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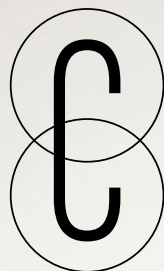
# THE RISE & REMAIN OF DIGITAL-FIRST ASSOCIATIONS

VOLUME 1 | VOLUME 2 | VOLUME 3 | **2022 VOLUME 4**

BUILDING  
BACK BETTER

DIVERSITY:  
A TWO-WAY STREET

THE EXECUTIVE  
BURNOUT II



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# The Path to Net Zero Associations

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As the world continues emerging from the pandemic, it seems that sustainability has been placed centre stage again. If the demand side of things appears to be a bit lagging behind – we’ve heard recently (and on numerous occasions) that associations need to first cover the basics when organizing events before the sustainability conversation can take place – the supplier side has taken things into their own hands.

This is why it’s more relevant now than ever that the Joint Meetings Industry Council – the organization that represents the combined interests of major international meetings industry associations – launched the Net Zero Carbon Events initiative as a way to bring the sector into the growing global movement to reach net zero by 2050.

The project, which debuted last year, aims to develop a framework for the industry to reduce emissions by 2030 (and work toward net-zero by 2050), as well as establish ways to measure the industry’s total greenhouse emissions and report progress on its goals. Its roadmap for the events industry will fittingly launch at COP27, at Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt, on 11 November – Decarbonisation Day.

Some 225 operators have signed the Net Zero Carbon Events Pledge since its debut, and, by the end of 2023, have committed to publishing their organization’s pathway to

achieve net zero by 2050 (at the latest), with an interim target to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030.

The business events industry has often been criticized as a huge carbon emission generator because of its reliance on travel. It’s essential that major industry players get together to chart a path to a more sustainable future. A positive side effect of the pandemic was a (momentary) decrease in air and other travel, but we’re quickly noticing that the world is nearly back to where it was. If you have travelled lately, you’ve probably realized that, indeed, not much has changed.

This is why we believe that associations have a crucial role to play. Those who represent industries that are big carbon emission generators have already shown goodwill. Others – and not only the industry organizations – could sign the Net Zero Carbon Events Pledge, following the lead of IEEE, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), who is even funding the initiative.

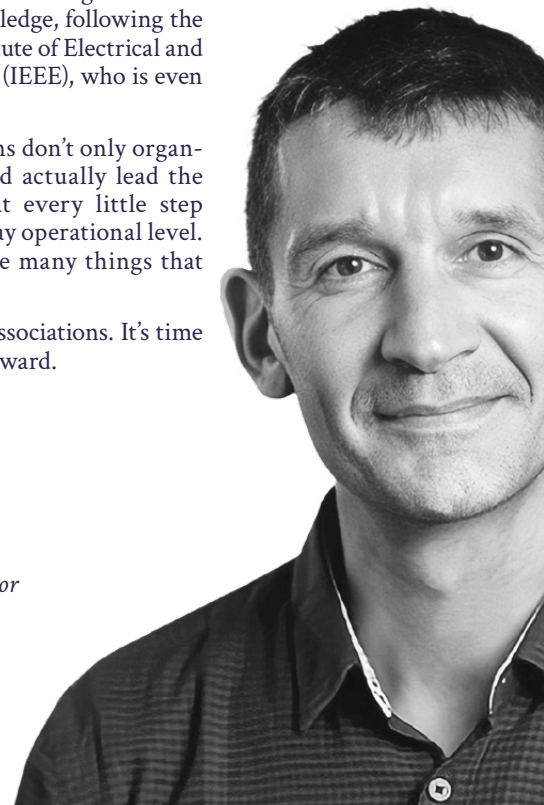
And, since associations don’t only organize events, they could actually lead the way in showing that every little step counts, on a day-to-day operational level. In that area, there are many things that still need to be done.

This is a call to you, associations. It’s time to take a giant step forward.



*Céline Volz*

Founder &  
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*Remy Dève*

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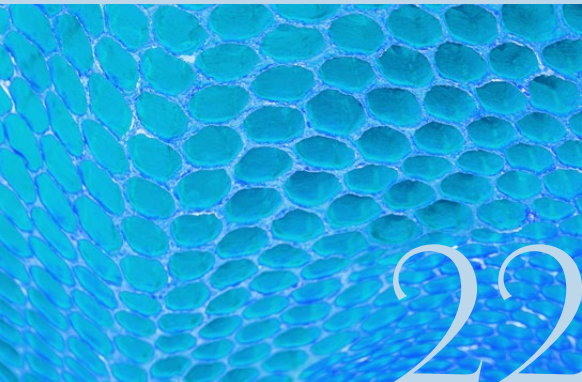
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Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC, reflects on what it means to be digital for associations that have different means and formats.

# Looking at Association Membership in Another Way

For her first contribution to Boardroom, author, speaker, strategist, and futurist **Sarah Sladek** gives a refreshed perspective on association membership and tackles the concept with the mind of both a sociologist and a demographer.

Work as we know it isn't working. High turnover. Increased conflict and generational tug-of-wars. Retirement waves. There's more disruption and disengagement at work than ever before.

Why should membership organizations concern themselves with workforce trends? Because workforce trends influence membership trends. The two are undeniably intertwined, yet workforce is rarely addressed in membership research and often treated as something else entirely.

Meanwhile, resignations and retirement waves continue to destabilize membership communities.

In an era of disruption, it's easy for leaders to become transfixed on navigating the present and miss key market shifts and trends reshaping the way members measure value or define community. This is an unfortunate misstep with unfortunate outcomes.

To start the process of shifting course, here are three workforce trends I see directly aligned with, and capable of influencing membership engagement behaviors for years to come.

## 1. OWNERSHIP VS. ACCESS

For centuries, society valued the concept of ownership. Possessions were symbols of status – cars, houses, land, and jewelry. The general idea was to work hard, save money, and acquire more money to buy more stuff.

Then, in 1982, the migration to access began with the arrival of the home computer. Since then, what's treasured most is 24/7 access to assets via technology.

For decades, many employers and associations merely dipped their toes into sea of opportunities opened by technology. Then COVID-19 happened and the demand for access skyrocketed when the world shut down and catapulted everyone into a tech-reliant environment.





Despite the 40-year shift towards greater access, some leaders re-opened after the shutdown and began to push for a return to the past. This is creating controversy and divide. Undoubtedly, the organizations demanding a return to the office or veering away from virtual will be viewed as change-resistant and exclusive and will struggle to keep pace in this access-driven market.

Consider the membership model in and of itself. Most associations use a model which asks members to pay dues for an entire year. This is an ownership approach – invest into a membership, paying for it in full and in advance.

In the past, members were willing to wait for access to events, information, and community, but in an access-driven market the last thing members want to do is wait for anything. Associations that continue to operate with an ownership mindset will find themselves under increasing pressure to deliver value and will struggle to keep members engaged.

Members expect on-demand, 24/7, ready-access to products, services, networks, and experiences, and to be part of a community that serves a global and remote audience. The association of today is expected to be accessible to all, always.

## 2. LOYALTY VS. BELONGING

*“They have no work ethic. Kids these days aren’t reliable. They’re quitters.”*

As with the transition to access, the transition to belonging has been bubbling up over the past several decades and hit a place of no return during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For past generations, the contract of work implied companies would reward loyalty with progression and pay. However, this arrangement began to break down in the 1980s. Downsizing, layoffs, and mergers reduced job security and the foundation of loyalty began to crack.

In the 1990s, the concept of job hopping emerged. Young professionals began moving quickly from one opportunity to the next and this garnered them a reputation for having a lack of loyalty. But research told another story – young people were willing to commit when meaningful relationships were actively present.

Fast forward to 2021. The Great Resignation becomes an economic trend as millions of employees voluntarily resign from their jobs, largely due to inflexible work arrangements, disengagement, and hostile work environments.

Here and now, the message is clear. Belonging matters. Being included. Having a voice and a seat at the table. Accepted. Respected. No strings attached.

Hierarchical models survived for centuries but are no longer relevant or sustainable. In the workforce, there is ample evidence companies with inclusive, diverse leadership are considerably

more profitable than companies with homogenous leadership. Associations need to take note and reformat their boards to allow for the participation of members from all ages and backgrounds.

When organizations focus on belonging and make efforts to make room for all, the disengagement and decline will subside.

## 3. LEGACY VS. ACCOUNTABILITY

Associations were founded on the premise that certain rules needed to be followed and traditions upheld. Everything ran according to expectations, process, and hierarchy. Protecting the legacy was important. This controlled approach left little room for innovation or change. It also silenced the member voices.

Legacy-based thinking backs organizations into a corner, demanding shyness and conformity at a time when people are calling upon organizations for leadership and activism.

In the absence of leadership, people have raised their voices for change. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which has been tracking protests globally, reports that 110 countries have experienced significant protests since 2017.

In fact, cancel culture, protests, boycotts, and walk-outs are more prominent now than at any other time in history, holding people accountable for propagating racist and sexist ideas, toxic behaviors, and making unethical, immoral decisions without any concern for others.

Generation Z (1996-2009) are the teens and early 20-somethings who introduced the concept of cancel culture and became largely renowned for holding up the mirror to society. They will hold your association accountable. Expect it. They will also expect your association to hold others accountable.

The legacy mindset rests on its laurels and remains firmly situated in the past. In contrast, the accountability mindset takes a stand, ushers up a call to action, and prioritizes change.

In short, the future is rooted in accessibility, belonging, and accountability. This is what members want associations to provide, and what employees want employers to provide. Make it a priority to observe the trends, market indicators, and values influencing the decisions to join and engage. The future is being written now, and if you’re not paying attention, you just might miss it.

*Sarah Sladek is a renowned thought leader and researcher of generational shifts, engagement trends, and change management strategies. She is the founder and CEO of XYZ University and Membership University, which recently launched a groundbreaking research initiative titled the Global Membership Health Matrix. In addition, she is the author of five books and numerous research studies, and host of the Save the Associations web show and Membership IQ podcast.*

# Burnout

## – The Executive Burnover (Part II)

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In the second part of this two-article series on burnout, special Boardroom contributor **Ole Petter Anfinssen**, Vice President of EDBAC and DBA Research Associate at Henley Business School, UK, explains how to avoid overwhelming stress and pressure in these unprecedented times.



Association leaders and senior executives are sometimes taking major risks. They are making daily choices which influence their own health and wellbeing – some of which may bring them to the edge. Hence, there are reasons for why people get ill, depending on circumstances.

At a senior executive level, one can see stress and pressure rapidly increasing as we manoeuvre through the aftermath of the pandemic. Therefore, it is

more important than ever to have a well-equipped “tool kit” to handle the pressure that comes with this new challenging climate, where one must be able to adapt and evolve along the changing environment.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES, ROUTINES AND ACTIVITIES

Here are five preventive measures to burnout which may help you to stay on top of things: 1) focus on health and wellbeing; 2) practice mindfulness and

make time for yourself; 3) stay organized and keep to-do lists; 4) celebrate wins and make sure to reward yourself; and 5) protect your private life and ensure you get time to switch off (Palwal, 2016).

In addition to the previous list several CEOs have also recommended the following: pace yourself while maintaining focus, get organized and structure yourself, do not procrastinate, stay positive, seek support, remember the



basics, take breaks and breathe, and have fun (Fleming, 2000).

Alongside these different measures I would also recommend that you have a keen focus on getting enough sleep. However, remember it's not about making big changes, it's about the small changes that one will be able to stick to as a part of a daily routine.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

I would now like to elaborate on sleep, which is crucial to our physiological and psychological wellbeing. As previously discussed, experiencing burn-out has several severe implications to one's health - and amongst many other health-related issues it may lead to sleep deprivation. Sleep is underestimated by many and a lot of us are sleeping less than what is recommended, which may decrease work performance. Subsequently, sleep deprivation may lead to hostility and decreasing self-control (Christian & Ellis, 2011).

Losing sleep and suffering from the effects of sleep deprivation does not only affect the individual, but also the team and the people we surround ourselves with (Barnes & Hollenbeck, 2009). It also has a negative impact on problem solving and decision-making (Barnes & Hollenbeck, 2009), and has even been linked to suicidal thoughts and behaviour (Littlewood, et al., 2016). Considering all this, it comes as no surprise that losing sleep is a severe health risk (Perlis, et al., 2016).

### ROI OF HEALTH

Maintaining a good health and balance is utterly important, also for our respective organizations as people create and add value - meaning they have a direct impact on business and shareholder value. So, looking after employee health is always considered a good strategic move (Quick, et al., 2000). People often ask if health provides a return on investment. As part of my job is to translate health into a financial language, the answer is yes. Focusing on health might create the competitive advantage needed in this increasingly pressured market.

But you might still be wondering: what exactly is the ROI of health? This is very well explained by Michael Critelli, former CEO of Pitney Bowes, an American technology company most known for its postage meters and other mailing equipment and service:

*"There are multiple reasons why a healthy employee produces an ROI. If you're a self-insured employer, you get the benefit of reduced health care costs. You get the benefit of reduced worker's compensation costs, reduced disability costs, both short and long term, reduced absenteeism, reduced presenteeism, which is the lack of productivity of an employee whose health is impaired, better work quality from employees that are alert on the job, better loyalty. If you treat people with respect and dignity, they will stay longer and work harder for a company that attends to their health. And better ability to recruit and retain people."* (Harvard Chan School

of Public Health and Harvard Business School, 2018).

### RULE OF THUMB

To make it simple and implement one easy routine for yourself I would give you the 8-hour rule, to stay on top of work, private life, and sleep. Work for 8 hours, do something for yourself for 8 hours, and sleep for 8 hours. There you go, your 24 hours are done (Grønn, 2018).

On a final note - don't forget to get enough sleep and pursue your passion.

*Ole Petter Anfinssen is a new, special contributor to Boardroom. He is the Vice President of the Executive DBA Council (EDBAC) and a doctoral research associate at Henley Business School. He is also the founder of Anfinssen Executive Health and Performance (AEHP) and co-author of the book Quality of Life.*

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# Diversity & Associations: A Two-Way Street

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**Giulia Mauri** and **Andréa Petemba**, lawyers at Brussels-based Kadrant law firm, share their take on diversity within the association Boards and how they believe that the Boards and the industries they represent are strictly interlinked when it comes to diversity and inclusion.





Many studies of well-reputed universities and consultancy firms have been written on the advantages of having a diverse Board. According to these studies, including people of different age, race, gender, culture and professional and socio-economic backgrounds in a workplace brings different perspectives and increases creativity, productivity and innovation, which overall allow any company or association to grow and be more successful.

The predicament of these studies is easy: one of the keys for an innovative Board is diversity. But what does it mean to have a diverse Board? Diversity is usually interpreted as being linked to factors mentioned above, but its deep meaning is to create Boards where people with very unique characteristics bring new opinions, ideas and perspectives to the table, which leads to a change in the dynamic of the Board.

If an increase in diversity at Board level contributes to creating a stimulating debate, this, however, makes the functioning of the Board less smooth and more “challenging”. Indeed, an even Board would make decisions in a very efficient manner since its members would easily agree with each other. In a Board composed of individuals who are very diverse, points that need to be discussed might stimulate a range of viewpoints that will have to be taken into account before any decision can be made.

## DIVERSITY & THE ASSOCIATION WORLD

The fundamental purpose of an association is to represent the interests of its members, whether large multinationals active in a specific sector or individuals pursuing goals such as defending the environment, advancing consumers’ protection or helping people in need.

In this context, the role of the Board is to be the voice of the community it represents and therefore to bring forward whatever projects the association is working on, on behalf of its members.

The members of the Board are elected and chosen from among the membership base of the association. In trade associations, for example, it is extremely frequent that the Board members are the CEOs or individuals who sit on managerial positions in their own companies. They contribute their expertise and knowledge of the industry for a purpose other than solely promoting their own organization: they sit on the association’s Board as representative and in the interest of an industry.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DIVERSITY?

Often, this means that the Board of an association is a mirror of the status of the industry or sector it represents. And, in particular, it is a mirror of the diversity achieved by that industry or sector at a high managerial level.

We still remember the story of this association whose directors were the CEOs of large multinationals. They were all men, white and in their fifties and met once a year in a ranch in the US where

they would hunt, played golf, eat and have lots of conversations about the future of their industry. When the first woman was appointed CEO of one of their members, the Board panicked. The presence of a woman at their yearly meetings meant that they had to rethink the format of their gatherings. And not only that: diversity made its way into their industry, and it was catching up with them!

## HOW TO BRING DIVERSITY TO THE BOARD?

In the past years, we have witnessed an increased awareness in associations about the importance of bringing on board individuals who can contribute new perspectives on the sector they represent.

In a fast-changing world, where new technology, trends and sensitivities are constantly evolving, it has become apparent that, for an industry to be able to represent its interests at association level, it is necessary to bring on board people who can appreciate and foresee where their field of work is going.

We have witnessed a real need at Board level for people who can bring refreshed perspectives, ones that can insure that the association stays in tune with the constant developments and changes of the industry it is the voice of.

The Boards of several associations we work with have understood that they are the reflection of their industry and managed to be so forward-looking to realize that, if diversity is unable to arrive at Board level, it is because it is not sufficiently present in the industry they represent.

On the basis of this acknowledgement, several associations have put in place programs to promote diversity within the sectors they are active in. We have seen the creation and implementation of initiatives with various goals such as attracting young talents, promoting women in roles that are usually male dominated and making the relevant industry more attractive to minorities.

## TRICKLING DOWN

If it is true that diversity trickles down at Board level only after having made its way in the industry it represents, it is also true that Board members, who usually have large expertise in a specific field and sit on managerial roles in their own organizations, are generally recognizing the value of diversity and actively trying to promote it within their own industry.

It seems to us that diversity in associations is a two-way street: from the industry to the Board and vice-versa.

*Giulia Mauri and Andréa Petemba are lawyers at Kadrant, a Brussels based law firm with a strong specialization in the not-for-profit sector. Their knowledge is not only linked to their work advising associations, but also to their participation in the activities of various associations as board member or chair of various working committees. More information on [www.kadranllaw.com](http://www.kadranllaw.com).*

# Alleviating the Financial Burden of Associations

As the world enters a new era of its existence, uncertainty has forced associations to review the way they operate. At the core of their sustainability lie their finances and the way they manage their cash flow. In that regard, the Netherlands have come up with a special Fund designed to reduce the risks they take when they organize events. Project leader **Paul Gruijthuijsen** and **Eric Bakermans**, Director Marketing Meetings and Conventions, Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions, tell Boardroom all about it.

*Interview Remi Deve*



**Can you (re)introduce the Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF) to the readers of Boardroom who might not be familiar with it?**

*Paul Gruijthuijsen:* The VGF is an independent foundation set up in the late 1980s. Our aim is to take away or reduce any financial concerns conference organizers might have when starting the initial preparations of an international conference in the Netherlands. In order to support them, we've founded the VGF in which you will find two schemes, the Pre-financing scheme and the Guarantee scheme.

With the Pre-financing scheme we offer some financial support in the beginning of the organization of the conference when the first invoices need to be settled, but no money has come in

yet as registration has not begun. To bridge that financial gap we offer a free-of-charge rent-free loan, designed for organizers to do, for instance, a down payment on the venue or start some marketing activities such as building a website or creating brochures and first announcements.

The Guarantee scheme offers a sort of financial insurance, also at no costs whatsoever, in case the conference ends up having fewer delegates than anticipated, resulting in a financial deficit for the association. By offering a financial guarantee (up to € 90.000) we hope to bring some financial reassurance. In case of a loss on the conference budget, the VGF will cover the loss up to the agreed upon amount.

These two schemes can be used separately or combined.



Of course, there are some conditions, but these are far more favorable in comparison to the often-extensive exclusion list a professional event or congress assurance offer. These are:

- The conference needs to take place in the Netherlands
- It needs to be a multiple day conference where exchange of knowledge is the focus
- The organization is handled by a party that has considerable experience in organizing international conferences
- The application needs to be done eight months prior to the conference

The amount for Pre-Financing or Guarantee depends on the budget and the history of the conference.

#### **In what ways can it help the Netherlands' recovery plan?**

*Eric Bakermans:* It's a part of something bigger, next to what the Netherlands already has to offer. The advantage lies in the fact that a certain amount of financial security is offered, both before and after the congress. It's fairly unique in the world as far as we know and the conditions are fairly easy to meet. In particular it's attractive to the somewhat smaller-size congresses or start-up events as those do not have so much financial room for maneuver.

*Paul Gruijthuijsen:* Often I get asked why the Netherlands offers such a thing, and what is the catch? Sometimes people have a hard time believing me, when I say our services are free of charge. They feel that there must be a hidden agenda. But there is none. And the reason why we offer these schemes for free is very logical. We know that the more international business visitors come to the Netherlands the better it is for our economy. Hosting international conferences in the Netherlands, creates jobs in the Netherlands and generate a great economic impact.

#### **We assume you have received great feedback so far...**

*Paul Gruijthuijsen:* We often ask our clients for feedback. We believe it's more credible to share their experiences then for us to claim how "good" we are. Clients vary from PCOs to scientists and academics working at the various universities and academic knowledge institutions in our country.

Professor N.M. Nico van Straalen, member of the Local Organizing Committee of the XVI<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Toxicology hosted in Maastricht last September said that

*"A loan from the VGF was an indispensable factor for starting up the organization of our congress and turn it into a success."*

#### **Do you focus on any specific sector when you bid for conferences?**

*Eric Bakermans:* The Netherlands strives to create integrated joint solutions across sectors through partnership between government, companies and research and knowledge institutions. This approach, known as 'Triple Helix' has proven to be quite successful. To maintain top-level engagement in helping the world to solve global challenges, all businesses in the Netherlands are engaged in nine key sectors nominated by the Dutch government. These include agriculture & food, horticulture, water & maritime, energy, high-tech systems & materials, creative industries, chemistry, life sciences & health, and logistics.

*Paul Gruijthuijsen:* The VGF is there to support any international conference, regardless the subject. Whether it is a large scientific meeting of over 1,000 delegates on for instance "Obesity" or a smaller academic conference on "Fungi", everybody can submit an application to benefit from it.

#### **In general, what would you say to associations who don't know what the Netherlands can do for them?**

*Eric Bakermans:* The Netherlands aims to maintain and grow its status as an innovative knowledge economy. To achieve this, carrying out research and stimulating innovation is vital. The Dutch government spends more than €4.5 billion on science every year. Dutch scientific research ranks among the best in the world and the government is taking measures to maintain this status. The government also aims at encouraging scientific research to address the challenges society and industry face. About 25% of research takes place at universities, about 15% at research institutes and most - about 60% - within commercial enterprises. If you are aiming for a conference on research, technology & science, the Netherlands can offer a wide array of opportunities.

In other words, our offers a perfect breeding ground for associations to grow - not only through their congresses alone but as entities operating in a rich ecosystem.

To know more about the **Pre-financing & Guarantee Fund (VGF)** get in touch with [paul@vgfholland.nl](mailto:paul@vgfholland.nl) or visit them at Booth F30 during IBTM Barcelona.





Building Back Better Series

# Sport as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development: The Ball is Now in Our Court

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Reflecting on the many changes we have had to cope with because of the pandemic, the way we address sports and physical activity is definitely in the top ten. On the negative side, facilities welcomed less people at a time (if any at all) depriving people of exercise; sporting events and supply chains were disrupted; professional athlete development was impacted. My optimistic view, though, sees the resilience of physical activity as most people took up informal and unorganized sport and recreation activities, such as cycling and exercising outdoors. In this article of our Building Back Better series we will examine how sports are a tool to create a better society for future generations.

*Words Vicky Koffa*



For long, sport - team, individual, organized or not, both from a viewer's or athlete's point of view - has been considered mainly as a form of entertainment, as secondary in the priorities one should set in their life. In the last decade and in the framework of compliance with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the immense potential of sport has been acknowledged more and has proven to be an *'enabler of social sustainable development'* (according to the [UN General Assembly's draft resolution](#) adopted in December 2020). As more and more organizations become involved in the SDG's, sporting associations follow the pattern to change the game towards a more sustainable sector.

## THE BENEFITS OF SPORTS

The first thing that comes to mind is a healthier population. Regular physical activity helps with the prevention of non-communicable diseases as bodies get fitter. It also promotes healthier lifestyles among the young (healthy food consumption, sleep patterns) teaching them that being active is important. A healthy body results in a healthy mind: mental health and development are impacted positively as self-esteem grows in a strong body.

What makes the case stronger is that physical activity knows no boundaries. Race, age, money, gender, culture, religion, and disability can only affect the 'how' but not the 'if'. Sport is highly adaptive in any circumstances and, therefore, as inclusive as it gets. It has the power to overcome prejudice and misconceptions and lead to a truly inclusive society. This inclusion creates a sense of belonging, a community focusing on a common interest rather than its differences. Which is why, going further, sport is considered as peace bringer.

The reach of well-being is more impressive when looking at minority groups in the field. People with disabilities, older persons, children, and women get (or should get) equal opportunities in enjoying an active lifestyle. Without the feeling of being left out, such groups are empowered physically and mentally, leading to a more confident and less violent society.

Furthermore, according to [EU research](#), *"sport has been shown to contribute to the attractiveness and touristic potential of countries and regions, to provide opportunities for innovation and ICT development, and deliver solutions to major social challenges, such as implementing environmentally friendly transport systems."*

Major organizations like the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) actively believe in the power of sport. *"Sport has a way of bridging any potential gap in an incredible way similar to art and music. It can be used as a tool to educate individuals and especially youth regarding any relevant social issue, including sustainability.*

*We believe this has to be done as a joint action and not as two separate components. While playing their favorite sport, youths are interested and engaged and this can be utilized to better their own future while slowly integrating aspects relevant to sustainability."* says Theren Bullock Jr, Foundation Manager of FIBA's Basketball For Good.

## DEVELOP SPORT TO DEVELOP SOCIETY

Strangely enough, despite the obvious gains, the sport sector did not receive in the past enough attention on a policy level. In order to harness all its benefits, sport needs support to become in itself more sustainable. A clustered approach between governments is essential to acknowledge its impact and establish new partnerships between different sectors and economic domains. Through these, new public and private financing solutions can be unlocked for sport activities (e.g., redistribution of revenue derived from professional sports to lower levels of the sport chain).

Another key solution is to digitalize sport further. More online platforms can be envisaged to provide easy access on two fronts: on the one hand to promote sport activities as more viewers gather around major events (community creation); and on the other, to promote the value of sport by offering online exercising and healthier lifestyles.

Science and innovation can also be avenues to create the right infrastructure (transport to training, adapted training equipment) for the disabled, for example, to be able to participate in more activities, may that be actively or as viewers. Merging sports and science can unlock powerful potential synergies and is vital to improving the performance of all athletes.

Not to forget the basis of everything, education. FIBA has created a Foundation to be their social and legacy arm to create and implement Basketball For Good projects globally using basketball as a tool to create positive change. Each initiative has a basketball component, which is consistent in every project, and a social component which varies depending on the relevant social issue in the country/region where it is located.

Bullock explains: *"In many cases the relevant social component is sustainability, so our next step within this awareness direction is to create a curriculum combining the two. We will have a program linking grassroots basketball development, but each drill and game will be linked to some form of sustainability education divided in 10 modules. This program will then be able to be introduced into Physical Education classes around the world in collaboration with the respective National Basketball Federation and the Ministry of Education."*

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## DEVELOP SPORT TO DEVELOP THE ENVIRONMENT

Although it may not be straightforward, sport can help advance climate issues and overcome challenges. Reduction, recycling, and reuse of plastic in major events, water and electricity upgrades in stadiums, construction of sustainable transport methods to access training facilities, promotion of outdoor training are all ways to achieve environmental balance. The approach can be twofold: tangible action taken by organizations and use of sports broad reach to raise awareness.

Action has started: the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2024 and 45% by 2030. The UN is facilitating this action through its Sports for Climate Action initiative, where sports organizations and their stakeholders can join to find support in creating change and guidance on how to raise awareness. Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the EU, the "Sport for All and the Environment" (SforAE) project is raising an awareness about the benefits of implementing ecological behavior in sport for all.

Associations can make a difference here implementing in their regulations actions for staff and members to reduce carbon footprint, following the example of the Quebec provincial cycling federation, *Fédération québécoise des sports cyclistes*. The organization has launched internal policies of eco-responsibility for employees as well as concrete guidelines for organizing more sustainable events with three levels of green certification. Likewise, the *Green Sports Alliance* is an environmentally-focused trade organization that convenes stakeholders from around the sporting world to promote healthy, sustainable communities where we live and play. Members are reducing waste, conserving energy and water, and eliminating toxic chemicals, among many other ongoing initiatives and accomplishments.

## PROJECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Governments and organizations saw the bigger picture and have created all sorts of collaborations to include sport in Building Back Better. UNESCO's *Fit for Life* supports inclusive and integrated policy making and enhances the well-being of youth around the world through data driven sport interventions.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the EU, the Sport For Sustainable Development project is a collaboration between 5 partners from 3 continents: the *European Sports NGO (ENGSO Youth)* as the coordinator, Hungarian University of Physical Education, Sport and Citizenship, National Olympic Committee of Senegal and Kokushikan University of Japan. The objectives include up-skill youth sport trainers,

gather information on good practices and provide learning and mobility opportunities for disadvantaged young people, among others.

*International Cycling Union* promotes sustainable innovative mobility through collaborations with Autonomy Digital (in 2020) and concrete actions and campaigns shown on its dedicated webpage *Cycling For All*. The association recently approved modifications to its regulations aimed at allowing refugee athletes to take part in major events with the status of "refugee athlete" and a new action on the climate. UCI President David Lappartient said: *"I am delighted by the progress made to strengthen cycling's universality, through the creation of the status of refugee athlete; and its contribution to sustainable development, with the adoption of a UCI Climate Action Charter."*

## ASSOCIATIONS ARE EVER PRESENT

The boundless potential of associations strikes yet again. In their role as conference organizers, they gather academia, government and industry under one roof to advance not only the interests of sport, but also the promotion of its benefits towards a more sustainable world. Improvement of the sports sector can positively impact other economic fields (tourism, urban regeneration, employment etc.) and associations are usually in the middle of such intersectoral collaborations.

New connections and partnerships formed before, during or after association events or other networking activities (such as campaigns and international projects) attract valuable funding. The more active a sports association is, the more partnerships it forges and the more funding opportunities it may receive.

Finally, associations have the 'shout-out' power: large events spread the message worldwide with the right awareness activities tied to an upcoming conference. Besides, they can capitalize on the popularity of certain professional athletes and use them as ambassadors to promote the value of sport.

This article is graciously sponsored by *Business Events Scotland*, whose values align with the Building Back Better concept.







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FEATURE

# The Rise & Remain of Digital-First Associations

Becoming a digital-first organization is not something that happens overnight. It often requires a sea change in the way you think. It means reconsidering every aspect of an association, from the tools employees use for the simplest of everyday tasks to your entire organizational structure – with always one thing in mind: the interests of and the benefits for your members. In this special feature, our wealth of contributors explores just that and gives pride of place to inspiring case studies and good food for thoughts.



# A Leader's Role in a Digital-First Strategy

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Successful digital transitions don't happen in a vacuum. They require leaders who have a clear picture of what needs doing, and the ability to get others behind it. This article, written by **Mark Athitakis**, is part of a content-sharing agreement between the American Society of Association Executives and Boardroom.

It's a truism that leaders aren't supposed to know every last detail of how the organization is running. You weren't hired to upgrade the AMS or price out the F&B expenses for your association's next conference. But that not-my-job posture can easily become a blind spot. Not thinking about the details of your association's digital positioning can lapse into not thinking about it at all.

That danger became clear to me while I was *[researching for a feature on what it means to be a "digital first" association]*. There are a lot of paths an association can take to becoming "digital first," as the article demonstrates. Some retooled in a hurry, and some have been working through a years-long strategy. But the common a change, and decide what the term meant for the association.

That doesn't mean software, at least not in itself. As Maddie Grant, digital strategist at the consultancy Propel, said, *"You can upgrade all of your software but not actually change how you do things."* And it may not mean finding digital solutions at all. ISACA, an international professional association focused on IT governance, made a shift during the pandemic to move more of its certification testing online—which made sense for its strategic goal of expanding its international engagement.

But as ISACA CTO Simona Rollinson explained, applying a digital solution can sometimes decrease value. In the case of the association's chapters, for instance, technology platforms are considered through the lens of creating in-person opportunities for chapters, not supplanting them. *"People may want to have that social aspect, so we've got to be careful when we design solutions,"* she said. *"Feedback from our chapters is very important to us."*

[The No BS Guide to Digital Transformation](#), a white paper published in June 2021 and coauthored by Grant and Spark

Consulting chief strategist Elizabeth Weaver Engel, CAE, stresses the importance of judiciousness and top-level engagement with digital strategy. Successful efforts, they write, come from *"a clear mandate from leadership"* and *"strong support from the C-suite (and from the board or volunteer leadership), actively providing direction and the resources for that change to happen."*

The CEO has a critical role here not just because they steer the association's direction, but because there are so many people that will need persuading—board members, staff members, other volunteers and stakeholders. As Construction Specifications Institute CEO Mark Dorsey explains in the white paper about a digital platform the association developed, *"You have to get the culture and governance right first. Your board has to be willing to change the way they make decisions and to provide the financial support you need to achieve the vision."*

And that all starts with the CEO, along with tech-staff leaders. The white paper points to a [recent report from the consultancy Altimeter](#) that shows that CEOs, along with CIOs and CTOs, are most likely to take ownership of digital transformation efforts. CEOs don't need to know every detail about what making that change entails. But they'll need the awareness of how important the transformation is, and what it will take to get an organization behind it.

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The Center for Association Leadership

# Digital First is About Shifting Your Mindset

For ESAE, **Guido Lobrano**, Senior Vice President and Director General for Europe at ITI - The Information Technology Industry Council, explains that it is only by changing the way they think about and operate in the digital realm that associations will be successful.

For many organizations, becoming a digital-first organization was a forced action brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overnight, employees and employers had to shift all operations online. For associations, this meant translating member service, often conducted through in-person meetings and engagements, to a virtual space in a seamless manner.

Like many other organizations, my association ITI, the Information Technology Industry Council, worked tirelessly to complete the transition as quickly and smoothly as possible.

## STRONG FOUNDATION

Fortunately, we had a strong foundation to build upon. As a global trade association, much of our work is already conducted virtually. Before the pandemic, our Brussels-based team regularly held remote meetings with members and stakeholders located across Europe and in other regions globally to advance policy recommendations for the technology industry.

This major transition in business strategy and employee engagement aims to strengthen connectivity while enhancing organizational performance. Associations

who embrace this mindset and culture can solve challenges quicker and better serve their members in a more streamlined fashion.

We found that the growth for digital transformation lives in digital-first mindset. When delivering services, the focus should be on creating an unparalleled experience that meets members where they are no matter their location and helps them quickly solve their problems.

One way we're able to meet this objective is by continuing to offer hybrid meetings and events for members. During the pandemic, we found that ITI can serve our members just as effectively in a digital conference room as we did in a room with four walls. As more and more people have returned to in-person engagements, we made it a priority to ensure that everyone continues to have an inclusive and valuable experience - whether they are in our office in Brussels or elsewhere. To help ITI employees navigate this new hybrid environment, ITI leadership has provided staff with extensive training with events and meeting experts to ensure we are being effective and that members are getting the most out of their time with





us. Further, ITI has invested in technical support for public events to help members leverage in-person networking opportunities while providing live-streaming capabilities for those not able to join in person.

#### ALL-INCLUSIVE APPROACH

Additionally, ITI has continued to invest and regularly upgrade software to collaborate online with and track member engagement. Working with top performing tools is critical to ensuring our members get the information and benefits they expect without being hampered by a glitch or outdated product.

Ensuring ITI employees are included in the digital-first mindset is equally important. Our President and CEO Jason Oxman spearheaded several efforts to support a hybrid workforce. Beyond structural considerations, ITI introduced new employee benefits to support a

thriving working culture at ITI. While ITI converted to remote work at the outset of the pandemic, we have since adopted a schedule that incorporates ample ad hoc telework, flexible hours, and no internal meetings on Fridays. Just as up-to-date software and equipment helps our members, it also helps staff. ITI consistently offers resources, training and products to assist staff with staying up to date on the latest technology to do their jobs effectively no matter where we are located.

Today, it is crucial for successful association leaders to be dedicated to a digital-first transformation to ensure access and productivity for their member companies and staff. The pandemic demonstrated that remote work is not a barrier to service or quality. It also proved that those associations that do not adapt a more flexible, digital first approach would fall behind.

At the same time, we should always think about digitalization as a means to enhance our association's resources and efforts to achieve these goals, and not as a goal in itself. Further, leaders must ensure we adapt the various elements of the digital transition to the specific needs of our members and the unique context in which our organization operates. This digital-first transition is here to stay. It's up to association leaders to make sure their organizations recognize this reality so that they are not left behind.

For more information about ESAE, with which Boardoom has an exclusive partnership, visit [www.esae.eu](http://www.esae.eu)





# The Success Stories of the European Academy of Allergy & Clinical Immunology

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For AC Forum, **Chiara Hartmann**, Marketing and Public Affairs Senior Specialist, EAACI, recalls how circumstances have forced her organization to enter the digital realm... and how it has grown stronger out of it.

The European Academy of Allergy & Clinical Immunology (EAACI) is an association of clinicians, researchers and allied health professionals, dedicated to improving the health of people affected by allergic diseases. EAACI's Annual Congresses are known worldwide as the largest platform for healthcare professionals and researchers to share, present and discuss the latest updates in the specialty. Usually taking place in big, buzzing venues, they attract over 8,000 delegates onsite, alongside more than 1,500 abstracts, around a wide-scope scientific program.

As the COVID-19 pandemic impacted individuals, society, and the entire world, we found ourselves seeking solutions to adapt to new challenges. Preparations for the EAACI Annual Congress usually intensify in the springtime, as the event takes place in the summer. Most organizations in 2020 were cancelling their physical meetings due to uncertainty and tight restrictions.

## SWITCHING TO DIGITAL

At the frightening peak of the pandemic, EAACI swiftly switched its Annual Congress format from the foreshadowed venue in London, to a fully digital event. It was the first time in the organization's history that delegates were asked to attend the congress from behind their screens. With just a couple of months to get everything ready, we had to ensure that the digital congress platform would be flawless and user-friendly. Speakers had to get acquainted with recording their lectures in a virtual studio, and participants needed to be properly informed about how to navigate the digital event.

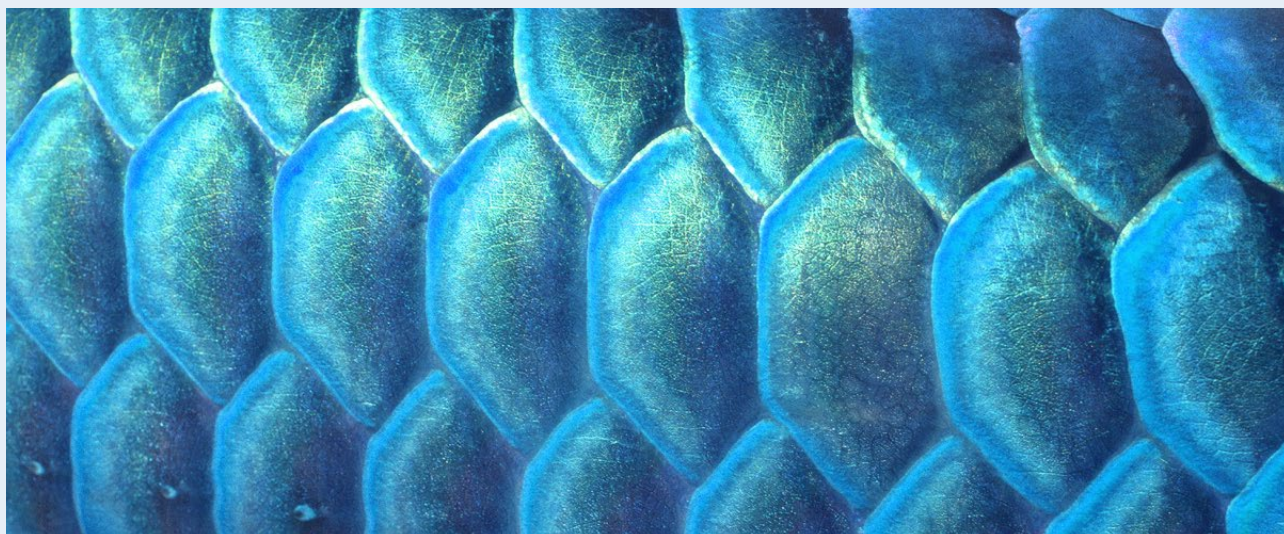
The 2020 digital congress turned out to be a success with over 8,500 participants. The participation was actually even more global than usual, as the new format meant that delegates could join without having to travel. Digital also allowed great perks such as a live section for delegates to view lectures in real time, but also an on-demand section, where videos could be re-watched at everyone's convenience, in any time zone.

One of the strongest aspects of medical events is the networking made onsite. This was a task that had to be kept in mind while developing the digital offer, so EAACI made sure to include several virtual tools for social interaction, bringing in gamification concepts to enhance interpersonal connection.

## TURNING TO HYBRID

As 2021 kicked in, it was clear that the pandemic was going to persist for much longer than expected. After one year of incredible strain in hospitals, clinical practices, and labs for EAACI's healthcare professionals and researchers, everyone was craving a bustling event, to share the latest discoveries in the community. Aware of national restrictions and to ensure health and safety measures were followed, EAACI organized its very first hybrid congress in Krakow. This time, delegates could choose whether to attend in person or virtually, in a format that essentially catered to everyone's wishes.

The ICE Krakow venue in Poland accommodated 1,500 participants on site, while another 6,000 signed into the digital platform from the comfort of their homes. By this time, EAACI was well versed in both offers, having spent the months before tweaking



the platform used, to create a seamless link between the two forms of participation. Challenges included unexpected changes in speakers' availability or their ability to travel, the implementation of testing facilities, sanitation and strict COVID-19 monitoring onsite, and the creation of strong back-up scenarios in case of changes to regulations.

Both the physical and digital components of the event were executed efficiently, thanks to strong technological partnerships and active communication prior to and during the event. Participants were highly pleased with the congress, which once again opened possibilities to attend even more globally, thereby enriching the scientific program and interdisciplinary dimension of the event.

In 2022 EAACI planned another - and this time larger - hybrid congress in Prague, under the motto of 'One Health - focusing on linkages between human plant, and animal health'. Digital participation was once again an important component of the offer, stimulating exciting new opportunities to join the meeting from outside Europe. For example, clinicians and researchers in Mexico established a hub within the Colegio Mexicano de Inmunología Clínica y Alergia (CMICA). Navigating the different time zones, residents were able to log in live to the afternoon plenaries, symposia and workshops, and then continued after the live part was over by watching the recorded morning plenaries. Thanks to this, participants were able to come together, learn from internationally renowned speakers and discuss cases.

## NEXT YEAR

This year, we are excited to announce our next hybrid congress taking place in Hamburg, on 9-11 June 2023. After this period which has brought challenges and opportunities in equal proportion, we are ready to host it in a fantastic venue which will

accommodate all our needs, including the potential for a larger physical participation and a seamless and interactive digital offer. The new Congress Centre Hamburg is a state-of-the-art, flexible and sustainable venue that provides the perfect environment for major medical congresses to share views and transfer know-how.

With the motto of 'Pathways to precision medicine', the congress will discuss tailored solutions for the treatment, diagnosis and management of our patients. The importance of customized solutions for all is the perfect backdrop for the success stories of EAACI, and the importance of coming up with people-specific opportunities to share knowledge in new ways. In times when interconnection was limited, we realized the vast potential that lies within alternative modes of connecting. The digital era provides incredible opportunities for positive change and the revolutionizing of best practices.

Being pushed to modernize and digitalize quickly, EAACI has become even stronger as an organization. Lessons learnt from the digital and hybrid congresses of 2020, 2021 and 2022 have led to a ripple wave of innovation in other projects for the Academy. For instance, the creation of a brand-new e-learning platform - the EAACI Knowledge Hub - with up-to-date content and assessments for members at any stage of their careers, where courses and CME accreditation can be achieved virtually. Likewise, the digitalization of the organization's smaller topical focused meetings and allergy schools.

For organizations wanting to learn more about AC Forum and membership, please visit [www.acforum.net](http://www.acforum.net)

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# Physical: Your Differentiator in a Digital World

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International Advisor to the Global Association Hubs **Martin Sirk** argues that being a digital-first organization doesn't necessarily mean you should get rid of all things physical.



As renowned business futurist and uber-cool keynote speaker Kjell Nordstrom pronounced when I first experienced his cyborg-punk presence, way back in 2002: *"your excellent website is no more a determinant of future success and competitive advantage than having functional toilets in your office"*.

Twenty years on, in the same vein, having a well-designed and adequately-funded digital strategy is going to be as essential as that prototypical website, but just as insufficient, for your association's future success.

Why? Because every company and association is now in the midst of becoming digitally competent and competitive, and this process will only accelerate as the tools to achieve this become cheaper and ever more sophisticated. Pricing will become even more transparent than today; products and services will be capable of almost instant deconstruction and replication; content and expertise will become unconstrained by geography or institution; hyper-competition will

be ubiquitous. And users, consumers, members will have incredible choice at their fingertips, as individually-customized messages and offerings become the norm from every organization they interact with. Any association's claimed digital differentiators will be subject to inevitable, inexorable erosion.

This is why, alongside a great digital strategy, associations need to consciously design and invest in an equally sophisticated, complementary physical strategy, and not simply treat these activities as the vestiges of an outdated, analogue world that is receding in our rear-view mirrors.

Alongside your CRM system, find a valued place (throughout your organization) for hand-written thank-you notes and personal phone calls. As well as your AI-driven translation system, employ people who deeply understand and respect cultural differences. When rolling out your on-demand content library, constantly encourage in-person group gatherings to

engage with complex issues. Use digital to map out physical: your members' friendships with each other are probably the single most powerful determinant of their loyalty to your association, and your ability to understand, facilitate and reinforce these relationships will in the near-future become mission-critical. Always remember that trust is not an algorithmic concept, no matter what blockchain enthusiasts tell you!

And most importantly, don't let the global, universal nature of digital persuade you that geography no longer matters, especially when it comes to the selection of strong destination partners and the best association ecosystems, whether you are planning events or looking for an office location or a base for global or regional activities. Global Association Hubs partner cities – Brussels, Dubai, Singapore and Washington DC – understand the digital revolution that associations are going through, but are even more competent in the physical partnership priorities that help to build and sustain genuine, long-term competitive advantage.

This piece is part of the exclusive partnership between Boardroom and the Global Association Hubs, which comes as an innovative response to the increasing decentralization of international associations as they look to develop their activities globally.

[www.associationhubs.org](http://www.associationhubs.org)



# Striking a Balance Between a Digital-First & Customer-First Philosophy

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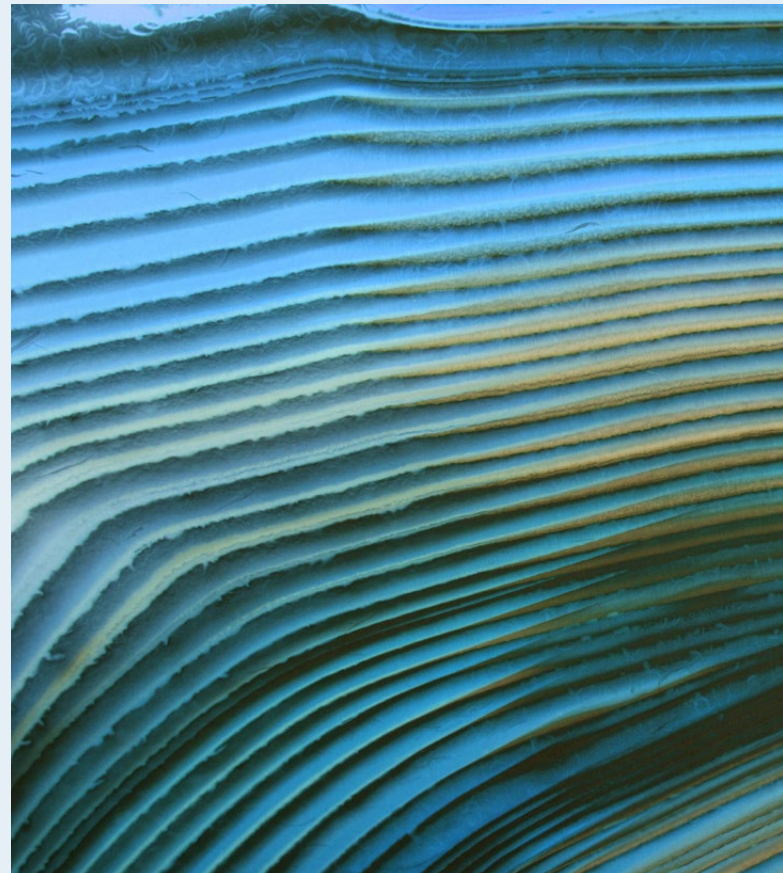
**Martin Boyle**, CEO of IAPCO, the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers, advocates for a digital-first approach when managing an organization... but only if members are put in the centre of everything.

Innovation and digitization or a 'digital-first approach', as it is so often referred to, are terms used by so many in both the corporate and not-for-profit association worlds today. To be 'digital-first' implies to many that an organization, its leadership and teams are 'switched on' at all times, communicate in real-time to their teams, customers and audiences and have the most cutting edge and efficient technologies available at their finger-tips 24/7.

Well, yes, there may be some that embody and practice this philosophy.

When asked his thoughts on the digital-first concept, Prof. Felix Carvalho, PharmD; PhD; ERT; EuCP and President of EUROTOX stated that: *"Our technological transformation will come from organizational core values and not vice versa. There's no doubt that EUROTOX will continue to use the digital tools (webinars, virtual meeting platforms, social media, and AMS) that today feel indispensable to run daily operations, enable greater collaboration between groups, and improve user experience; however, it's important that such efforts do not result in a radical sea change, or substantial change of engagement with our members, stakeholders, industry, and scientific partners."*

I tend to agree and would argue that for most, especially smaller associations with limited resources, using an efficient and appropriate selection of digital tools to empower and enable organizations to be more 'customer-first' is perhaps a more appropriate and realistic viewpoint to adopt. After all, at the heart of all digital interaction is human capital and, although some in the



Artificial Intelligence field may disagree with me, digital engagement opportunities can only be driven by human desire and passion.

### INVESTING IN DIGITAL TECH

As I write this article, I am *en route* to Nairobi where I will be volunteering to speak about my industry sector (the global meetings industry) and support the delivery of a Career Day for 550 young students. The theme for this inaugural event is 'Technology and Careers for the Future: The World at your Fingertips!'; rather relevant, I hope you would agree. Joining me on stage will be Sir Brian Souter, Co-Founder of Stagecoach Group, Dr David Sengeh, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and Chief Innovation Officer, Sierra Leone and others from the renewable energy, Agri-tech, Fin-tech and music industries, all of whom have invested in significant technological advances to their organizations.

At IAPCO, the association I lead, our members and their clients continue to invest in digital technologies to improve their own operations and the delivery of their meetings and events. We have witnessed an extreme sea change in the development and

adoption of virtual meetings and events technologies in the past two and a half years as a direct result of the recent pandemic.

Transitioning our own IAPCO Annual Meeting in 2021 to a virtual conference, along with implementing a suite of software applications for our internal processes and administration has brought very positive results in regard to efficiencies, data security, and operational practices, especially given that 100% of my team works remotely. In doing so, we connected with our community through our own webinars and online educational programs and, in fact, grew our community base substantially over the period. Technologies enable us to focus our human resource on our members first.

Those members and the rest of our community remain steadfast in what they want from their association with us. Opportunities to engage, network, and share knowledge and experiences with others continue to be of great importance to them. To help facilitate this, IAPCO launched our Members Hub in April 2022. It can best be described as a sort of professional Facebook for members. Initially, engagement was excellent with members joining daily and, like Facebook, it relies on content from its community. Encouraging a membership community to shift from a receiver to a provider of content is challenging at the best of times and ever so much more when professional obligations and responsibilities take priority. Consider how to be innovative in the means by which you request contribution, regardless of the technology used.

### MAKING IT HAPPEN

Prof Carvalho continued with; *"it's important to identify the intentions and relationships that fulfil the needs of our members and stakeholders by asking questions like 'how can this benefit our users?', and only then, 'what technology do we need to make it happen?'."*

I return to the Nairobi event for a final thought. The idea that a young person in Nairobi with a passion for, say, engineering can have a professional career and contribute to the success of an organization across the other side of the world via technology at their fingertips is perhaps the best example of 'digital-first' in action. Importantly, however, ensuring they feel part of that global community whilst they do so in silo is what I would call 'customer-first' which will be fundamental to their long-term sense of belonging and mutual success.

IAPCO is a not-for-profit membership association, registered in Switzerland. IAPCO Members are Professional Congress Organizers (companies, not individuals) that have qualified for Membership under the detailed application process by demonstrating that they consistently deliver PCO services to their clients and partners at high quality standards. They retain their membership through annual quality checks and reviews by the IAPCO Quality Committee.





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# Digital For All?

**Sven Bossu**, CEO of AIPC, reflects on what it means to be digital for associations that have different means and formats.

At the World Economic Forum earlier this year, the message was clear: technology, especially digitalization and connectivity, are considered key drivers for economic, social and environmental progress. When looking at associations, digitization has proven to be a lot more during the COVID crisis - it was a real life preserver. It allowed them to continue to engage with their communities in absence of face-to-face meetings and to ensure connectivity between their members, which is very often the key value proposal of any association.

## NOTHING NEW

Digital is nothing new to associations. They all have a website, are active on social media and have some kind of metrics in place. However, there is a gap between this and having a real digital presence strategy. A digital presence is how the association appears online, made up of several different components and can be summed up as the impression the brand of the association makes online through content, websites, search engines and other digital media and platforms.

Putting this in place does take effort though - both the initial set-up and the continuous maintenance/improvement - and some smaller associations might actually question whether these investments are worthwhile. The answer is undoubtedly yes.

Take the case of the association I work for, AIPC, the global association of convention centres. We have 170 members worldwide and (try to) connect 900 senior leaders working within those organizations. Our digital presence is crucial in a number of ways. First of all, it allows us to reach a broader audience, both in terms persons within member organizations who are not able to join our face-to-face meeting and in terms of potential member organizations. Secondly, it enables a more continuous engagement with our members. And thirdly, the underlying data analysis allows us to see which are the things of interest to our members, allowing to adapt quickly.

## ABOVE YOUR WEIGHT

For smaller associations, digital presence is actually a way of "fighting above your weight": it allows for global and continuous engagement at a relative low cost, because the good thing is that putting this in place does not cost a fortune. There is a suite of low-cost solutions available, from CRM to analytics to web-design. However, there are a number of things to keep in mind. The first thing is to ensure consistency throughout the different channels. For example: using the same colour scheme on the website, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. sounds obvious, but you'll find that a lot of organizations are creating confusion by using different colour schemes per channel.

Secondly, integrate physical activities. For AIPC, the face-to-face meetings remain extremely important and therefore they need to be embedded into the digital presence, creating intersections between physical and digital. And thirdly, make sure that your digital presence is "responsive", which means that the customer experience is the same whether he visits your website via a mobile phone or laptop. Once all this is put in place, comes the final challenge: keeping everything fresh and up-to-date. You don't want to have a website where the latest member news dates back from the moment the website was created - so put a reminder in your agenda to check for news and updates (sounds silly but actually works).

All of this has of course nothing to do with the Metaverse or some other more sophisticated technology. But if done correctly and thought through, a low-cost digital presence can make a world of difference for any associations, large of small.

AIPC represents a global network of over 190 leading centres in 64 countries with the active involvement of more than 1000 management-level professionals worldwide. [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org)



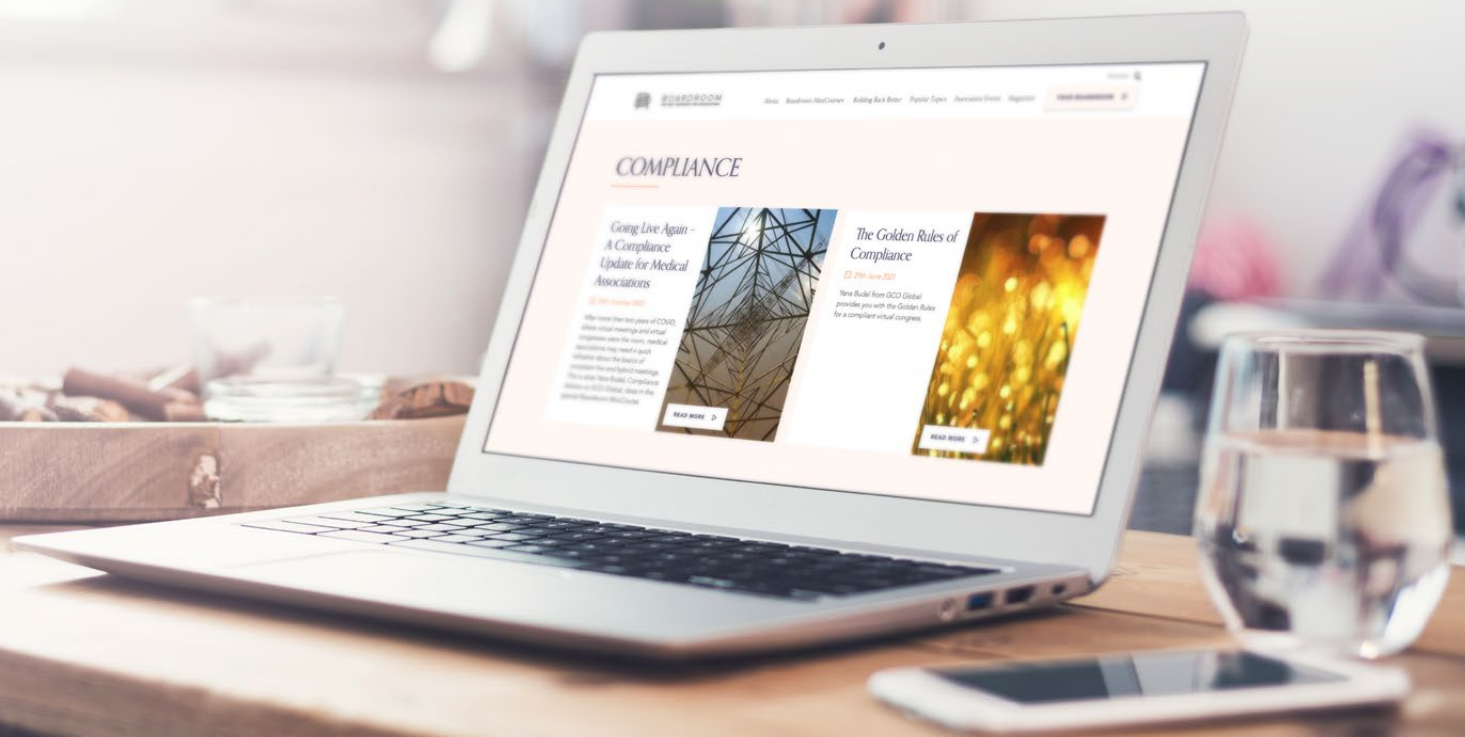


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Associations  
nowadays would like  
to know the social  
and environmental  
impact they  
have on the local  
communities and  
how they create  
change with  
their events.



# Singapore's Transformation to City of the Future

The faster the economy and our needs are spinning, the greater the change the meetings industry (along with all the economic sectors it affects) is required to adapt to. But merely adapting brings little progress. True development towards a sustainable future comes from innovative initiatives, like Singapore has shown in the last 50 years of its constant evolution.

Now one of the safest, most open and sustainable countries in the world, Singapore has used its extensive knowledge and business events cluster to become a leader in innovative urban planning solutions.

*Words Vicky Koffa*

With limited land and practically no natural resources at its disposal, Singapore has made enormous strides to move away from swamps and waterless settlements to a model country worldwide for its urban governance and planning for the city of tomorrow. As sustainability is the only option to face all the challenges of the land, the island has focused on using cleaner energy and water management technologies.

## INNOVATION IN CLEAN ENERGY & WATER MANAGEMENT

Looking to accommodate the mobility needs of its rising population, Singapore has developed a fast and efficient public transport system. With the Land Transport Master Plan 2040 launched by the government, commuters in Singapore can expect to reach their nearest neighborhood centre within 20 minutes, and the city within 45 minutes. Electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles and cycling networks are deployed for cleaner air as well as provisions for barrier-free journeys to make public transportation accessible for all.

Fighting challenges against rainwater storage and lake scarcity, Singapore has also prioritized water conservation and resilience. To meet its water supply needs, it relies on a mix of sources including local catchment (two-thirds of the land surface), imported water, water reclamation and water desalination. About the latter, in February 2021 it opened the Keppel Marina East Desalination Plant, the fourth in the country. It is the country's first large-scale dual-mode desalination plant that can treat both seawater as well as freshwater, depending on the prevailing weather conditions.

Singapore is also famous for its NEWater project, reclaiming water using advanced membrane technologies and ultra-violet disinfection for non-potable and indirect potable use. The two NEWater plants currently supply 40% of the nation's water needs, a number expected to increase to 55% in the future.

## BUSINESS EVENTS SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT

Due to the continuous innovation in urban planning, Singapore is home to global thought leadership, offering easy access to like-minded industry leaders and conference attendees. The Singapore International Transport Congress and Exhibition was created to provide a key platform for all international urban mobility stakeholders to redefine the urban mobility landscape of tomorrow. With over 10,000 delegates in its three editions benefiting from technical visits to exclusive sites, the event has become a must-attend occasion for urban mobility thought leaders.

In the same spirit, the Singapore International Water Week was launched as a global platform to share and co-create innovative water solutions addressing contemporary challenges. The event gathers global water leaders and practitioners from both public and private sectors to engage in discussion and debate, network with key industry players, showcase leading-edge technologies and best practices, and identify practical methodologies to address the world's most pressing water issues.

Since its inauguration in 2008, the World Cities Summit has gathered over 250 global cities to address liveable and sustainable city challenges and share integrated urban solutions.



VISITORS VIEWING A LARGE-SCALE MODEL OF SINGAPORE AT THE URA CITY GALLERY, LOCATED AT TANJONG PAGAR IN THE HISTORIC CHINATOWN PRECINCT.

### BUILDING A CITY ON SUSTAINABILITY

What has led Singapore to the top spots of sustainability reports worldwide is its commitment to creating urban solutions that will benefit the people and the planet now and in the long run. The Singapore Green Plan 2030, which outlines the nationwide agenda on sustainable development, is a cradle of opportunities for companies and industry partners to empower and invest in the local and global green transition.

In an effort to tackle climate change, new initiatives include goals to double electric vehicle charging points, reduce carbon waste by 30% by 2026, and to review carbon tax so that only the best-in-class carbon-intensive investments enter the country. Furthermore, over the next decade, Singapore plans to be a global leader for smart and sustainable building, mobility and environment solutions. The country has set a target to make 80% of its buildings more energy-efficient by 2030 through the Green Mark Incentive Scheme.

As food waste is also a critical sustainability issue, Singapore has updated its legislation to require large commercial and industrial food waste generators, such as hotels and developments housing food caterers, to segregate their food waste and allocate space for on-site food waste treatment from 2024 onwards. Big hotels have risen to the challenge, updating their equipment

for food preparation and recycling. The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) World Congress was held in September and aimed to showcase waste management more holistically and dynamically.

### GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY

Singapore has realized that sustainability is not just a local matter. Collaboration with international counterparts is important to make progress for a more sustainable future, even more so in the meetings industry. Last year, Singapore Tourism Board (STB) became member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to advance sustainability in the global travel and tourism sector.

Singapore is also one of the partner cities of the BestCities Alliance, a collaboration committed to building a sustainable future and enable sustainable meetings that leave a lasting legacy. In 2021, during the BestCities Forum, the Alliance secured a pledge from destinations and associations to integrate sustainability and inclusivity into future conference planning.

#### More information

[www.visitsingapore.com/mice](http://www.visitsingapore.com/mice)



# Dubai: Always One Step Ahead

## THE LEGACIES OF EXPO 2020 DUBAI

From the very start, the site where Expo 2020 Dubai took place was designed to be something else after the Expo closed. Dubai being Dubai, there was a whole strategy to create a new district, a smart and futuristic destination for business and innovation, driven by sustainability, education and entertainment. As momentum continues to build to ensure the lasting legacy promised by the authorities, let's explore the stakes at what is today known as Expo City Dubai.

There are many forms that a legacy can take, but a good lasting one will instill a spirit of discovery, hope and possibility. Expo 2020 Dubai offered a glimpse of how to achieve that, and it is now being transformed into a brand-new neighborhood propelling the destination into the future, a testament to the emirate's vision of becoming a leader in many fields of endeavor.

Expo 2020 Dubai took place 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022, welcoming over 24 million visitors from all around the world, and with them ushered in a hope of a better tomorrow, led by a confluence of ideas, opportunities and collaborations scattered across an array of awe-inspiring pavilions.

### FUTURE-READY

From the very beginning, the sprawling exhibition was as future-ready as it was present-focused. In the weeks that followed the end of the six-month event, the site began its transition to a clean, human-centric and tech-enabled city. Retaining 80 per cent of the Expo-built infrastructure, Expo City Dubai is part of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. A green and innovation-driven city of the future, it is designed as a blueprint for sustainable urban planning, galvanizing action on its journey to net zero.

Representing the ambition of the emirate hosting it, Expo City Dubai aims to be a bastion of progress and creativity. Having officially opened on 1 October, it retains several of Expo 2020's attractions such as the Al Wasl Plaza, the Garden in the

Sky tower, the Surreal water feature and several pavilions. The district is the largest in the world to be fully covered by a 5G-enabled network.

Expo City Dubai also houses the Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC), which is set to play host for a number of conferences and business events in the future, with its 45,000 square metres of event space.

DEC already welcomed the Dubai Association Conference earlier this year. Championing the theme of 'Associations and The New World: Resilience & Reinvention,' the third edition of this only-for-associations conference explored how professional societies, non-profit organizations, and trade associations have been adapting amid not just the aftermath and direct impact of the global pandemic, but shifting dynamics among



AERIAL VIEW OF EXPO CITY DUBAI



the professions and industries they serve. Partnering with the American Society of Association Executives, it brought together Dubai-based associations together a VIP group of top association executives, led by ASAE President and CEO Michelle Mason.

From a commercial standpoint, Expo City Dubai aims to act as a fertile ground for businesses by offering a technology-driven ecosystem, with several companies keen to set up shop.

#### GREEN COMMITMENTS

Expo City Dubai also wants to be the green paragon of Dubai in its commitment to sustainability. Placing environment-friendly initiatives and technology at the heart of its frame, it wants to personify sustainable urban planning. Besides being home to 123 LEED-certified buildings,

the city will be a car-free destination, offering visitors other mobility options such as buggies, e-scooters and e-bikes. Meanwhile, with a low-rise 'campus' feel, the city's districts are fully pedestrianized, improving safety and air quality, and there are no less than 10 km of cycling tracks, a 5 km running track and 45,000 sqm of parks and gardens.

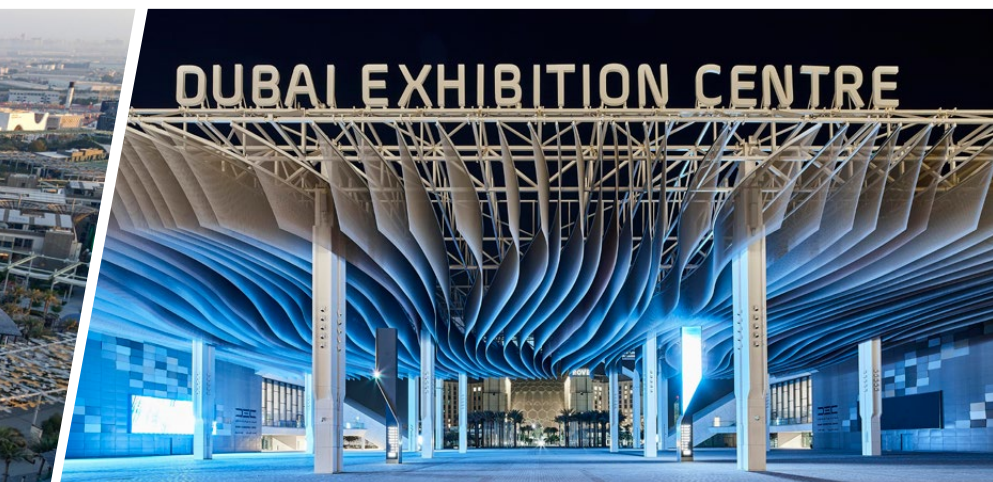
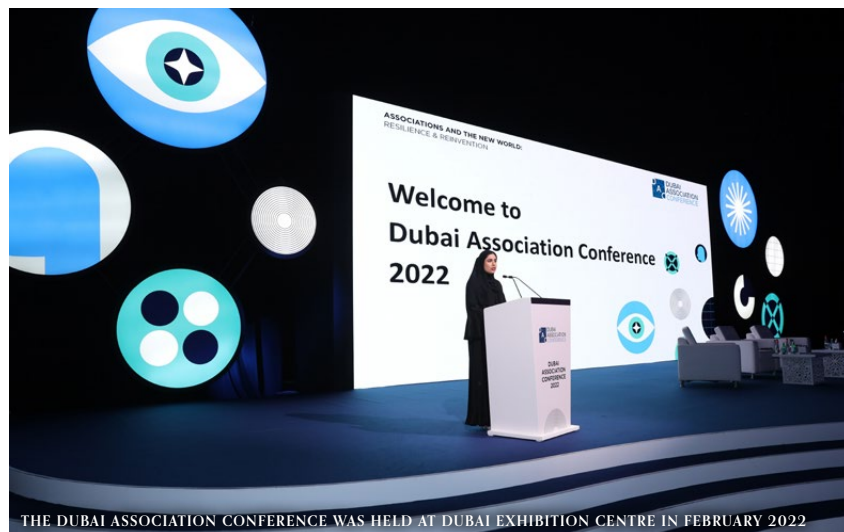
Expo City Dubai is also the first community in the UAE to be registered under the WELL Community Standard pilot. Developed by the International WELL Building Institute, this is a vehicle for buildings and organizations to deliver

more thoughtful and intentional spaces that enhance human health and well-being, the aim being to set a benchmark for healthy communities and neighborhoods.

Technology is here to help the district's green initiatives. In that regard, you will find the world's largest installation of MindSphere onsite - Siemens' cloud technology platform that uses smart metering and sensors to monitor energy consumption and efficiency of power, light, water and climate conditioning systems.

Reflecting its eco-friendly code, Expo City Dubai will remain free of single-use plastic. And while it is beckoning people to make greener choices, its sustainability drive is being complemented on an event level as well: the district will play host to the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) in November 2023, during which leaders will be urged to commit to tougher action on climate change, including cutting the use of coal-fired power stations, reducing reliability on fossil fuels and boosting renewable energy sources.

The conference is expected to attract more than 45,000 participants daily, including heads of state, government officials, international industry leaders, private sector representatives, academics, experts and representatives of civil society organizations.



## GROWING WITH THE DUBAI ASSOCIATION CENTRE

Once considered a bold step forward in establishing the city as an association hub, Dubai Association Centre (DAC) now stands as an example of the rapid progress that can be made when collaborative entities across the public and private sector come together to drive growth. Launched in 2014 as an initiative to facilitate the licensing of professional societies or trade organizations, whether regional or international, DAC can actually make your life very easy.

Priding itself on business-friendly policies, Dubai, as a leading international centre for commerce, industry and tourism, has brought its 'open doors' spirit into the modern world, attracting foreign business and investment through free-trade zones, zero income tax and a favorable corporate taxation policy.

### PROGRESS UNDERWAY

But beyond trade, the Emirate is on a journey to become a knowledge-based economy, and the Dubai Association Centre (DAC) is a good example of the progress underway. Associations, indeed, play a key role in the destination's growth as they can drive education and professional standards, engage with government and regulators to encourage sustainable development, and act as a bridge to attract talent.

Offering assistance for the establishment of associations in Dubai, DAC – a joint initiative between Dubai Chambers, Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism, and Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) – provides a formal environment where organizations can form a membership-based community or open a regional representative office to conduct business in the UAE and beyond. So far, it has achieved good results, with more than 75 licensed associations as of November 2022 – an increase that didn't stop during the pandemic.



STEEN JAKOBSEN

Steen Jakobsen, associate vice president at Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), explains: "Dubai Association Centre's steady growth has continued,

*building on the reputation it has established as a gateway for associations to access not just the city and the UAE, but the wider Middle East and proximity regions. DAC's reach extends across most major economic sectors, and especially into the fields at the heart of the city and wider country's innovation agenda."*

Practically speaking, a DAC license enables associations to open an office within the DWTC Free Zone in Dubai and enjoy use of its numerous facilities, which aim to offer organizations a fresh new space where growth and networking with the right businesses in the area are priorities. Being together under one roof, it allows associations to connect with each other and share best practices and solutions to overcome common challenges.



BETTINA SMITH

In addition, DAC organizes quarterly roundtables for its members to address macro-topics related to association management, but also on the impact of the global pandemic on the association sector and how associations can deal with the disruption caused.

#### CASES IN POINT

*"The networking events DAC regularly organizes are definitely an added value," says Bettina Smith, Operations Manager, Direct Selling Association of UAE, "They allow us to share experiences with other associations and also learn valuable information from DAC directly on what is happening within the region. DAC has also supported us in our registration and*



DAVID MACADAM



DR. JAMAL JOMAH

*licensing which can be challenging - having that kind of support is a real asset."*

David Macadam, CEO of The Middle East Council of Shopping Centres & Retailers (MESC+R), goes even further and praises the team of professionals at DAC *"who understand the association business from years of hands-on experience. They were able to quickly develop a strong relationship with our own team and others seeking their advice. From delivery of trade licenses for operating in the UAE, to assistance and guidance in delivery of event permits, to providing alternative choices for venues for events, to providing office space, DAC has all aspects of business covered. The support is always delivered with a timely urgency which is critical to our success."*

DAC's supportive structure, backed by the entities that founded the Centre, have also been important to Dr Jamal Jomah, President of the Arab Association of Surgical & Medical Aesthetics: *"Not only do we have the possibility of obtaining a prime location with logistical assistance, but DAC can help with government support and advice. The networking and collaborating with other organizations, which increases our visibility and presence on the global stage, is also very important. Besides, they offer reduced fees for association events and make the chamber resources for us to use available. The list could actually go on and on."*

*"We understand we must continue to show association leaders that Dubai is not only a viable regional hub for them, but one that they need to set up in," concludes Steen Jakobsen. "A major part of this is demonstrating that DAC allows associations not only to tap into membership and influence growth in Dubai and the UAE, but the wider Middle East and indeed into Africa - all regions that in many cases have been underserved in the past."*

In addition to offering an environment that eases the ability to conduct business, Dubai, in this regard, gives associations the opportunity to tap into an entirely new market. If you're looking for growth, you indeed need to grow globally and Dubai can help you just do that.

More information on  
[www.dubaiaassociationcentre.com](http://www.dubaiaassociationcentre.com)



## Case Study

# WHEN ASTRONAUTS CONVENED IN DUBAI

Held at Dubai World Trade Centre 25-29 October 2021, the 72<sup>nd</sup> International Astronautical Congress (IAC) was the first in-person IAC since the start of the pandemic, and it also marked history being the first IAC to be organized in an Arab country. Gathering more than 5,000 delegates from 110 countries – with an additional 1,500 participants during the Public Day – the event was themed ‘*Inspire, Innovate and Discover for the Benefit of Humankind*’.



ENG. ADNAN ALRAIS,  
CO-CHAIR FOR THE  
LOCAL ORGANIZING  
COMMITTEE OF  
IAC 2021.

Created in 1951 to foster dialogue between scientists and to support international cooperation in all space related activities, the International Astronautical Federation, with more than 390 members, continues to this day to connect people working in space

agencies, societies, associations, museums and institutes, through its yearly congress.

IAC was hosted by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), a Dubai government organization responsible for the UAE space program, which includes various space satellite projects, the Emirates Mars Mission, the Emirates Lunar Mission, and the UAE astronaut program. Eng. Adnan Alrais, Co-Chair for the Local Organizing Committee of IAC 2021, explains to Boardroom the kind of legacy the Congress is leaving behind and how it was a showcase of Dubai's pioneering steps in the space sector.

### You hosted the IAC in October 2021: Why did it make sense to host this event in Dubai?

The IAC 2021 came to the UAE at a fortuitous juncture: it followed closely on the heels of the launch of the Emirates Mars Mission (Hope Probe), the Arab's first space exploration craft to Mars. The year of the event also marked the second anniversary of the return of the first Emirati astronaut from the International Space Station and the third anniversary of the launch of KhalifaSat – the first Earth-observation satellite to be produced wholly by Emiratis. These achievements

are symbolic of the commencement of a new era in the region; the IAC 2021 became the opportunity to highlight how space science and technology contribute to a nation's progress.

IAC 2021 also followed a highly successful Space Week held at the Expo 2020 Dubai, which saw a stellar line-up of astronauts, astronomers, and space experts come together to discuss a wide gamut of topics.

### What has the event achieved according to you?

Hosting IAC 2021 was a knowledge enrichment platform for the youth in the fields of space science and technology. It acted as an accelerator for STEM education, and was a source of enormous pride and inspiration for the next generations who are hoping to participate in the space sector.

The legacy of IAC 2021 was felt across the region, and acted as a catalyst for other nations to establish space centres and agencies.

However, the impact of both the IAC 2021 being hosted in Dubai and the arrival of the Emirates Mars Mission - Hope mission in the same year sent a strong





## IAC in numbers

- 5,000 delegates from 110 countries
- Approx. 1/3 young professionals – under 35
- 1,500 participants to the Public Day
- 1,400 technical papers
- 3,356 abstracts from 86 countries
- 140 exhibitors
- A dedicated Next Generation and Outreach Program

message that reached beyond the borders of the UAE. It illustrated that the Arabs have a significant impact in space, and that our contributions are respected and valued by international communities.

Space is a sector that is growing in the UAE, and, as a result of the increased activities, it's now growing in the region too. To see

an Arab nation hosting the IAC further calibrated this growth, as the world would see the impact the UAE is having after just over a decade of space activity.

### **Can you explain how MBRSC serves as a pillar to drive the establishment of the knowledge economy and sustainable development in the UAE?**

MBRSC is a scientific centre that specializes in space science and advanced technology. Launching ambitious projects, we work to develop generations of Emirati engineers according to the highest scientific standards.

MBRSC is looking forward to contributing in ways that enrich human knowledge and support scientific development worldwide. The centre has strong ties with internationally influential organizations and is keen to establish relationships with space agencies and the world's most prestigious universities and faculties that specialize in space science.

MBRSC supports the country's plans aimed at creating a new generation of Emirati expert engineers and researchers to hold leadership roles in establishing a knowledge-based economy. The centre has worked on achieving the UAE National Innovation Strategy and looks forward to positioning the UAE amongst the most innovative countries in the world within the space sector. We have also supported national plans to contribute to the progress of humanity and build a better world.

Our vision is to be a leading, globally recognized centre in the field of space science technological innovation and advanced technology to enrich human knowledge. Our mission is to build a sustainable space science and advanced technology sector that contributes to establishing a knowledge-based economy, and to launch and implement advanced space projects and prepare a generation of Emirati scientists that take our country towards a brighter future.



## PICKING DUBAI'S BRAIN

Surrounded by strong natural elements like the sea and the desert, Dubai is a popular tourist destination. The culturally diverse emirate, though, has made a name for itself worldwide as an ambitious futuristic city where knowledge, innovation and imagination come together to create projects that never cease to amaze.

When the UAE government set course for the future to be the world's leading country with its Centennial Plan 2071, Dubai was already well prepared for the task. With a

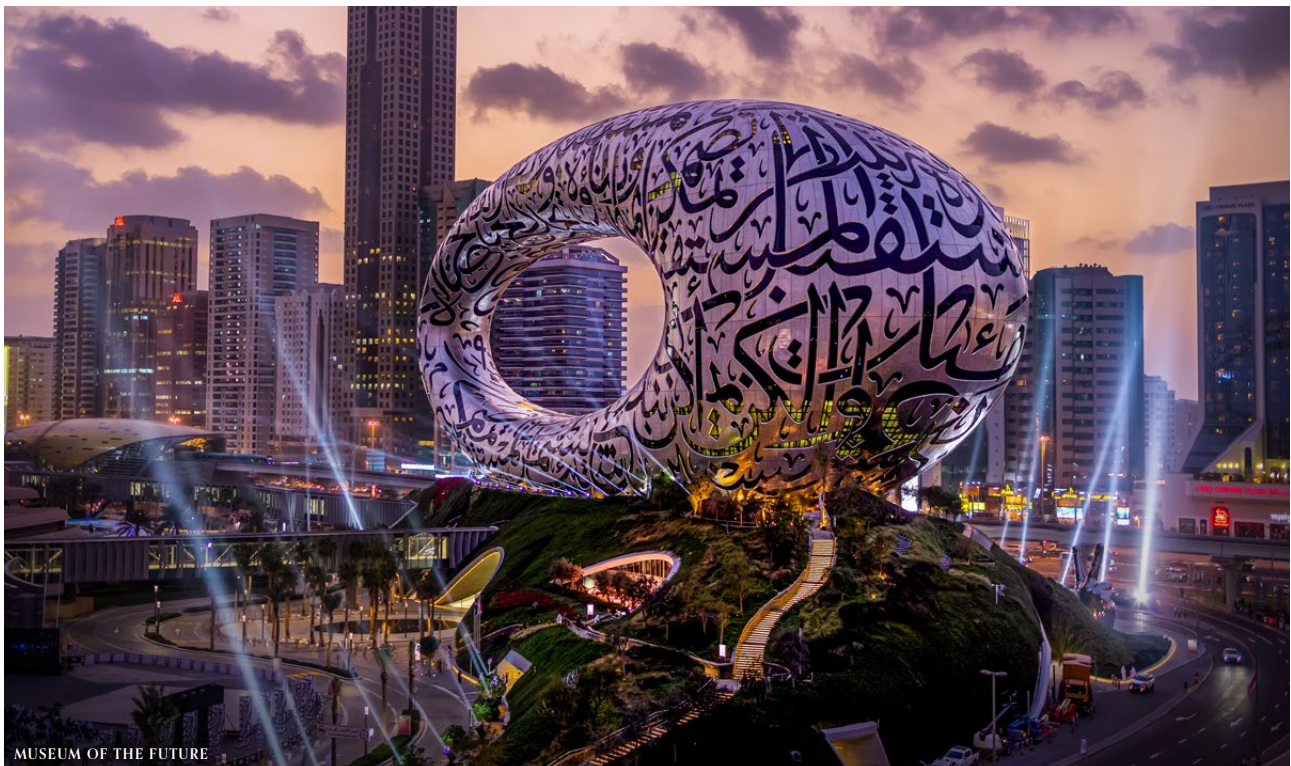
plan to invest and build around the four essential aspects of education, economy, government development and community cohesion, the emirate is cultivating an environment for exponential growth with knowledge at its core. From space research to tackling climate change and from robotics to food solutions, Dubai is digging deep to present initiatives which align with a sustainable future for all and its ambitious vision to make a big impact.

To support this, in September His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council, launched the Dubai Research and Development (R&D) Program. Its goal is to support key economic sectors and create new opportunities for growth

by providing a comprehensive framework for research, development, and innovation across the emirate. Boosting scientific and technological research will help Dubai advance in existing sectors as well as identify the potential of new ones.

### ROBOTICS & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TAKE THE LEAD

Stressing the importance of the diversification of Dubai's future economy, the government is placing strong focus on the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics. Earlier this year, Dubai Future Foundation announced the launch of the 'Dubai Robotics and Automation (R&A) Program' to boost the development, testing and adoption of R&A, and accelerate the use of its application in key economic sectors.





As part of the Program, 200,000 robots will be provided over the next 10 years to increase efficiency and productivity in various sectors including services, logistics, and the industrial sector.

A major application of such advancements is Dubai's recently founded first robotic biobank. Set to open in 2023 with a capacity to manage seven million specimens, the biobank will be one of the world's largest in terms of sample capacity. A robotic system will ensure biological samples are secured in cryogenic storage (below 80 degree Celsius) maintaining proper sample integrity and retrieval.

In transportation, AI is taking the driver's seat. An agreement signed between the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) and Cruise (an autonomous vehicle company) is already mapping the city digitally with two electric vehicles. The aim is to offer self-driving taxi and e-Hail services in Dubai in limited numbers by 2023 and gradually to reach up to 4000 vehicles by 2030 in the hope to facilitate mobility, ease city congestion, and boost road traffic safety levels.

Projects of this sort fall under the UAE's 'Strategy for Artificial Intelligence', launched already in 2017. A first of its kind in the region, the strategy covers most economic sectors and creates a platform to help advance and integrate AI in the country for better quality of life on all levels.

### **TACKLING CLIMATE & FOOD CHALLENGES**

UAE government is committed to agriculture and rural development and food security. The country has developed a comprehensive national food security strategy to position it as number one in the Global Food Security Index by 2051 by promoting increased resilience and sustainable food production.



With a priority to apply modern farming techniques to accelerate self-sufficiency in fresh food produce, Dubai has opened Bustanica, the world's largest vertical farm. Located near the airport, the hydroponic farm is geared to produce more than 1,000,000 kilograms of high-quality leafy greens annually while requiring 95% less water than conventional agriculture.

Under the UAE Net Zero by 2050 strategic initiative, a national drive to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, Dubai is investing heavily in clean and renewable energy. The Green Hydrogen project invites the private sector and global investors and developers to participate in the production of green hydrogen, the 'fuel of the future'. With production predicted to increase by 57% annually, the project at the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park supports the UAE's leadership and competitiveness in green hydrogen markets.

### **INTO SPACE**

To strengthen its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) has joined this year the Space Climate Observatory (SCO) International, which coordinates

worldwide efforts to accurately monitor the impact of climate change. Dubai's DMSat-1 satellite launched in 2021 shares data on the UAE's atmospheric aerosols and greenhouse gases and chemicals, contributing to the management of such emissions.

But Dubai's space exploration goes beyond climate change on Earth. The Emirates Lunar Mission is set to explore the moon using the "Rashid Rover", a vehicle equipped with the latest technologies and innovative devices. It will capture photos and collect information and data from the moon's unexplored areas allowing the country to conduct comprehensive and integrated studies of how to build human settlement on the moon.

*All texts written by  
Remi Deve & Vicky Koffa*

For more information on Dubai as a business events destination, contact [askdbe@dubaidet.ae](mailto:askdbe@dubaidet.ae) or visit [www.dubaibusinessevents.com](http://www.dubaibusinessevents.com)



# Madrid, the City Where Meetings Come to Life

Light, energy, a zest for living. These are the hallmarks of Madrid, a city that buzzes with life. You can feel it everywhere: its streets, its parks, its culture, its gastronomy... and in professional meetings, which turn into one-of-a-kind experiences in Madrid.





For more  
information



CAPAS\_SESEÑA



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## REVEL IN THE CITY'S STREETS

To start off your working day, get a feel for the city by exploring its streets and soaking up the sight of its buildings and monuments. Walking around Madrid is like strolling through an outdoor museum. The area of **Paseo del Prado** and **El Retiro Park** was recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and offers an endless range of historic and cultural institutions. Some of them, like the **Prado Museum** and **Royal Botanical Gardens**, will make your business event an unforgettable memory.

Madrid has countless outdoor cafés, and moving from *terrazza* to *terrazza* is both a popular pastime and a term that captures the social character of the Madrileños and their love of sharing tables and laughter in the open air. And why not? Dinner with peers is much better in the rooftop restaurant of a trendy hotel.

From any of these rooftops, you'll see russet-coloured buildings with reddish roofs that seem to buzz with their own special energy. And if you look up at the sky, an amazing shade of blue straight out of one of Velázquez's paintings, you'll realize that the city's vibe has already got you hooked.

## GASTRONOMY OVER A SLOW FLAME

Some of Madrid's most authentic experiences involve gastronomy. From tapas to gourmet experiences in avant-garde spaces, Madrid serves up unforgettable memories of your visit. Rest easy with our catering companies, which embrace concepts like sustainability, seasonal ingredients, kilometre Zero and special diets. They've got it covered.

## EMOTIONS MADE OF MUSIC, LIGHT & COLOUR

By now, you'll already be captivated by the vibrant energy Madrid exudes, but it still has some surprises in store. There are as many versions of the Spanish capital as there are restless visitors eager to be surprised.

You'll find incredible event venues, hotels to delight the most demanding traveller, itineraries full of stories and mysteries, artisans who will share their knowledge, rooftop bars with 360° views, *avant-garde* restaurants and, first and foremost, an endless supply of one-of-a-kind experiences.

Without a doubt, meetings in Madrid are something else. Here, meetings come to life.



# Case Study

## World Conference on Pharmacometrics in Cape Town

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Over the years the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), has partnered with a wide variety of organizations across a number of key sectors to bring business events to South Africa. In this series of expert interviews, we engaged with a number of industry leaders to gain insight into their sectors and unpack the incredible work they do and their association with the SANCB. These partnerships are a key part of the recovery plan for South Africa's business events industry.

Raised with an appreciation for education and living a life that models a good moral compass and taking care of those that report to you, Colin Pillai, co-chair of the World Conference on Pharmacometrics (WCoP) that took place 29 March to 1 April 2022 in Cape Town, is a result of nurture and fierce determination. Inspired by his parents who instilled a passion for further education, Colin has gone on to break barriers but hasn't forgotten those left behind.

Growing up in Chatsworth, Durban, Colin's parents were a major influence when it came to pursuing higher education. It was especially from his father's strong example that Colin pursued his career and managed to reach incredible heights working in the pharmaceutical sector and driving programmes that develop scientific capability in low- and middle-income countries.

Trained as a pharmacist at the University of Durban Westville, Colin pursued a PhD in Clinical Pharmacology and Mathematical Modelling of Drug Effects. He acquired clinical and research experience in hospital and community pharmacy and worked as a consultant

with the SA Medical Research Council's Tuberculosis Research programme, where he ran a unit conducting Phase I clinical trials in Durban.

Colin's life took a turn in 2000 when he was invited to Basel Switzerland as a visiting professor at F. Hoffmann-La Roche, a company that was looking to build up the science of pharmacometrics and establish a group of its own.

He later moved to Novartis and headed up the modelling department of the company. When he left the pharmaceutical industry, Colin set up two social ventures - CP+ Associates based in Switzerland, and Pharmacometrics Africa NPC, a non-profit organization registered in South Africa, whose goal is to build up science in Africa and low- and middle-income countries in terms of the whole spectrum of drug discovery and development.

Now based in Switzerland, Colin, keenly aware that his departure from South Africa made him part of the brain drain, has maintained active academic links with numerous institutions in Africa including via formal Honorary

Professorships and Board Member status. He has also dedicated a lot of his activities to finding ways to mitigate the brain drain and build up science in Africa. Since November 2017, he is a Senior Adviser on capacity development and training programmes for global health to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

### **Can you explain how the association with the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB) came about?**

The association was a result of conversations with Lerisha Mudallar from Wesgro (Western Cape, Tourism, Trade and Investment Promotion Agency), a partner to SANCB. Though the partnership came about after having already won the bid to run the World Conference on Pharmacometrics, the SANCB gave tremendous assistance with administrative issues such as Visa application processing. Though not a direct remit of SANCB, they were able to explain the process and worked with local home affairs authorities to facilitate the process in an efficient way. The SANCB also gave valuable yet impartial advice on preferred suppliers and vendors for



organisers to make informed decisions. As scientists and not event organizers, that type of advice was extremely helpful to WCoP.

#### **How do you see South Africa as a business events destination?**

The continent is a major selling point. As a tourist destination, it is incredible and anything more than that is just the cherry on the top. As a country, South Africa tends to have a world-class infrastructure when it comes to international conferences, and this was highlighted during the hosting of WCoP. It also boasts amazing local service providers that have the skill and expertise to handle the demands and challenges of the international organizer and community.

Organizing WCoP in Cape Town has actually showcased Africa as a destination for scientific innovation. I am excited about the potential for local job creation in healthcare and data sciences research via collaborations with the international community.

#### **To what extent are business events important for the health sector?**

Business events such as WCoP are important, especially in a nascent, new field like Pharmacometrics. They bring together delegates to build the next generation of scientists, so it aids in

capacity and capability development. This ranges from teaching and training during preconference workshops and getting young scientists to share their knowledge and initiatives. It is also a setting where they can conduct internal benchmarking to see where they fit relative to where they should be going. Conferences are also vital for young scientists to identify peers and potential collaborators, locally, regionally, and internationally.

For the older career scientist, events such as these allow of the two. This gives people the best of both worlds them to see how they can expand their network or produce pieces of work that can be more impactful. For the companies/organizations that sponsor the events, conferences are vital to showcase what they do so they can get exposure and continue to do more of it. The sector as a whole also benefits because these business events get pharmaceuticals, regulatory bodies, and academia - bodies that might not usually engage - in an environment that helps them break down barriers and potentially collaborate.

#### **In that regard, face-to-face conferences seem to 'work' better...**

In 2021, WCoP was held as a hybrid event, and that was a resounding success. In a virtual setting, people can engage

either on video or chat, and if they decide to type a question, they tend to put a bit more thought into it, which is a huge positive. Added to this when a delegate asks a question in a virtual setting it allows them to get more contributions and answers not just from the speaker but from other delegates who can respond in the chat.

Having said that, face-to-face settings are a better environment to have tough conversations which are hard to do virtually. When engaging face-to-face, you can have a tough conversation, but still, have the option to meet socially thereafter to clear the air which is not always possible virtually.

Looking to the future, hybrid is the way to go. A business event that is not 100% face to face or 100% virtual but a combination in a way that is seamless and both groups of people have a rich and robust experience as either alone. The world is already talking about holograms and being able to present using those, so the whole hybrid world is changing very rapidly. There will always be a place for virtual and a place for face-to-face. The trick is how to bring them together seamlessly.

**More information on South Africa as a conference destination on:**  
[www.southafrica.net/us/en/business](http://www.southafrica.net/us/en/business)

# Co-Creating Sustainability with Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

Sustainability concerns us all. That's why Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) has joined with associated stakeholders in the heart of the Malaysian capital to set a trajectory towards reaching the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

*Words Adrian White*

Eco-tourism is a major focus of the Malaysian Tourism Ministry. KLCC's actions towards achieving its sustainability goals fit into a larger national context. In addition to playing a leading role in the economy of Southeast Asia, Malaysia hosts some of the planet's richest and most diverse eco-systems, from its rainforests to its famed dive spots, making it so much more than just a business destination, and a major draw for nature lovers.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Nestled at the foot of Kuala Lumpur's iconic Petronas Twin Towers, KLCC is Malaysia's foremost convention centre, and one of the best equipped in Southeast Asia. It even has its own dedicated metro stop on the city's Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, with a second nearby stop, dubbed KLCC East, planned to open in 2023, making access by public transit for environmentally-minded conference delegates even easier. KLCC is also centrally located near world-class hotels, as well as a wide and eclectic choice of shopping and dining.

The area that encompasses the convention centre has been chosen as a Sustainable Development Goal precinct, which goes by the acronym KLCC SDGs precinct. The development of this precinct is a long-term project, spearheaded by the convention centre. It requires high-level commitment and engagement at all levels, particularly from the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Business Events Alliance (KLCCBEA), the ESG team from KLCC Holdings Sdn Bhd, which is the corporate entity that owns the convention centre, and the KLCCBEA SDGs Committee, which was established specifically for this project.

The overall goal of the precinct is to disrupt, lead and inspire Malaysia's business events industry players and supply chain to take action and increase their commitment to sustainability in order to further the goal of transforming Malaysia's business events industry into an active champion of sustainable development.

Another strategic partner in KLCC's endeavour is Urbanice Malaysia, an entity established as a Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Cities and Community Wellbeing, under the auspices of the Malaysian Ministry of Housing. Urbanice acts as an advisory body, advocating the localisation of sustainable development goals and promoting climate-actions geared towards the development of liveable and sustainable cities and communities.

Urbanice's Chief Executive, Norliza Hashim, says, *"This collaboration demonstrates a high level of commitment from the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre to align its activities towards achieving their sustainable development goals and targets. The effort sets a great example and we hope it will drive more businesses and corporations in Malaysia towards adopting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks to help accelerate the localisation and implementation of the country's SDGs, in line with the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, Malaysia SDG Cities, and Kuala Lumpur's vision as a 'City for All.'"*

Malaysia has a federal system of government, meaning that KLCC will be working with Kuala Lumpur's city council (DBKL), to help implement the federal government's 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. The support and collaboration of both DBKL and Urbanice Malaysia are critical to the successful implementation of KLCC's SDG plan.



The convention centre has hosted events focused on its own sustainability plans too. In addition to the recent KLCCBEA and Urbanice Malaysia symposium, KLCC also featured a keynote presentation and workshop led by Guy Bigwood, a global expert of regenerative tourism and business events, and founder and managing director of Global Destination Sustainability Movement.

He shares some of his insights on the sustainable development of the KLCC precinct: *"Through the KLCC SDG Hub project, the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre and its partners in the KLCC precinct are setting the stage for their city and country in creating a regenerative destination. This is an example of how industry players, supply chain and the public sector can collaborate to develop compelling destination value for planners, organizers, delegates and guests."*

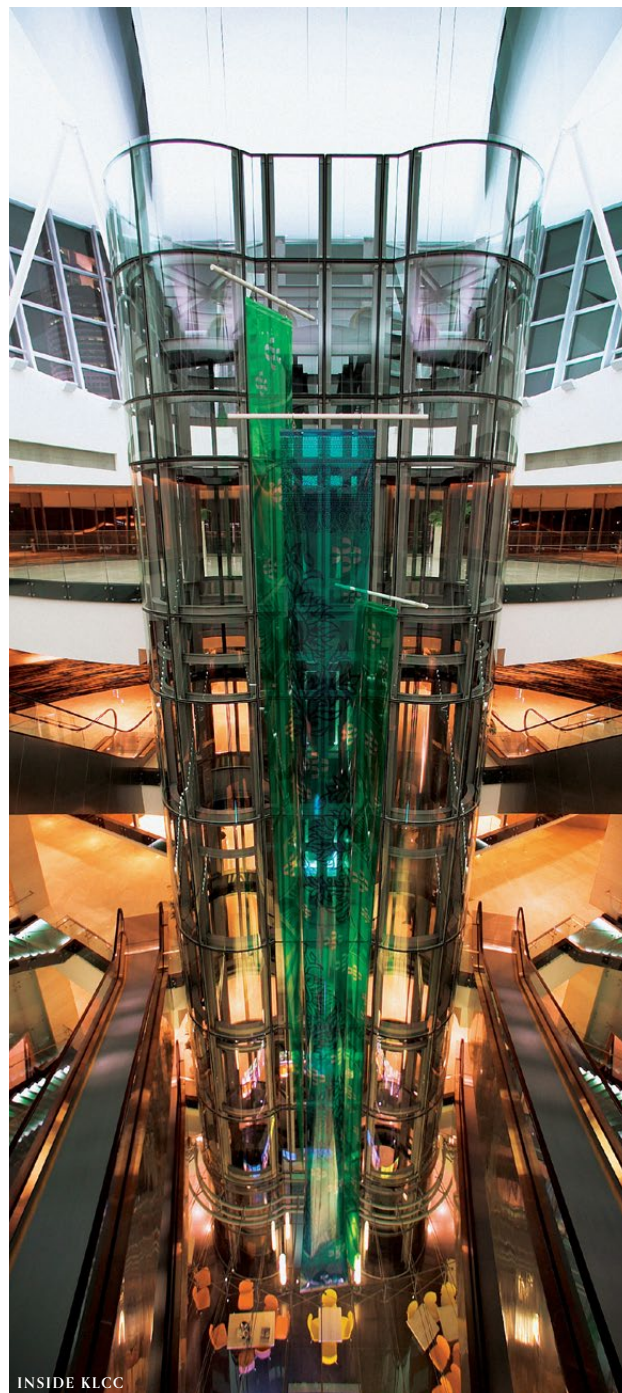
### ACROSS THE WHOLE SUPPLY CHAIN

One of the primary objectives of KLCC's strategy involves raising awareness among its partners and taking a leadership role in encouraging players in Malaysia's business events supply chain to enhance their green credentials. Building on this, KLCC hopes to serve as an example and an inspiration for other projects within the city, but also across the country as a whole.

Whether on a local or national level, it is essential for any conference centre touting its location as an events destination to have the hotel industry on-board. Daniel Kaeflein is General Manager of Traders Hotel Kuala Lumpur. He maintains that the whole is more than the sum of its parts: *"As an on-site hotel partner of the KLCCBEA, we believe that together we can achieve more. With each partner, with their own sustainability programmes, coming together to advance a collective agenda, we will have more marketing power and more visibility towards positioning the KLCC precinct as Malaysia's and Asia's SDG hub."*

Last but not least, KLCC has implemented diverse technologies and solutions as part of its journey toward sustainability. Among them are an AI food-waste tracking system, a food-composting machine, a gravity reliant rainwater harvesting system, and a rooftop hydroponic farm that helps reduce food-miles, thus decreasing the carbon footprint while providing its guests with fresh healthy food.

Malaysia's national flower is the hibiscus, but in many ways the Petronas Twin Towers, being Kuala Lumpur's most prominent landmark, are a national symbol, a vehicle for the country's aspirations to reach fully developed status. This symbolism means that KLCC holds a disproportionately large place in the national consciousness. In leading the way on the road towards sustainability, KLCC is acting as so much more than just a conference centre. It is helping to set the national and regional agenda, raising the bar and setting an example by making sustainability a priority, not just for the MICE industry, but for all sectors of the Malaysian economy.



INSIDE KLCC

**More information**

[www.klccconventioncentre.com](http://www.klccconventioncentre.com)

# Hungary's Key Sectors as Drivers of Growth

Blending the best of the past while looking toward the future, Hungary and capital city Budapest are becoming to-go-to destinations for associations. In this article, Boardroom editor **Lane Nieset** explores the country's growing economic sectors and their relations to international organizations.

In 2019, Hungary hosted more than 5,000 events and was up 28% in terms of international conferences. Capital city Budapest also earned the title of European Best Destination and best airport in the region. But the country holds far more accolades on the cultural side: it's home to 16 Nobel prize winners, the second-largest synagogue in the world, and three UNESCO World Heritage sites.

During the pandemic, the Budapest & Hungarian Convention Bureau also developed an organiser's checklist for safety protocols, as well as Health and Safety Guidelines to help planners design a safe event both during COVID-19 and in the future. And now, as the bureau's long-term strategy has been finalized following international research and experience, Hungary and Budapest are gaining recognition as an ideal MICE destination – and gaining prestigious CIFTT (International Committee of Tourism Film Festivals) awards in the process.

## AUTOMOTIVE ADVANCEMENTS

Hungarian engineers are responsible for some of the most significant innovation in the automotive industry, from the development of the carburettor to the concept of the Ford Model T. Even today, companies like Audi, Mercedes and Bosch have sites in Hungary, and the country

has become a major player in the CEE region in terms of autonomous driving-related R&D activities and e-mobility. In fact, automotive is one of the country's core industries, employing nearly 170,000 people (and comprising 20% of total exports).

Hungary is also striving with innovation in the electronics industry as key players are setting up their European manufacturing hub for EV batteries, thereby pushing forward the country's objectives of sustainability and innovation. One great example is Samsung, which has been a major investor and leads the development of the electronics sector.

Hungary is making significant strides in the transition toward electric vehicles and was the first country in Central Europe to adopt an e-mobility concept – and continues to grow the number of charging stations for e-vehicles, while also upgrading the public transportation fleet to electronic vehicles. In 2020, €808 million was invested in 22 projects designed around batteries for e-vehicles, and five of the top 8 global Electronic Manufacturing Services EMS manufacturers settled in Hungary.

## ICT INNOVATION

Hungary boasts ICT start-up stories like Balabit, LogMeIn, NNG, Prezi and **IBM Budapest Lab USTREAM** – and more than

600-plus start-ups in total – and one in five people in the country has a job thanks to the digital economy.

The ICT sector has increased in value produced by 20% over the past few years, now accounting for at least 20% of the country's Gross Added Value. In terms of Business Service Centres (BSC), there are





156 companies across the country, with the majority share of office space (87%) in Budapest. With the hybrid operational model that combines the physical space and home office, office culture is rapidly changing – and the sector is quickly adapting in response.

### INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS

Agriculture accounts for 4.1% of the gross added value, and 40% of production is exported (most notably in subsectors like meat, pet food, sweets and snacks, grain, and oil and fats). Between 2014 and 2020, there was an investment value of more than €1.2 billion in the food industry, which is home to key players like Coca-Cola, Givaudan, Heineken, Mondelez International, Nestlé and Unilever.

Hungary also excels in areas of expertise like the chemical and packaging industries,

with important chemical clusters located in three regions: Northern Hungary, Central Hungary, and Central Transdanubia. The country is now utilizing its pharmaceutical knowledge base to develop the sector, teach and train students, and attract foreign investors. Hungary's central location gives it a strategic advantage for distribution to Central and Southeastern Europe, and the industry can gain even more strength by investing in logistics infrastructure.

Already, there are 3 TEN-T European transportation corridors and an extensive intermodal network, motorway system and international air, as well as the N<sup>o</sup>. 1 motorway in terms of length in CEE, with 50-plus scheduled weekly containers and top 10 distribution centres, including Ford and Huawei. More is also on the way thanks to a €5.4 billion rail investment and recent investments for 32,800 m<sup>2</sup> air cargo facility at the Budapest Airport.

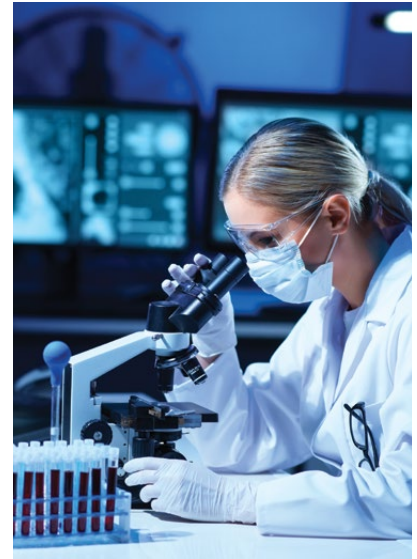
### MEDICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Eight of the top 10 global drug and biotech companies boast manufacturing and R&D activities in Hungary, and the country sports 95 pharma companies and 300 innovative biotech and MedTech SMEs and start-ups. It's the largest exporter of medicinal and pharma products in CEE and particularly excels in sectors like genomics, bionics and e-health, as well as pharma, biotech, veterinary, MedTech and clinical trials, with more than 300 per year.

The pandemic brought the strategic importance of the health industry to light and the Health Industry Support Programme is now playing a role in strengthening these sectors.

### SPACE SUCCESS

Hungary has a long history in space exploration, going back 75 years. And despite joining the European Space Agency (ESA) on the later side, in 2015, the



country is active in a number of projects today, and has invested €16.8 million to ESA's 2021 budget. Hungary is on its way to strengthening its international role and creating an organizational and normative framework for effective coordination of the sector – and the Budapest University of Technology and Economics is very active in the field.

A great example: The 19<sup>th</sup> ESA Business Incubation Centre opened in Hungary to support entrepreneurs creating new local start-up companies developing services and applications that make use of space technology and satellite data ESA BIC Hungary.

As these sector strengths and innovations show, Hungary offers a wealth of knowledge and experts for visiting associations, which has placed the country 26<sup>th</sup> on the ICCA ranking in 2019 and helps it continue to grow and attract events from around the globe.

#### Contact

Hungarian & Budapest Convention Bureau  
[www.hcb.hu](http://www.hcb.hu) / [sales@hcb.hu](mailto:sales@hcb.hu)





# An Enthusiastic 'Welcome Back' By Taiwan

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With business events booming everywhere and everything fully operational again after the pandemic, the world is the associations' oyster. The choice for the right destination is vast, but only some stand out for their digital readiness, resilience, commitment, creativity, and experience. MEET TAIWAN is welcoming back the world of business meetings and shouts out ready on all fronts to receive delegates to its shores.

*Words Vicky Koffa*

Like everyone, Taiwan was hit hard by the health crisis, however landed on its feet quite quickly, achieving world-leading pandemic control results through prompt measures. MEET TAIWAN's (the country's MICE Promotion Program) years of experience in organizing big events, in combination with the island's creativity, kicked in and the nation never lost its connection with its global industry partners.

#### A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF CREATIVITY & EXPERIENCE

Early on, a dedicated team that included MEET TAIWAN offered financial assistance to make Taiwan more attractive and rebuild planners' trust in the system. With support from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, these financial subsidies, matched with Taiwan's success in managing COVID-19, attracted many meetings to Taiwan, which is a testament to the country's resilience and efficient safety measures.

After the pandemic and with borders opening up and meetings returning to normal, Taiwan is proving that the coordinated safety procedures it implemented during the crisis have been effective. The country is as safe as it gets and conference organizing support from local stakeholders is strong. The proof is that Taiwan ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world for quality of living and 1<sup>st</sup> for the health and well-being for expats in the latest survey by InterNations from July 2022.

Last year, the country entered a new chapter in its business events book. 'Re-fresh Taiwan', a renewal campaign for the MICE industry, represented a fresh start after the global pandemic, bringing together governmental and non-governmental resources to generate improved knowledge and facilities. That, in combination with Taiwan's cultural vitality and the people's passion, gave the island the boost it needed to create an enhanced business meetings ecosystem developed for the future.

MEET TAIWAN's commitment to offering quality service is evident, especially when it involves modern sustainable venues, technical solutions, catering options, and financial and consultant support. The program is a one-stop-shop when it comes to planning and organizing business events on the island.

#### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IS HERE TO STAY

This new era of business events for Taiwan was quickly reinforced by the technological skills the island has to offer. As its economy is moving towards its 4.0 phase, Taiwan's digital transformation is present in all sectors, including the meetings industry. At the beginning of the pandemic, Taiwan quickly showed its digital integration strength, successfully holding large-scale online international conferences such as the 2020 ICCA Congress.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade launched an Online Public Exhibition Template to help Taiwanese companies easily exhibit online. Five virtual exhibition halls and six virtual booth designs continue to be at exhibition organizers disposal, who can mix the different templates to

create diverse exhibition styles, plus hold webinars and product presentations. Despite challenges, Taiwan managed to hold 280 online business meetings, serving more than 7,000 domestic and foreign companies in the past two years alone.

Global recognition shows that Taiwan's road to being in the top digitally advanced countries in the world is a straight line to success. Taiwan has been ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup>-most (out of 63) competitive digital economy in the world in 2022 by the Swiss Business Management School's Institute for Management Development (IMD).

In an effort to continue its digital success, Taiwan inaugurated this summer the Ministry of Digital Affairs (MODA). The MODA will be tasked with helping people build resilience in their digital lives, improving cybersecurity practices for businesses, introducing technologies, and realizing the vision of a smart country. CSR and ESG are encouraged to assist stakeholders with implementing green concepts in digital technology and creating a green meetings industry.

#### THE 'OPEN ARMS' PRESS CONFERENCE

As time goes by, Taiwan updates its business events ecosystem in order to be able to offer the best services. This October, MEET TAIWAN hosted a hybrid press conference at the Taipei International Convention Center to officially welcome international business events and visitors to Taiwan. Under the theme 'Open Arms', the event validated the destination's regenerated outlook of its business events scene.

Numerous VIP's from international associations, venue operators, and companies showed their support with their presence in person and online, emphasizing the importance of international partnerships from both private and public sectors. During the conference, Taiwan's efforts were recognized globally by international organizations that included ICCA, UFI, IAEE, and IAPCO, plus convention bureaus and associations from around the world.

Looking into 2023 and beyond, Simon Wang, President & CEO of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), expressed positivity and excitement for the prospects of MICE events in Taiwan. Taiwan will be expecting more than 500 business events, including international conferences, exhibitions, and meetings to be held in Taiwan next year, with an estimated 390 thousand business travelers to boost the country's economy.

More information  
[www.meettaiwan.com](http://www.meettaiwan.com)

Organized by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA  
Taiwan External Trade Development Council  
Ad. by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA



# As Guadalajara Moves to the Next Chapter

An interview with Gustavo Staufert, CEO of Guadalajara Visitors & Convention Bureau, reveals the city's evolution as a conference destination. From setting the example of what collaboration can achieve to joining BestCities Global Alliance, Guadalajara takes safety, sustainability and legacy creation for association conferences to new levels.

*Interview Vicky Koffa*

## What attracted you in joining BestCities Global Alliance?

When Bogota decided to leave the Alliance, the spot for representing Latin America was empty and we were a good fit. What we found the most impressive was our alignment to the extent legacy creation should be part of conference organizing. It was something we were already working on our own, expanding the public policy in difficult areas in order to improve the way of life for our communities.



GUSTAVO STAUFERT

When BestCities presented concrete legacy activities and ways to choose conferences which can make a difference, we realized that our goals are common. The fact that we won the Gay Games in 2023 is testament to our commitment to this goal. We can teach our citizens to celebrate differences without quitting or renouncing their beliefs. Through this event we want to convey to our city and to the world the message that humanity goes beyond preferences, that everyone is accepted the same.

## Can you share other events you are building legacy around?

On the one hand we are hosting Gay Games and on the other we have major sports events coming up. The FIFA Cup in 2026 will take place in three different countries for the first time - Canada, USA and Mexico. FIFA are currently focused on the promotion of human rights. Getting together with 16 destinations from three different countries in order to preserve culture, improve human rights, present to the world what collaboration can achieve, that is legacy.

The same goes for Talent Land, an event for young talent development. By getting together with big IT companies, like Intel or IBM located in the area, the new generations find a way to join the working force and create their own legacy from a very young age with new ideas and developments. Communicating that economics are very important, that environment and climate change are always a hot topic, is obviously crucial. But the expansion and improvement of humanity and society within our borders and outside of it also play a major role in building a better world.

## How does sustainability fit in your plans looking forward with BestCities?

We decided to show our progress with Intermoda, an important fashion show for Guadalajara. With two trade shows a year in an industry not famous for its sustainability output, we thought it was the perfect opportunity to showcase what our efforts can achieve. From venues to materials used for the show, sustainability will be at the core of the event. The hope is to educate all stakeholders within the





industry and expand these learnings into other industries.

### **Do you align conference bidding with strengthening your key economic sectors?**

By all means. We are working very close with areas of the economy that can benefit from and can be fruitful for visiting conferences. Our focus is anything that has to do with technology, education, medicine, laboratories, and literature. As the World Book Capital with the second largest book fair worldwide, we are now bidding for the World Editors conference, which I am confident we will win. Gastronomy is also a big part of our focus in an attempt to show how the mixture of concepts from the Spaniards and the Muslims formed the Mexican cuisine.

### **Can you explain what the 'Guadalajara Factor' is?**

It all started two years during a conference with other Latin American countries. Representatives were circulating this term, the 'Guadalajara Factor,' asking what the secret was behind our (i.e., the private sector, hotel owners, hotel chains, malls, convention centres, the airport, and state authorities) successful crisis management regarding business events during COVID. We were not aware of the term, it was not something we created, it came from the 'competition,' which makes it so much more important for us.

What the concept describes is the collaboration of all stakeholders to create a safe environment to help the economy and at the same time respect human rights and health. The University of Guadalajara also jumped in the discussions and

started putting together roundtables on how to hold conventions and exhibitions safely. Our work paid off because in the fall of 2020 we had the fashion show and a mining convention. We focused on things which are key to a successful conference: we worked hand in hand with the organizers and understanding their needs, with hotels and restaurants to adapt to the needs of the pandemic, focused on health and safety with regulations across the sectors, and reported the true numbers to the authorities for better organization. These four points kept us in business and that is what others now call the 'Guadalajara Factor.'

#### **Contact**

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# If You Seek a Meaningful Event, It Is Here to Find

New Zealand is extending an invitation to event planners who seek more through extraordinary travel.

Aotearoa New Zealand has released its first 100% Pure New Zealand global campaign post-pandemic, 'If You Seek'. The campaign shows that New Zealand rewards those curious enough to look a little deeper and go a little further to discover more meaningful connections.

It highlights the memorable experiences, people and places that make Business Events in New Zealand unique.

From the thrill of facing a traditional Māori pōwhiri welcome, to a venue set amongst lush native forest, the exhilarating rush of a jet boat that serves as transport between activities, to the awe-inspiring stories outside and inside its new world-class convention centres. The campaign captures

a sneak peek of the offerings that can deliver a business event with a difference.

René de Monchy, Chief Executive of Tourism New Zealand, says: *"Aotearoa New Zealand is a place for those who pursue meaningful connections with culture, people, and the environment."*

*"Those curious manuhiri [visitors] are rewarded with a rich experience of our beautiful country and are met with manaakitanga [a deep expression of hospitality and reciprocal understanding/connection]. These are visitors who we think will explore more deeply and ultimately contribute to New Zealand's tourism sector in ways beyond the economic benefit."*

## BUILDING ON ITS EVENT STRENGTHS

Tourism New Zealand's dedicated Business Events team provides strategic funding and support to bid for and bring international conferences to New Zealand.

Recent investment in the country's business events infrastructure has seen the development of three new world-class convention centres in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland.

You'll find strong knowledge hubs to support innovative content at conferences including agribusiness, health science, tech and screen, earth science, and high value food and wine.





But there's more that New Zealand can offer event planners, says Tourism New Zealand's General Manager New Zealand & Business Events, Bjoern Spreitzer.

*"It's an emphasis on Return on Objective that adds value to an event already packed with amazing activities, innovative content, and stunning scenery."*

*"Whether that means experiencing New Zealand's unique Māori culture and using that as a platform to expand on your organization's own culture and values; engaging closely with and learning from the local community; or enjoying nature and then giving back to the environment through sustainable initiatives, those more meaningful connections are here to find."*

#### BACK TO NATURE

New Zealanders feel a special connection to the land and believe they have a duty of care to look after it for future generations.

New Zealand's beautiful landscapes are a key attraction for visitors, but also a source of many of New Zealand's areas of expertise. Many international conferences leverage pre- and post-field trips to the farms incorporating cutting-edge agritech; the 'natural laboratory' of New Zealand's



geothermal activity; or sampling fresh produce, wine, or seafood at the source.

A number of attractions that can be added to an events agenda support regenerative tourism, from the forest zipline that ploughs profits back into pest eradication, to the whale and dolphin safari that contributes directly to marine conservation.

Tourism New Zealand encourages all event organisers and delegates coming to New Zealand to make the Tiaki Promise, a pledge to care for people, place, and culture.

Tourism New Zealand also provides information to help organizers reduce the environmental impact of their event. A free Sustainability Toolkit includes advice on eco-friendly venues and accommodation, greener transport options, waste management, local food, and maximizing community engagement.

For associations keen to measure and mitigate their event's carbon footprint, Toitū Envirocare provides internationally recognized certification and tools to measure, reduce and offset greenhouse gas emissions.

Giving a meaningful gift to delegates has also been made easy via a partnership with conservation charity programme Trees That Count. The option to plant a native tree on behalf of each conference

participant not only protects New Zealand's flora and fauna, but also supports efforts to address climate change by removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

#### PRESERVING CULTURE

Indigenous Māori culture is increasingly being incorporated into conferences held in New Zealand, rewarding those who come looking for more authentic connections.

Tourism New Zealand can help planners incorporate Māori culture into their conference for a unique experience found nowhere else. From a pōwhiri (ceremonial welcome) to bring people together; to a wero, or challenge laid at the beginning of the event for delegates; or a bespoke haka that helps build unity and purpose, incorporating culture allows an organization to explore their own goals and core values.

An event's diversity, inclusivity and connection with the host community can also be enhanced through initiatives including adding Māori representation on the Local Organizing Committee or featuring Māori knowledge or speakers.

If you seek more from your next conference, visit:  
[www.businessevents.newzealand.com](http://www.businessevents.newzealand.com)





# Bringing Blockchain to the World

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the in-person Korea Blockchain Week 2022 — one of Asia's largest blockchain events — returned to Seoul this past August, bringing an impressive number of speakers and foreign attendees despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

*Words Lane Nieset*



PARTICIPANTS ARRIVING AT KBW 2022

© KBW 2022

Now in its fifth year, Korea Blockchain Week 2022 (KBW 2022) has grown from 4,000 attendees to more than 8,700 people (42% of which are foreigners) — plus 130 influential speakers in the blockchain industry. At this year's event, three or four conferences took place simultaneously at venues across Seoul — including the

Grand InterContinental Seoul Parnas Hotel, DDP, Some Sevit and Jamsil Sports Complex — transforming KBW 2022 into a platform and public forum dedicated to the theme of blockchain.

Coinciding with the main event, IMPACT, there were a total of 97 registered events throughout the week, including KBW Official

Hackerhouse, Seoul Connect, Adoption: KBW Institution Day, Impact NFT Gallery and BlockParty. And now, building on this success, KBW is looking to become one of the world's top three blockchain events. As Seon-ik Jeon, CEO of FactBlock, an organizer of KBW 2022, explains: *"Since the opening of the blockchain scene in 2018, 'crypto' and 'Korea' were searched together the most. 'Blockchain' was the next popular word searched with 'Korea'. If the search is kept at this rate, I thought I could organize a global event based on this theme, so I organized and hosted KBW."*

For Jeon, the idea for KBW first started around 2017, when he was in Tokyo, a place where credit cards aren't even popular yet people were making payments with bitcoins. *"I believed that the blockchain industry would become mainstream,"* he adds. *"I thought that it would be possible to share information transparently and place Korea at the center of the Asian market by holding conferences and events with global leaders as it was before the blockchain market opened in Korea."*

He met with blockchain founders who were performing Asian marketing activities in Japan to collect information on the blockchain industry, and debuted KBW the next summer. They spend a year inviting popular speakers that the audience and community want to see, but unlike other types of conferences, they don't pay the speakers to attend – it was all voluntary (they do, however, cover standard hotel rooms and return flight tickets for keynote speakers).

*"If you have a good agenda, you can invite good speakers,"* Jeon says. *"The greater the number of audience an event has, the greater the chances that the speaker feels encouraged to give a better speech. In order to attract a large number of people, you must be able to offer great value constantly. By doing so, a virtuous circle of content can be created."*

The first year was the most demanding in terms of speakers, but once they invited Nick Szabo and David Chaum – the duo who laid out the foundation for today's blockchain – the second year, they earned the attention of tech-based founders and 1% of the global blockchain industry. *"It was also important that Korea became a popular destination, a hip country—I feel that people's perceptions changed a lot since 2018 [when South Korea actively opened its doors to blockchain],"* he adds.

In 2018, the country was undergoing social issues and the "philosophy of blockchain was degraded." Jeon created FactBlock as a way to mitigate the damage and create a venue for knowledge and information exchange by inviting experts to Korea. *"FactBlock, a blockchain community builder, is a product of such efforts,"* he explains.



*"To put it simply, KBW and FactBlock share the objective of expanding the base of the blockchain industry through a healthy community."*

One of the highlights of this year's event was the opening speech by Vitalik Buterin, the co-founder of Ethereum, titled "Post Merge: Next Step for Ethereum," in which Buterin predicted, *"the scalability of blockchain will be significantly improved after an update to proof-of-stake(Pos) scheduled in September...which will make the payments using cryptocurrencies more prevalent within two to three years."*

Other speakers included Henry Chang, CEO of Wemade, who showcased his vision to create an open blockchain gaming platform, which he aims to be the top of its kind in three years, and Sam Seo, the director of the Klaytn Foundation, an organization focusing on blockchain games to build an environment that can incorporate blockchain into the metaverse.

The goal now is to grow the event to 10,000 participants and use international events like this one to place more global attention on Korea and show how the country attracts and curates quality events and world-class speakers. *"What we had to do first was to create MICE that could garner attention and evoke a keyword associated with 'Korea'. In fact, there aren't many words associated with Korea generating a lot of searches—that's why each and every event is equally important,"* he explains in an interview following the success of this year's event.

*"For instance, imagine you make a plan that allows a participant to attend a single MICE event in Korea and go back to their country. In such cases, you can invite foreign speakers but not a foreign audience. That's why we added the concept of 'week' to the event so that the audience can fully enjoy Korea for a week, and, luckily, I think the concept of KBW resonated with the audience from the beginning."*

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# Meet Basel, City of Congresses and Fairs

Basel is capable of defending its status as a congress destination in the aftermath of the pandemic too. With several top-notch specialist events being staged there this autumn, Switzerland's third-largest city is attracting thousands of visitors.

*Words Christine Waelti*

While labels like city of culture, research and science location and business metropolis all accurately describe Basel, they cannot conceal the fact that the city is compact in size. Despite this, it still boasts plenty of urban flair. Art and architecture buffs will find offerings unrivalled elsewhere in Switzerland. And, apart from museums, galleries and buildings of international renown, the inhabitants of Basel also know how to enjoy life. It thus comes as no surprise to learn that the city features a highly varied gastronomic and club scene and a wealth of different events.

Basel's central location in Europe constitutes a major advantage for organizers, who value its good accessibility and excellent public transport network. A further argument is the infrastructure available at Messe and Congress Center Basel, right in the heart of the city. Five generously-dimensioned exhibition halls and 25 modern conference rooms offer maximum flexibility with an overall surface area of 141,000 sqm. The great versatility of the venue is evident from the packed schedule of national and international events being hosted there this autumn.

## CASE STUDIES

These include the European Congress of Pathology (ECP) which attracted just over 4,000 specialists from more than 100 countries. Attendees were particularly impressed by the fact that everything was within such easy reach in the city centre, that the rooms at the venue were so versatile and that such importance was attached to the topic of sustainability.

This was followed from 18 to 22 September 2022 by the European Conference on Optical Communications (ECOC), regarded as the industry's most important



## Key figures for the Messe and Congress Center Basel

- Exhibition area (square metres): 141,000
- Exhibitions (annually): 20 to 25
- Visitors at the exhibition site (annually): up to 1 million
- Rooms at the Congress Center: 25
- Room capacity: 50 to 10,000
- Events (annually): 250





meeting point, with its almost 5,000 participants from 46 countries. Those in charge opted for the MCH Group locations since they are capable of accommodating an extensive exhibition in addition to the conference program.

*"We require a considerable amount of space for both, and it was quite a challenge to find a suitable location,"* explains Emma Harvey, Commercial Director at ECOC. *"But Messe and Congress Center Basel convinced us on all counts."*

And further exciting congresses are scheduled for the weeks to come, including the Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting from 24 to 26 October 2022 and the Swiss Innovation Forum on 23 November 2022.

*"After two difficult years, we very much appreciate the many great events that are*

*being staged on our premises,"* says Jonas Scharf, Head of MCH Venues. *"For us, this is clear proof that Basel will be one of the places to be for organizers in future too."*

#### MORE THAN A LOCATION

When you hold an event in the congress centre or at Messe Basel, you are booking a great deal more than just a well-equipped location. You also benefit from the following advantages:

- easy access thanks to the central location, proximity to the airport and good rail connections.
- the support of an experienced and professional team with a high-quality standard.
- an uncomplicated stay at the venue thanks to its state-of-the-art infrastructure

and immediate proximity to the city centre.

- an inspiring atmosphere thanks to the leading position that Basel holds in the life sciences, biotechnology and medicine.
- a good environmental footprint, since the City of Basel generates all its electricity from renewable energy sources.

#### Contact

MCH Messe Schweiz (Basel) AG /  
[www.messe-basel.com](http://www.messe-basel.com) / +41 58 206 20 20

#### More info on Switzerland as a convention destination:

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## FRANCE'S FAMOUS FACES

# Florian Lemaitre

For our France's Famous Faces Series, Boardroom met with Dr Florian Lemaitre, Professor in Pharmacology at the Rennes University Hospital's School of Medicine. In the Pharmacology Department, Dr. Lemaitre is responsible for therapeutic drug monitoring, or as we say 'TDM' of patients taking immunosuppressive and antiretroviral drugs. He was also instrumental in getting the International Congress of Therapeutic Drug Monitoring & Clinical Toxicology to Rennes.

*Interview Remi Deve*

### **Can you briefly introduce the International Association of Therapeutic Drug Monitoring & Clinical Toxicology?**

The IADMCT is a professional society that brings together pharmacologists and toxicologists from all over the world working in hospital or academic biology laboratories. They are drug specialists, doctors, pharmacists or scientists, involved in the individualization of drug treatments.

To put it simply, from a blood sample taken from a patient, we measure the concentrations of drugs in his/her body and suggest adjustments to the dosage in order to ensure the effectiveness of the treatments and to limit the risk of toxicity during their use.

I am both the secretary of the association and the vice-chair of the scientific committee relating to immunosuppressive drugs, the anti-rejection drugs used in organ transplantation.

### **You help bid for and won the hosting of the International Congress of Therapeutic Drug Monitoring & Clinical Toxicology to be held in Rennes in 2026: to what extent is this a showcase of Rennes as knowledge hub?**

This success puts Rennes on the same level as other major European and international cities that hosted the event in the past. This is actually only the second time that a French city has been selected for the organization of the congress in the last 24 years. Rennes will be able to showcase itself as a major hub for pharmacology and toxicology, but make no mistake, this achievement is due to the fact that all stakeholders at a national level worked hand in hand to get this.

### **Generally, what's in it for a destination like Rennes to attract such a high-profile event?**

The organization of an international congress in Rennes is a wonderful opportunity to show what the city, and possibly

the entire region, can offer. Our fellow pharmacologists and toxicologists from all over the world will be introduced to our strong local scientific network and I'm confident we will initiate or strengthen formal collaborations with other hospitals and universities. The diverse origins of the participants are always the starting point for rich discussions and interactions - only at congresses like this can you do that, and Rennes' typical local culture will definitely help.

### **What kind of support has the Rennes Convention Bureau provided?**

The teams at the Rennes Convention Bureau and the Couvent des Jacobins Convention Centre provided us with invaluable assistance in preparing our bid application. Their know-how, every step of the way, is undoubtedly an added value. They have brought their wealth of experience regarding our needs in terms of rental space, transport, accommodation and catering, as well as support for other services such as communication and marketing - they also helped us deal with the right PCO.

The teams truly act as a partner to us, the local organizing committee, who, in turn, has their hands free to develop the best scientific program possible. Without the help of the Rennes Convention Bureau and the Couvent des Jacobins Convention Centre, we would probably not have been able to win the bid.

#### **More information on Rennes as a congress destination:**

[bureau.congres@destinationrennes.com](mailto:bureau.congres@destinationrennes.com) / [rennes-congres.fr](http://rennes-congres.fr) /  
[www.centre-congres-rennes.fr](http://www.centre-congres-rennes.fr)





# Conferences Made Easier

It's a stat that says it all. When associations organize a conference in Paris, there is usually a 20 per cent increase in the attendance. But that doesn't mean the French capital – which is 'naturally' attractive in a way – just sits there and rests on its laurels.

In fact, Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau just launched two Welcome Charter that have been designed to make any event run even more smoothly.

Corinne Menegaux, Managing Director, tells Boardroom all about it.

*Words Remi Deve*

This is a competitive world, especially when it comes to business events. Despite geopolitical uncertainties that are looming upon us, destinations have to differentiate themselves from each other and prove that they can deliver.

## RIGOROUS CRITERIA

Paris is no exception. If its historical attraction has been undisputed, it has to stay on top of its game and demonstrate its innate sense of hospitality every step of the way. In that regard, the Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau, together with all the stakeholders operating in the Paris tourism sector, have invested in making easier the hosting of conferences in the French capital, and signed two hosting charters which set out rigorous criteria designed to enable easier business traveller pathway.

*"The idea is to gather the professionals of the tourism sector in Paris under one roof if I may say so," explains Corinne Menegaux. "The ones who share the same values of excellence and hospitality and who can commit to making the experience of the planner and the delegate like no other. So far, we have about 50 signatories of the charters. It's actually a work in progress."*

The charters describe the way institutions, hotels, venues, caterers, inbound tourism agents and transport companies work together to develop the appeal of



the destination, in a whole-of-a-city approach. This implies personalized – and unified – support for sponsors, support letters, simplified terms and conditions of sale, technical management tracking, quota management, targeted prospecting, systematic application of quality commitments, etc. The list is quite long!

Menegaux adds that the ultimate good is to provide an event experience that is augmented, sustainable and innovative.



*“Augmented because we can help technologically make your event more visible on the world stage, sustainable in the broadest sense of the term because sustainability lies at the core of our strategy and not only from an environment perspective, and innovative for we make it easy to change your mindset about how you usually do things,” she says.*

#### IMPACT & BEYOND

To take one step even further, the Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau is currently developing an impact calculation tool, scheduled to be launched in spring 2023. It will concretely measure the economic, social and environmental benefits of the events taking place in the French capital.

Menegaux argues: *“Obviously, we’re interested in the economic impact business events generate for Paris and its surrounding region. But we’re also aware that organizations nowadays would also like to know the social and environmental impact they have on the local communities and how they create change with their events. This new tool will be designed just for that. And it will give us a competitive advantage in comparison to our more traditional competitors.”*

All this, in addition to a renewed confidence in world that sees business events as an ideal platform for knowledge transfer, will definitely breathe life into the French capital’s sectors of excellence, including innovation, design / fashion, science, culture, gastronomy and sport. As it is preparing itself for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Paris has never been so ready to embrace association conferences that want to make a difference.

Contact  
[convention.parisinfo.com](http://convention.parisinfo.com)

## Medical Congresses in Paris

In Paris, medical conferences accounted for 41% of the total number of congresses organized in 2021, with 136 events.

The healthcare sector always ranks first when it comes to hosting conferences in the French capital. In 2021, it attracted 149,760 participants, i.e. 28% of total delegates, the lowest share since 2018. Half of the medical congresses organized in Paris had more than 500 participants, and November was the busiest month, with 39 meetings and 65,453 participants.

Flagship events include conferences such as the ESMO 2022 Congress which took place early September 2022 at Paris Expo Porte de Versailles. On this occasion, the oncology community resumed one of their most awaited annual in-person events – something they were not able to do for a long time.

The event brought together 29,000 delegates - medical and clinical oncologists, basic translational researchers, oncology nurses (but also all other oncology professionals, patient advocates, journalists, healthcare industry representatives, policy decision makers, and regulators), of whom around 5,000 joined the meeting online. High-quality education was delivered in more than 20 tracks covering all tumor types, and a deep-dive focus was given to practice-changing data, therapeutic innovations, translational research, and patient advocacy, with around 2000 abstracts.

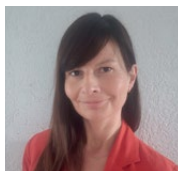


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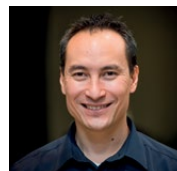
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**Susan de Bievre**

Association Consultant  
& Advisor

Peter was elected as Secretary General of URSI in 2017. He is also professor at Ghent University and permanent member of staff from IMEC (Interuniversity MicroElectronics Center) in Belgium and more specifically with the IDLab (Internet Technology and Data Science Lab). He is directly responsible for several EU-funded research projects both on a technological level as well as on a more coordinating level e.g. as project coordinator of projects in the field of microelectronics and later in the area of Future Internet and Next Generation Internet.

Ariane has more than fifteen years of professional experience in associations' management, including complex educational and event programming, project management, business development, strategic planning, and team leadership with international exposure. She worked for the International Society of Nephrology, the International Society of Endocrinology, and the European Society of Organ Transplantation.

As part of the EPIC mission, Carlos works closely with industrial photonic companies to ensure a vibrant and competitive ecosystem by maintaining a strong international network and acting as a catalyst and facilitator for technological and commercial advancement. He brings with him a strong background in microelectronics which was acquired through several management positions held at the international association SEMI.

Susan has worked in the medical association field for over 15 years. She was External Relations and Strategic Business Manager at the European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care where she led and built the strategic partnership with industry stakeholders. She moved to the International Society of Nephrology in a similar position in 2019. She today holds senior consultancy and advisory roles for several medical associations.



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