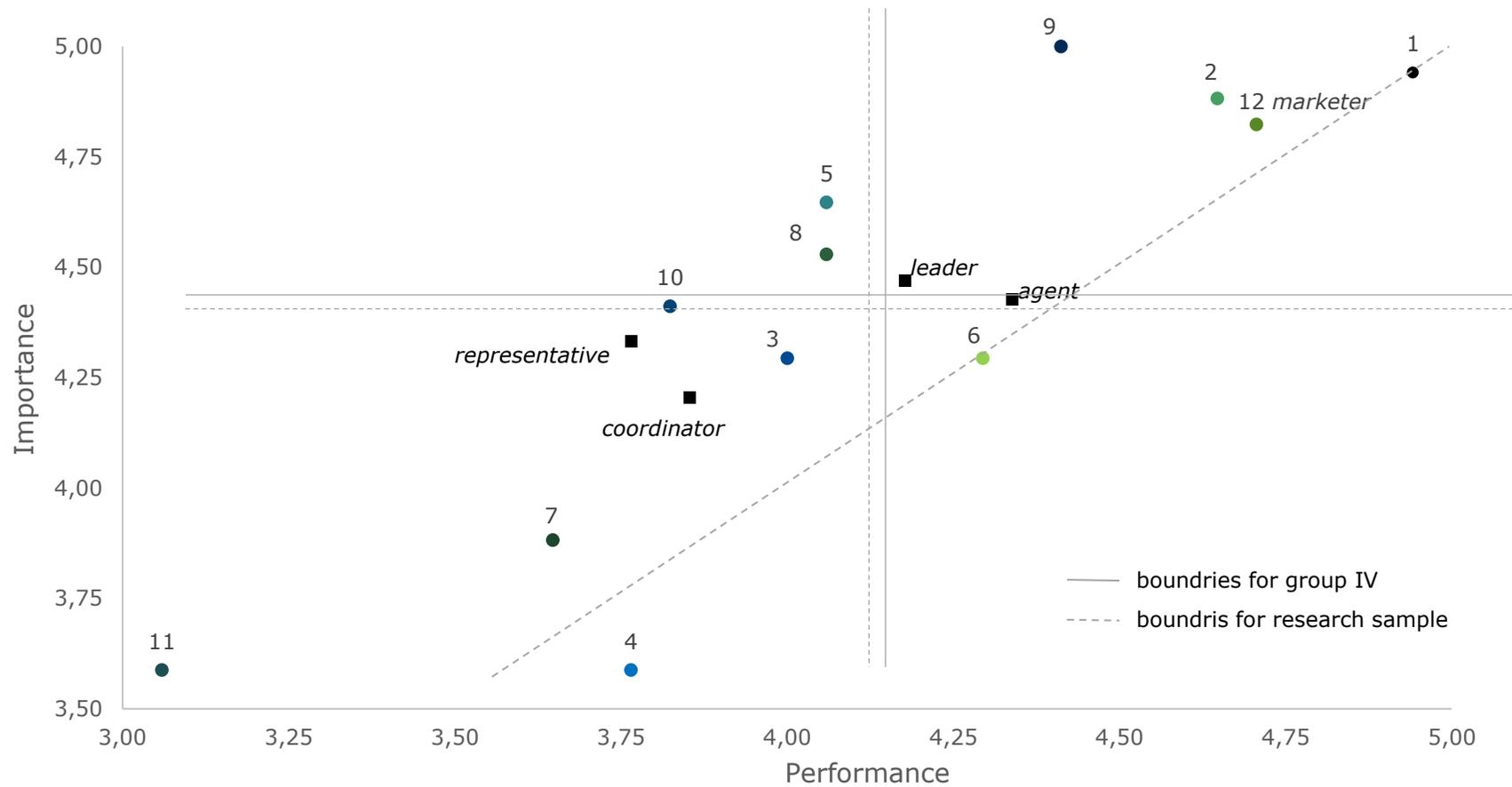


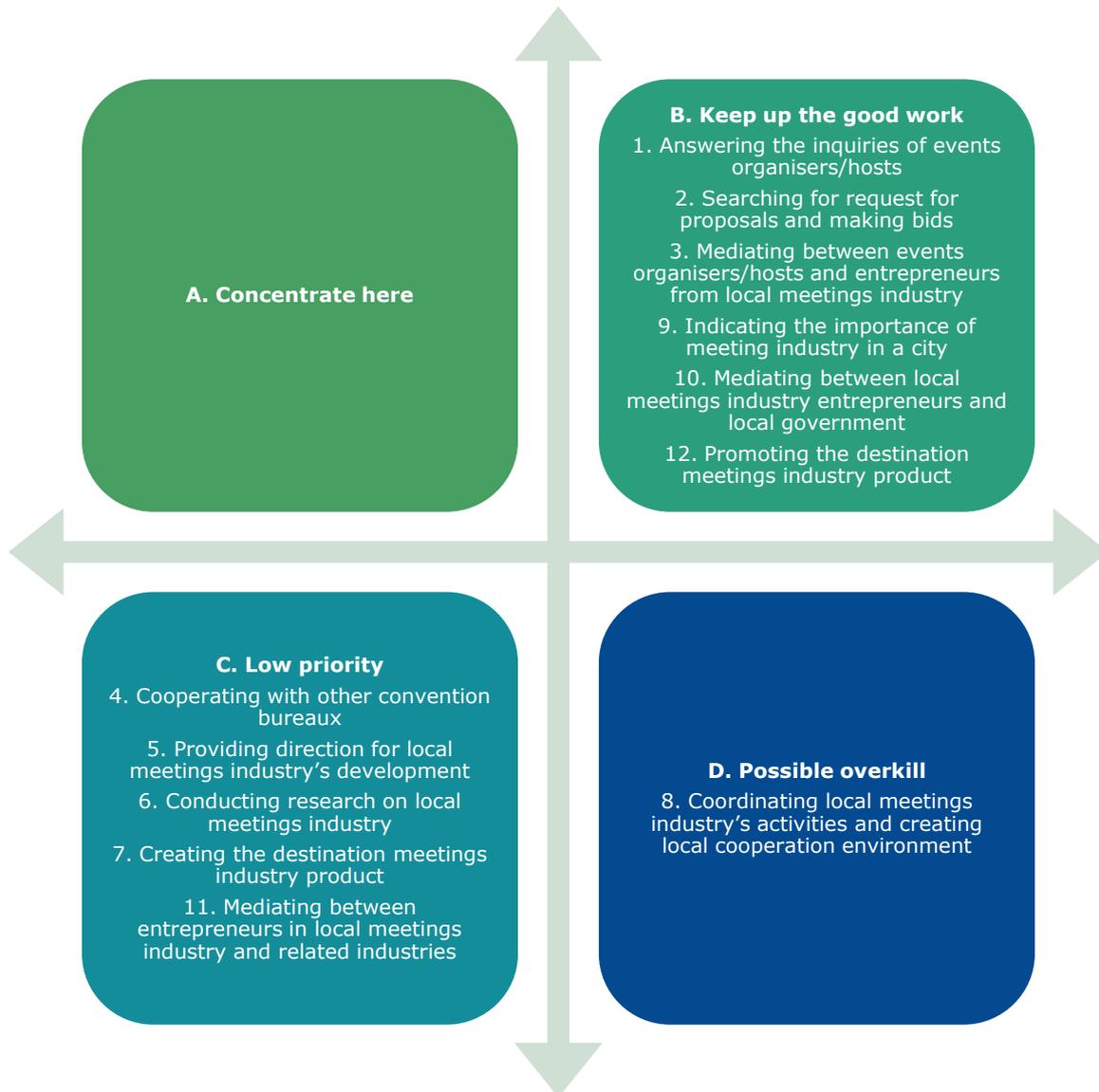
Fig. 12. IPA grid – Group IV
 Source: own elaboration

GROUP V

Cities: Atlanta, Belfast, Bratislava, Bristol, Cascais, Frankfurt, Las Vegas, Lausanne, Naples, Philadelphia, Seattle, Strasbourg

Average no. of meetings: 18
Average time of activity: 34
Average no. of employees: 63
Average budget: 35.4bn USD

Relatively low scores for task 7 were also noted for group V (Fig. 13.). Again, the average scores of the group are almost the same as the averages for the group. Recommendations regarding mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government (10) in group IV may have required consideration, yet in group V recommendations are clearer: activities in this regard should be continued since the results are located in quarter B. A high score for this task also resulted in more responsibilities for the representative. However, it should probably be necessary to limit activities relating to the function of leader and coordinator, because too much attention was paid especially to coordinating local meetings industry's activities and creating local cooperation environment (8). Moreover, results of such activity are found on the line with an incline of 45 degrees, which means that scores for the importance and performance of task 8 were similar. In turn, the result for cooperating with other convention bureaux is found below the line, which means that the score for the performance of the task was higher than the score for its importance (Fig. 13.).



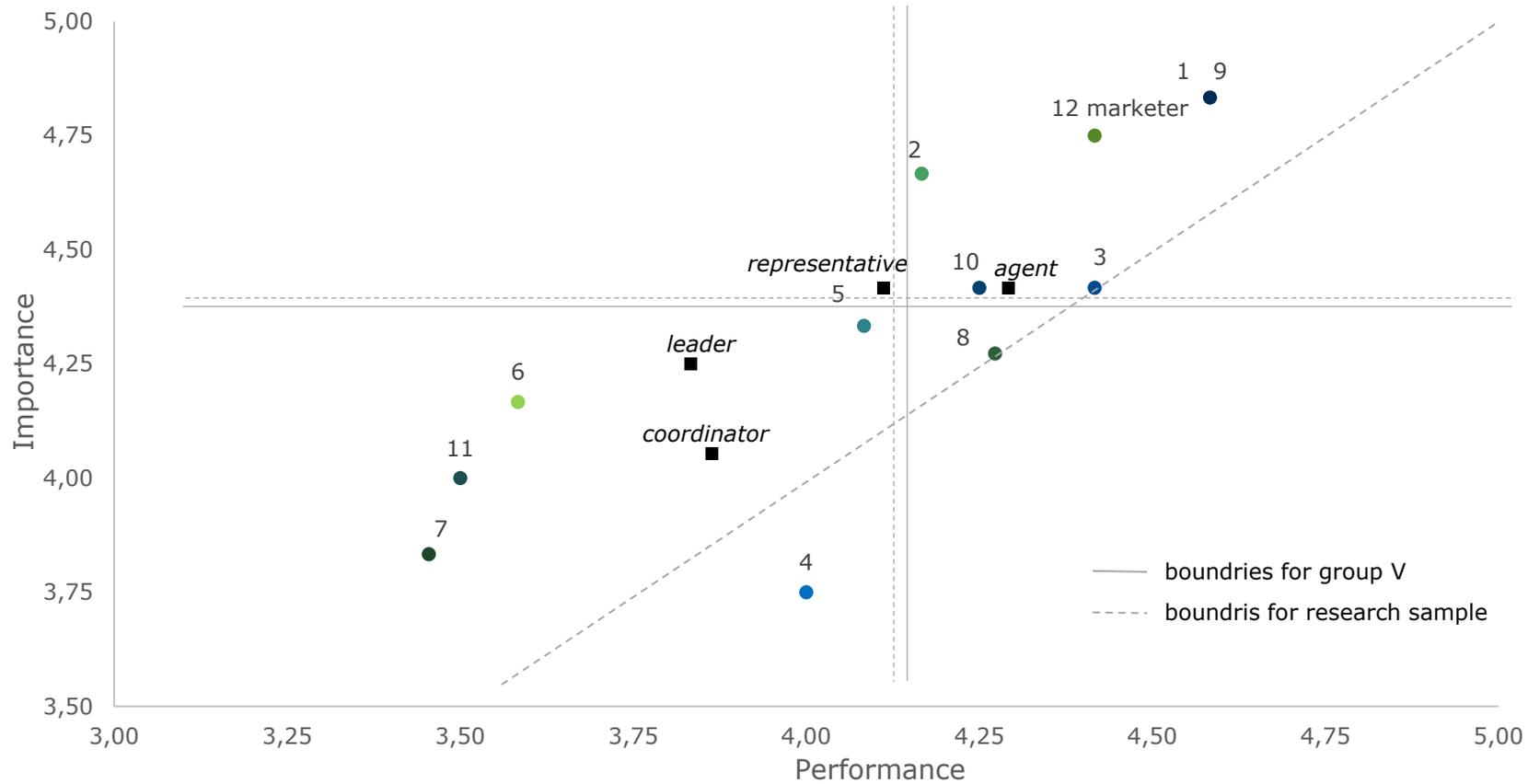


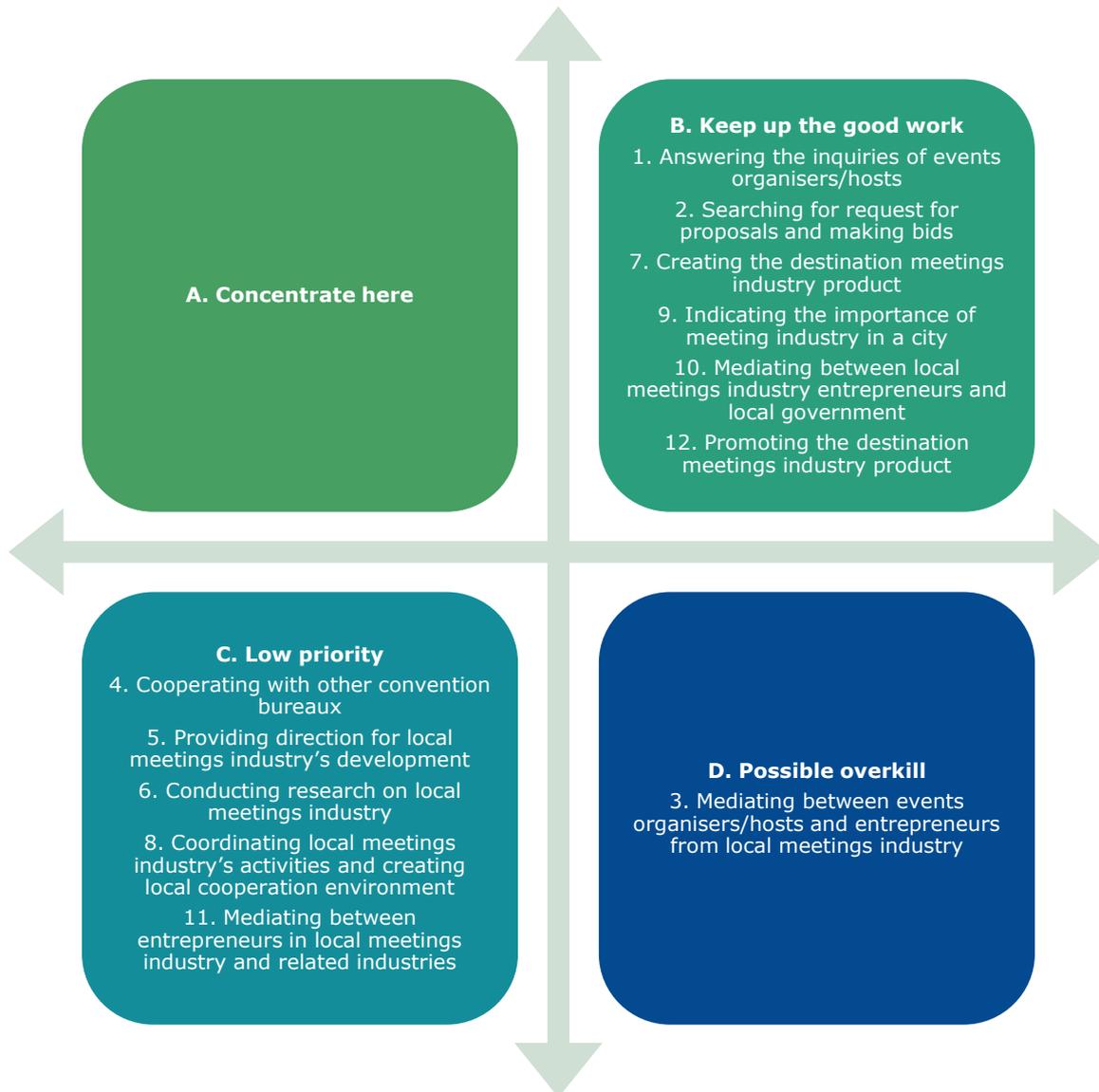
Fig. 13. IPA grid – Group V
 Source: own elaboration

GROUP VI

Cities: Adelaide, Anchorage, Arequipa, Birmingham, Budva, Campinas, Christchurch, Concepcion, Curitiba, Fort Worth, Freiburg, Genova, Gijon, Gold Coast, Halifax, Innsbruck, Kuching, Linz, Lucerne, Madison, Minneapolis, Muenster, Nara, Nashville, Opatija, Oulu, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, Santiago de Compostella, Stuttgart

Average no. of meetings: 7
Average time of activity: 22
Average no. of employees: 18
Average budget: 4.4bn USD

In the last group (VI), as is the case in all the previous ones except for I, the highest degree of performance was related to task 1, namely answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (Fig. 14.). The respondents also gave high importance and performance scores for promoting the destination meetings industry product (12) and indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9). In turn, mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3) raises concern whether activities should be continued to the same extent or whether they are excessive and part of attention should be redirected to other matters. It is worth noting that very similar results were recorded for active securing of meetings (2) and creating a local, complex product (7). Such high scores for task 7 and their location in quarter B were only the case for group I. For the same reason the average result is found in the same quarter for the function of the agent and image developer. Lower priority, however, was given to CBs' roles as a representative. Lower scores were also assigned to the tasks of the leader, although they were located close to the boundary, therefore CBs should concentrate more focus on these activities in the nearest future (Fig. 14.).



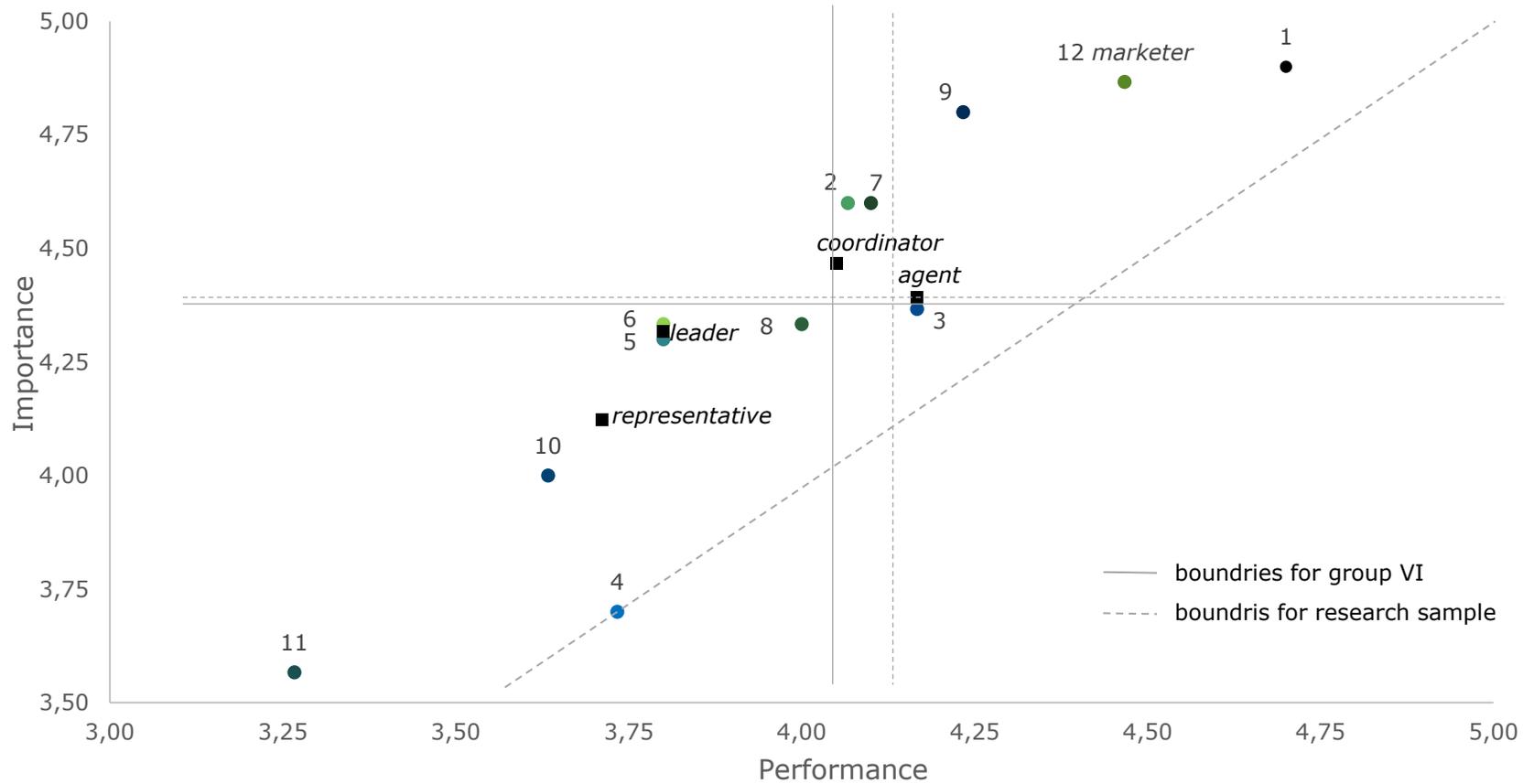


Fig. 14. IPA grid – Group VI
 Source: own elaboration



CONCLUSIONS

1. The majority of tasks were given similar scores. They were seen as important and performed to a significant degree.
2. The differences concerned several activities or those relating to their recommendations stemming from the boundaries of the quarters being located in various places in the IPA grids. In all groups, high scores were given to passive (1) and active (2) securing of meetings, indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9) and its promotion (12).
3. Respondents gave much less priority to cooperating with other convention bureaux (4) and mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (11).
4. In particular groups, high validity and implementation scores were given to the following tasks:
 - group I and VI – task 7: creating the complex destination meetings industry product (combining the local entities' offers);
 - groups II and III – task 5: providing direction for local meetings industry's development;
 - group V – task 10: mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government.

The most important and the most performed tasks:

- Answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (1)
- Searching for request for proposals and making bids (2)
- Indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9)
- Promoting the destination meetings industry city (12)

Less important and less performed tasks:

- Cooperating with other convention bureaux (4)
- Mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (11)



5. Mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry was assessed differently, because the results of the task are found on or near the boundaries of quarter B (groups I, V, VI), in the middle of quarter B (groups II and III, or the importance and the realization of the task was regarded as high) or in quarter C (group IV, so it was characterised by much lower priority).
6. **CBs' key roles** include functions of agents and marketers, because tasks assigned to them were given high scores in all groups. Quite a lot of importance was attached to the significance of the meetings industry in cities, but the results of the task were balanced with lower scores for other responsibilities assigned to representatives, which meant that the function was of fairly secondary importance in the range of CBs' activities. Apart from that, in individual groups other tasks were also given high priority (as shown above), therefore some functions will be significant on various stages of development of the local meetings industry.
7. **The aim of the research** to find what roles CBs play in the local meetings industry divided into institutions operating in cities with a varying number of international meetings **has been achieved**.
8. First, it was assumed that CBs in cities with the highest number of international meetings combined five key roles, whereas CBs in cities with a lower number of meetings concentrate their activities mainly or solely on tasks assigned to the role of agents. It was noticed that for group I CBs, or ICCA ranking leaders, more focus was put on specific tasks that contributed to securing meetings efficiently than in the other groups.
9. Group I CBs play mainly the role of agents and marketers, which means that they can be called highly specialised institutions. Based on these entities, it can be stated that CBs as agents and image developers contributes to city competitiveness to the highest extent, which provides **an answer to the research problem**: what is the relationship between the roles played by foreign CBs and city competitiveness on the international meetings market?



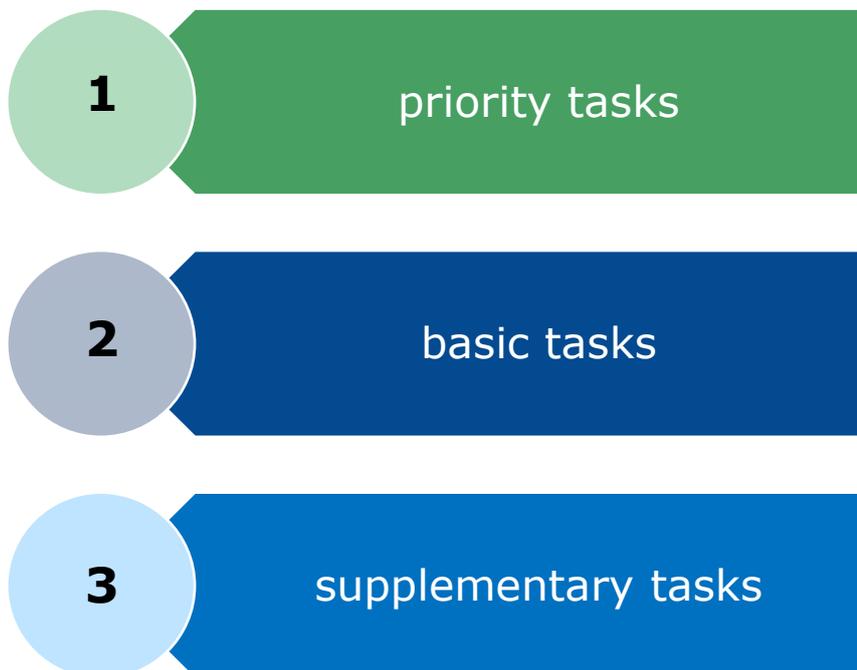
- 10.** It was supposed that the ranking leaders (group I CBs) would have the greatest experience and financial resources to succeed. Meanwhile, the opposite took place; in other words, a specialisation will enable using limited resources more efficiently.

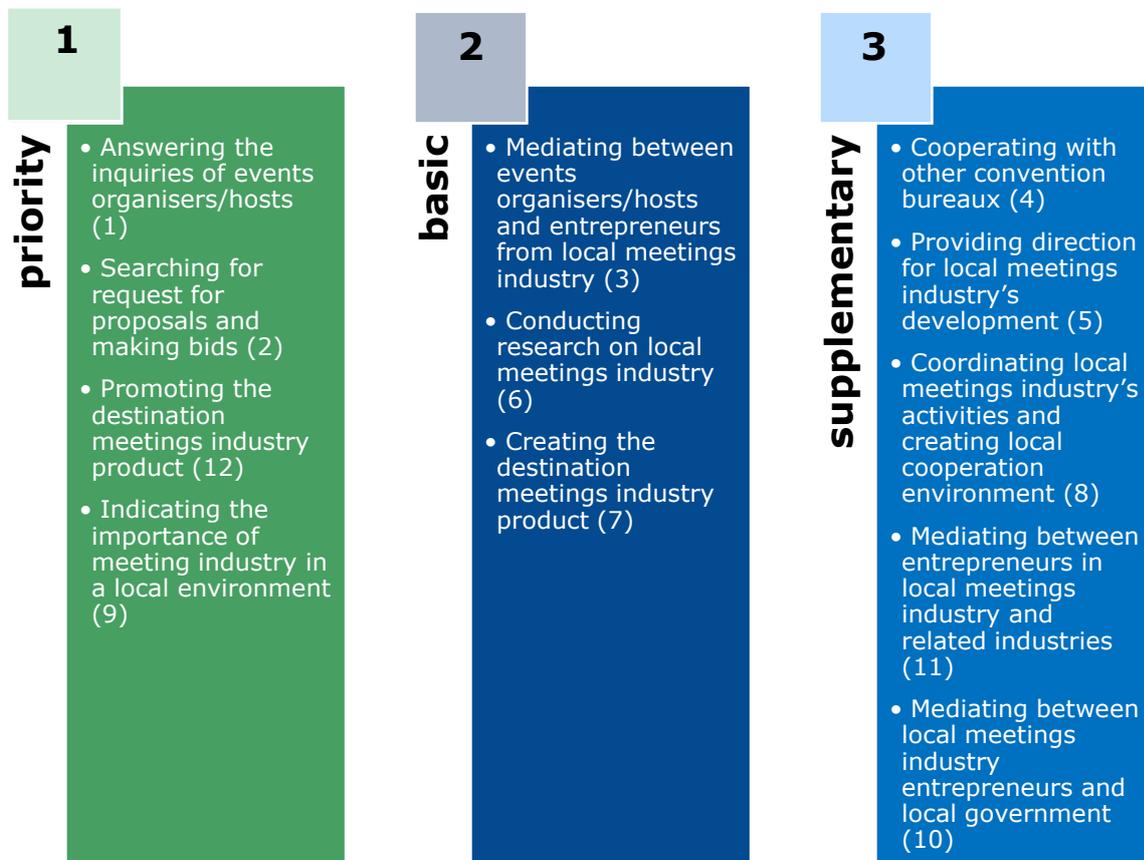
- 11.** As concerns the other groups, scores were less dispersed on the IPA grid. For this reason, it should be noted that CBs assigned to them performed all the mentioned roles in their activities. It may stem from the fact that part of them functions as CVBs, which widens the range of their activity. In addition, it would seem that based on long-standing experience and thus established position in the local environment, part of the tasks associated with the shaping of relationships among local entities should already be redundant. It is possible, however, that a lower level of development of the local meetings industry requires CBs to engage in other issues that are indirectly related to securing meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HIERARCHY OF TASKS UNDERTAKEN BY CONVENTION BUREAUX

The fact that virtually all activities were considered to be important and performed to a great extent presents some difficulty in determining detailed practical recommendations in line with IPA grid field interpretations. The suggestion concerning the necessity to quit action that was assigned a score of for example 4 for both importance and performance on a scale from 1 to 5 seems exaggerated. Practical recommendations should therefore relate to ordering, **task hierarchy**, starting with those that should be realised first and ending up with those that could be undertaken next or that could be conducted by other entities. All the more so because the group I CB pattern indicates that these institutions have to have narrow specialisations with the limited resources that they have. For this reason, instead of four IPA groups: concentrate here, keep up the good work, low priority, and possible overkill [Martilla and James 1977], it was proposed that CB activities be divided into priority, basic, and supplementary.





In the suggested classification, two criteria were considered: the quality of scores in particular tasks (or their location in IPA grid quarters) and the possibility of them being implemented by a non-CB entity. Activities with the highest scores for importance and performance were classified as priority tasks. They were found in quarter B and were the most difficult to adopt by another entity. Basic tasks included responsibilities for which the results were not recommended in an unambiguous way because they were located near the boundaries of the quarters. Meanwhile it needs to be stressed that the tasks also obtained relatively high scores. The last group, i.e. that of supplementary tasks included activities with lowest scores (quarter C) and those that could be undertaken by another entity without major problems. Individual categories will be discussed in detail on the next pages.

1

priority

- Answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts (1)
- Searching for request for proposals and making bids (2)
- Promoting the destination meetings industry product (12)
- Indicating the importance of meeting industry in a local environment (9)

PRIORITY TASKS

The first group concerns actions that should be given priority in all CBs. Priority tasks mainly included **passive (1) and active (2) securing of meetings**. For a number of CBs it mainly means the necessity to undertake more activities when it comes to searching for request for proposals and making bids (2), because this task was performed to a lesser degree. Concentrating vastly on responding to organisers that contacted a specific CB directly, the role of the entity is more about the function as a tourist information centre dedicated to business recipients rather than a city's agent. Starting activities to attract organisers requires resources: financial in order to gain access to bases in which requests for proposals are published as well as personnel, because such types of tasks require not

only a thorough knowledge of the local market, but also the ability to prepare offers or have predispositions and ability to enter into new contracts.

Securing meetings would be difficult without appropriate **promotional activities (12)** that raise the recognisability of cities among the organisers and potential participants of meetings. Because of the indirect nature of relationships in the meetings market apart from promotional materials it is also necessary to actively participate in industry fairs or study visits that not only allow the organisers to get to know the city in a more tangible way, but also make it possible to establish contacts with CBs' employees and individual suppliers. The scope of activities conducted, however, will probably depend again on a CB's financial resources. In addition, they have to be coordinated with general promotion of a city to ensure that its image is coherent.



Indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city (9) is, in turn, a less cost-consuming task. In the majority of CBs studied the activity was considered important and was given a lot of attention, which seemed a sound approach. Considering how important the sector is for a city, its authorities and other entities should be more willing to provide support in securing and organising particular meetings, investments etc. Right actions can also change inhabitants' approach to meeting participants, treating them as contributors to creating and maintaining jobs, rather than only generate problems such as temporary congestion of cities. It may be difficult, however, to specify the manner in which the importance of the meetings industry should be stressed. Among many possibilities one can indicate for example publicised successes in securing meetings, engaging local environments in their organisation, speaking at conferences and other events that concern the nature of the sector as well as carrying out research that determines the impact of the entire meetings industry on the economy and society of a city.

2

basic

- Mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3)
- Conducting research on local meetings industry (6)
- Creating the destination meetings industry product (7)

BASIC TASKS

The tasks discussed above are the absolute minimum of CBs' key responsibilities which can be extended to include other activities, if need be. Basic tasks that also should be treated as standard activities of the studied institutions were classified as mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3), conducting research on local meetings industry (6), and creating the destination meetings industry product (7). The results of the tasks were found close to the boundaries of IPA grid quarters. For this reason recommendations in this case was not so unambiguous.

If a CB concentrates on the function of the agent, its role can be limited to submitting an offer or sending a inquiry to a local provider that meets the criteria of the organiser. This entity may also **mediate between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry (3)** as a "neutral adviser", guarantor for both parties, yet the degree of commitment depends on the CB's employees and its strategy.

Conducting research (6) was another task that was assigned to the group of the basic ones. Respondents assessed this activity differently, but its results were generally located close to the boundaries between A (concentration field) and C (trivia field), which related to a relatively high score of importance with that of realisation being much lower. Research activity may be overlooked for several reasons.

- 1) First, conducting the activity does not contribute directly to improving CBs' performance results associated with the number of meetings secured, therefore efforts should be directed at other responsibilities.
- 2) Second, it is hard to specify the scope of research that would satisfy all stakeholders. Entrepreneurs would be more interested in detailed studies to identify main segments of recipients and to analyse competition, whereas city authorities would opt for more general ones to obtain a full picture of meetings in their region.



- 3) Third, CBs may lack specialists in this respect, let alone the budget which may not be enough to finance research.

This does not change the fact, however, that such activities, if possible, should be conducted because this will provide a tool for monitoring local meetings industry market and additional arguments for stressing its significance and talks with representatives of local authorities and other entities.

Creating the destination meetings industry product (combining the local entities' offers) (7) is the last task in this group. However, this statement may have been the source of concern for respondents as to how it should be understood. This was also the case for the issue of CBs "selling cities" raised by R.B. Gartrell [1988, p. 21]. They can be interpreted in two ways, analogous to the functions that they perform:

- 1) a tour operator that creates a package by combining individual offers and then sell them as their own brand products;
- 2) commercial agent/representative who does not create their offers on their own (does not offer their own products for sale) but sells other entities' goods and services proposing those that should meet customer expectations to the greatest extent.

The first solution should be excluded because CBs are then professional congress organisers (PCO) or a similar entity and lose their neutrality that stems from their non-profit profile. Sales conducted by CBs should be conducted as in the second of the cases presented. A task consisting in creating a complex offer should also be understood in this way. CBs should gather information about particular suppliers' offers and make them available on their websites, catalogues or other promotional materials, and first of all to find out what resources and potential they have to secure meetings. Thanks to this, performance of tasks 1 and 2 should be more efficient.

3

supplementary

- Cooperating with other convention bureaux (4)
- Providing direction for local meetings industry's development (5)
- Coordinating local meetings industry's activities and creating local cooperation environment (8)
- Mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (11)
- Mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government (10)

SUPPLEMENTARY TASKS

CBs' other activities were classified as supplementary, which means that they should be undertaken by entities that have enough resources or if the situation of the meetings industry requires it in a particular city. The results of tasks that involved cooperating with other convention bureaux (4) and mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (11) were more often than not found in the trivia field (quarter C). Coordinating local meetings industry's activities and creating local cooperation environment (8) was usually given too much attention (D), and the most diverse recommendations were noted for providing direction for local meetings industry's development (5).

Low scores for **cooperating with other convention bureaux (4)** come as a surprise because it could be assumed that cooperation should take place at least with a CB on a national level to promote a given country efficiently and help secure meetings for particular cities [Crouch & Weber 2002, p. 70],

although such an organisational solution is not used for example in the USA. In addition, cities are more and more often undertaking cooperation when seeking to organise subsequent editions of a specific meeting. Apparently, this phenomenon is not widespread as yet.

The task that was certainly given the lowest scores was **mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (11)**, among which for example financial and cultural institutions were mentioned. Among all the activities listed on the questionnaire that was the least precise because of the variety of entities that they can include. Moreover, in CB's everyday operations there is no need to cooperate with local entities other than city authorities and meetings industry entrepreneurs or such contacts are so rare that they do not require a lot of attention.

Another problem is that cultural institutions are usually public entities dependent on local government. Therefore, it may be enough to establish relationships with representatives of the industry and local authorities.

Differences in assessing a task consisting in **providing direction for local meetings industry's development (5)** may stem from different positions adopted by individual CBs in cities that they represent. If these entities are strong in their local community, they may be considered the leader that will adopt a strategy of development of the industry considering its needs, all stakeholders' goals and that has appropriate resources (human resources, financial resources and established relationships with entities that make up the industry) in order to realise it. A different situation may also be the case. City authorities, PCOs and conference facilities representative is the leader with a CB only supporting it. In such a situation, the entities mentioned may easily replace CBs as concerns fulfilling this function. In turn, when a CB does not have an established position in a city, and its employees are only securing partners for cooperation and inform what a CB deals with, it is hard to expect for the entity to provide direction for the development of the industry.

In most cases **coordinating activities** in the sector as well as **creating local cooperation environment (8)** were seen as a task to which too much attention was paid. The efforts may have not produced the desired effects. In addition, completion of such action greatly depends on a particular city's situation. If roles of individual entities that contribute to the development of local industry are clear, their competences do not overlap and the need for cooperation is obvious because of the possibility of attaining individual and common goals, then CBs' coordination and help in this respect is not needed or only a little support suffices. Although the local market is not so mature, local meetings industry has not been developing for a long time, and especially individual entities have not yet established mutual relationships, it may be necessary for CBs to perform the described task in order to secure meetings.

EVOLUTIONS OF ROLES OF CONVENTION BUREAUX

As was confirmed, the functions of agent and marketer prevail over other roles performed by CBs. At the same time virtually all tasks should be considered secondary to passive and active securing of meetings, because both promotional activities, supporting cooperation and shaping relationships among local entities should finally contribute to increasing the number of meetings organised in cities. Performing the remaining roles by a CB will then probably be dependent on the degree of development and situation in the meetings industry, which may at least partly change the hierarchy of these institutions' tasks over time. It is shown in Fig. 15, which adapts the life cycle model of a tourist region according to R. Butler [1980]. Depending on the number of international meetings in a city, or a level of development of the local meetings industry, CBs' individual roles may gain or lose in significance.

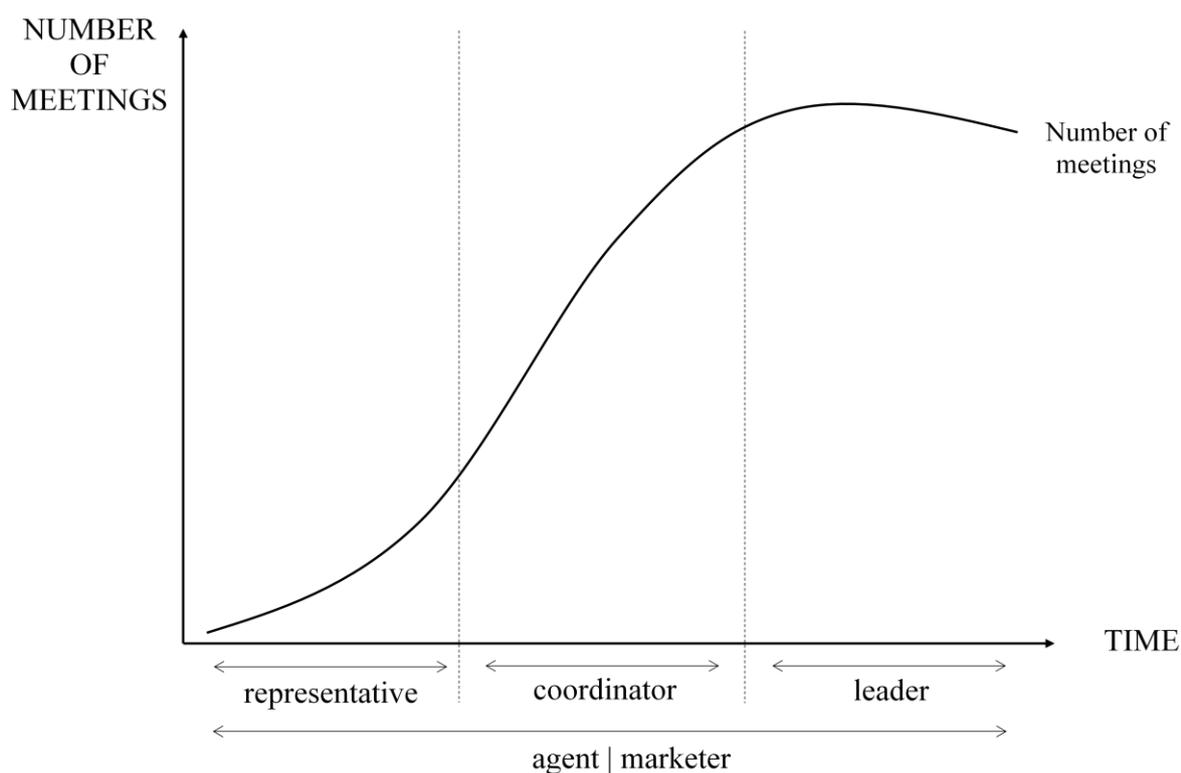


Fig. 15. Roles of convention bureaux vs. the life cycle of cities as meetings destinations

Source: own elaboration based on: Butler 1980

The function of image developer (marketer) should go hand in hand with the priority role of the agent from the very beginning of a CB operating in a city. At the initial stage of the entity's operation and local meetings industry development, the function of mediator may become important to show what CBs deal with in general and that the described industry should be treated on a par with other sectors of the economy. Gradually, this role should lose its significance to the role of coordinator that unites various entities and activities as part of one industry. It is all the more justified, because as the number of meetings and participants rise, the number of engaged entities and scope of their activities should also go up, therefore coordination may turn out to be necessary to ensure positive results. In turn, as time goes by, CBs may establish a strong position to be treated as the leader. Especially that reaching or exceeding the critical value, it will be necessary to specify further action. In order to have this achieved, regular market research studies should be carried out to define the critical moment and then the necessary steps.

The presented scenario of developing the meetings industry and CBs' roles does not of course mean that the discussed functions have to evolve exactly in the same way on particular cycle stages in all cities. It may turn out, for example, that CBs will perform the role of a leader more quickly or they will never attain such a position. In Fig. 15, it is stressed which tasks have greater significance at a specific development stage without diminishing the importance of the activities assigned to other functions. However, in each period the role of agent together with the function of marketer should be given the highest priority.

DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

The number of international meetings was considered as the stage in the development of the meetings industry and competitiveness of a city in this market, because securing a meeting means that a given city was the best against a number of criteria [see e.g. Crouch and Ritchie 1998; Nelson and Rys 2000; Getz 2003; UNWTO and ETC 2015]. It was decided to use the ICCA ranking, because it is public, transparent, and includes a large number of cities¹.

SELECTION OF CITIES

The 2015 ICCA ranking included 430 cities in which at least five international meetings had taken place. Because of the goal of the research, the cities were divided into more homogeneous groups that made it possible to draw conclusions between entities with different number of international meetings. It also stemmed from the great variability of the community, because the average number of meetings equalled 24 and the standard

Criteria according to which meetings were considered by ICCA:

- 1) min. 50 participants
- 2) rotation of the location in which meetings were organised among at least three countries
- 3) meetings are held on a regular basis

deviation stood at 31. For this reason cities were divided into groups, and the multiple of the arithmetic average (Table 3) was taken as boundary values. Six groups were created in this way. It should be noted that group I cities, at the top of the ranking, with the number of meetings exceeding 96

accounting for only 4% of the population as many as $\frac{1}{4}$ of all international meetings was organised. Cities with the least number of meetings, however, that comprised more than a half of the population were host to only 16% of the events mentioned (Table 3).

¹ The ICCA ranking also has drawbacks, because the same significance is attached to meetings in which 50 and 5 types of people took place. In addition, if an event is organised for the first or second time, it will not be included on the list.

A similar list developed by the Union of International Associations (UIA) provides an alternative to the ICCA ranking. This ranking concentrates on meetings organised by organisations rather than associations and each event is assigned to one of the three categories (A, B or C) that differ as to the criteria to determine a given meeting as international [UIA 2015]. Actually the list includes more cities than the ICCA list (because the list may have a city with at least one organised meeting), but the UIA ranking is not widely available.

Table 3. Division of cities into groups

Group	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Average (x)		4x = 96	3x = 72	2x = 48	x = 24	½x = 12
Ranges	above 96	73 - 96	49 - 72	25 - 48	13 - 24	5 * - 12
Percentage of cities	4.19%	3.26%	4.88%	13.26%	22.33%	52.09%
Percentage of meetings	25.04%	11.60%	12.26%	18.81%	16.01%	16.28%

*The ranking included cities in which at least 5 international meetings were organised.

Source: own elaboration

Then it was determined in how many of the 430 cities CBs operated. In a web engine the phrase "city name + convention bureau" was searched. Further, it was verified whether a particular website is conducted by a CB or a similar entity, and then contact data were searched to send a questionnaire. Urban and regional CBs were included and the only exception applied to Malta because of the small area of the country. If the first 10 search results had no results that met the above criteria, it was assumed that a no CB functioned in a given city (which is justified, because its functions can be taken over by a national CB or for example a local congress facility).

For the 430 cities found on the ranking it was found that a CB operates (or operated) in 315 of them. 92% (or 290 entities) were sent a questionnaire because contact data were obtained for this number of institutions. At the end of June and at the beginning of July 2016 an e-mail with an attached questionnaire was sent to CBs' managers as experts in local meetings industry and CB operation. The questionnaire was sent to all institutions on the list because of the expected low percentage of responses characteristic of an Internet questionnaire [Kaczmarczyk 2011].

ANALYSIS METHOD

The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

- 1) **proper part** referring to respondents' opinions on CBs (listed in Table 4.):
 - how important these tasks are in the functioning of each CB
 - to what extent they are realised by an entity, whose respondent is represented by
- 2) **a grid** comprising questions about:
 - the full name of a CB,
 - the year in which the CB was set up,
 - the position of the respondent in the CB,
 - type of events secured by the CB,
 - the CBs' organizational form,
 - the number of the CB's employees,
 - the CB's yearly budget,
 - the CBs' organizational structure.

Table 4. Roles and tasks of convention bureaux

No	Task	CB's role
1	Answering the inquiries of events organisers/hosts	Agent Vendor
2	Searching for request for proposals and making bids	
3	Mediating between events organisers/hosts and entrepreneurs from local meetings industry	
4	Cooperating with other convention bureaux	
5	Providing direction for local meetings industry's development	Leader
6	Conducting research on local meetings industry	
7	Creating the destination meetings industry product (combining the local entities' offers)	Coordinator
8	Coordinating local meetings industry's activities and creating local cooperation environment	
9	Indicating the importance of meeting industry in a city	Representative Mediator
10	Mediating between local meetings industry entrepreneurs and local government	
11	Mediating between entrepreneurs in local meetings industry and related industries (e.g. finance, culture, recreation)	
12	Promoting the destination meetings industry product	Marketer Image Developer

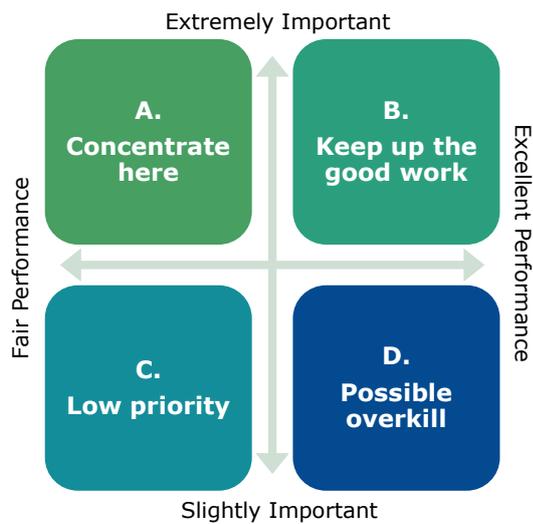
Source: own elaboration

The list of CBs' tasks was prepared based on the literature of the subject. Each task was assigned to one of the top five rules (Table 4) that a CB can play in the local meetings industry and city isolated also based on analysis of the literature of the subject. These functions include:

- 1) that of **agent**/vendor that represents their city outside its borders, especially when it comes to securing meetings;
- 2) that of **leader** that guides the development of the local meetings industry;
- 3) that of **coordinator** that integrates action of entities that make up the local meetings industry;
- 4) that of **representative**/mediator that lobbies for the meetings industry in the city;
- 5) **marketer**/image developer responsible for promoting cities as locations for meetings.

Respondents assessed the importance and performance of tasks on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 referring to an insignificant task realised to a small extent and 5 referring to a really significant task and completed to a large extent. Such a structure of the questionnaire makes it possible to use the **Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) method**, which was originally developed to measure customer satisfaction treated as a function of two elements: *importance* and *performance* of particular attributes of specific products and services [Martilla and James 1977]. The method is currently being used in e.g. competitiveness studies or research into the attractiveness of tourist regions [Enright & Newton 2004; Caber, Albayrak & Matzler 2012; Mihalic 2013], and the determination of a city's attractiveness in the meetings market [Go & Zhang 1997]. In this case, the method was used to assess the tasks conducted by a CB.

The essence of the IPA method boils down to calculating the average score of importance and performance for each task placed on the graph called the IPA grid [Martilla and James 1977]. In the study, the boundaries of the quarters of the grid were determined by the point of intersection of arithmetic averages of the average validity and implementation score. Four fields were produced in this way. Placing results on them indicates that for each task one of the following courses of action was taken:



- E. Concentrate here
- F. Keep up the good work
- G. Low priority
- H. Possible overkill

Analysing the results, one should concentrate mainly on quarters A and D, because they entail taking new steps (quitting efforts or initiating or intensifying activities in specific areas) rather than continuing current activities, as is the case for B and C.

Supplementing of the above interpretation may allow determining the line with an incline of 45 degrees. It combines points with the same score for importance and performance, therefore results above this line should be given priority, because they are characterised by a higher score for importance rather than performance [Biesok and Wyród-Wróbel 2015].



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