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The Next Chapter of Association Management

2025 VOLUME 1 | VOLUME 2 | VOLUME 3 | VOLUME 4



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LETTER TO OUR READERS

The New Complexity of Association Leadership

The job of leading an association has never been more complex, or actually more human. As geopolitical instability, funding uncertainty, and accelerating technological change seem to become the norm, leaders are constantly being asked to make sense of ambiguity. Strategy today is less about control and more about clarity, finding a way forward even when the picture isn't complete.

Association leadership used to be defined by expertise, structure, and predictability. Those things still matter, but they no longer suffice. The leaders who thrive now are the ones who know how to balance competing priorities: purpose and pragmatism, tradition and innovation, inclusivity and focus. They understand that leadership is not about having all the answers: it's about creating the conditions where the right questions can be asked.

At Boardroom, we've noticed this shift across every conversation we have with association executives and destination partners. Decision-making has become more iterative, more reflective, and ultimately, more collaborative. The best leaders we meet are those who embrace uncertainty as part of their craft, using it to stay curious, adaptive, and open to new forms of partnership.

This issue reflects that evolution. From AI and automation to sustainability and legacy, the stories in these pages (and on www.boardroom.global) are not about quick fixes but about navigating complexity with intention. They show leaders choosing to slow down, listen, and redefine what value means in a fast-changing environment.

In many ways, associations have an advantage in this landscape. Their DNA is collective, built on dialogue, consensus, and shared purpose. Those very traits, once seen as slow or bureaucratic, have become powerful assets in an age that prizes resilience and trust.

So as you read through this issue, we invite you to see complexity not as a burden, but as a new kind of leadership currency. It's what reminds us that progress is rarely linear... and that sometimes, the most effective strategy is simply to stay grounded while everything around us moves.



Céline Volz

FOUNDER &
MANAGING PARTNER



R mi D v 

FOUNDER &
CHIEF EDITOR



BOARDROOM
THE BEST RESOURCE FOR ASSOCIATIONS

Address

Avenue des Volontaires 19
1160 Brussels, Belgium
info@boardroom.global
www.boardroom.global
T. +32 2 743 47 20

Founder & Managing Partner

Cécile Koch
cecile@boardroom.global
+33 6 72 78 72 37

Founder & Chief Editor

Rémi Dève
editor@boardroom.global
+33 771 89 43 99

Deputy Director

Vicky Koffa
vicky@boardroom.global

Sales & Marketing Manager

Csilla Benedek
csilla@boardroom.global

Contributors

Ole Petter Anfinssen
Senthil Gopinath
Sven Bossu
Elizabeth Powell
Ewa Abramiuk-Lete
Dr. Ahmed El Shal

Administration & Accounting

Frédéric Gandibleux
finance@boardroom.global

Design

Paf! | pafdesign.be
info@pafdesign.be
+32 2 743 47 28

Cover Picture

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By Dr Ole Petter Anfinssen, Special Contributor to Boardroom

Why Winning the Argument Matters More Than Being Right

When most of us think about politics - whether it is for government, business, or even personal relationships - we often see it as a rivalry between right or wrong. We tend to believe that the strongest ideas or thoughts, backed by truth and integrity, will naturally rise to the top and be the winning notion. However, the reality is very different.

In power and politics, results are rarely determined by who is objectively “right.” They are defined by who delivers the most compelling and convincing story, winning the audience. What matters most is not accuracy, but persuasion – the ability to influence people, win them over, shape perceptions, and drive decisions in your favour. This is uncomfortable to acknowledge, but it is the truth and understanding it is essential for anyone who wants to navigate the realms of leadership, influence, and decision-making.

Power and politics at their core

Power is the ability to form outcomes. It is the capability to influence what comes next, to manoeuvre reality to align with your vision. In contrast, politics is the negotiation of how that power gets wielded. Unlike philosophy or morality, which pursue universal truths, politics lives in competing interests. Different groups or teams – nations, parties, corporations, or even friends or family members – come to the table with disagreements, different opinions and conflicting priorities. One group or person’s view of what is the “right” answer or solution often comes across as self-serving or harmful to another.

This is why politics seldom produces universally “correct” or accepted answers. Instead, it produces hidden agendas, compromises, alliances, and results shaped by who can make their case most persuasively. If politics were about disclosing the truth alone, decisions would be made by scholars and scientists. However, politics is not a class, workshop or seminar; it is a competition where success depends on persuasion. It is where a weaker argument can triumph over a stronger one if packaged in a way that resonates with people’s emotions, fears, or hopes – pulling heartstrings.

Leaders should understand this intuitively. They know that appearing confident, relatable, and trustworthy often matters more than showing valid evidence. History is filled with examples, and it is about persuasion vs principle.

If we look for instance at the U.S. presidential election and debates of the 1960s. Richard Nixon had experience and made informed, detailed arguments, while John F. Kennedy, who was calm and charismatic, won over the audience. The “truth” of policy meant less than the perception of direction, strength and vision.

This also applies to the corporate world or non-profits. An executive director of an association pitching a new strategy doesn’t just present data; they develop the narrative. They emphasise risks of competitors, the opportunities ahead, and how to act decisively. Even if a competitor’s proposal carries more valid evidence, the leader who presents and sells their plan as bold, urgent, and inspiring will most likely win.

The power of framing in politics

If persuasion is the catalyst of politics, framing is what fuels it. Framing is about how something is presented or sold to the people or audiences. It is the lens through which people interpret it. It generates perception before the discussion even begins.

Look at climate change for example. Scientists and researchers mostly agree on the data, while public opinion is influenced by framing. One side presents the issue as an economic expense and governmental overreach, while the other frames it as an important moral obligation to protect future generations and an opportunity for sustainable green innovation. Both sides draw from evidence and facts, but the side that wins is the one that frames it to resonate with the values and/or fears of their audience.

Framing also shows up in everyday business. A manager can describe a restructuring as downsizing or as streamlining to secure future growth. Both are actually true, but the framing determines whether the workforce feels threatened or secure. Ultimately, the framing of such sets the stage. Whoever defines the terms of the discussion is already one step towards winning it.

Perception vs. Reality

Politics is often criticised for being a show that misses the point. However, politics is like a theatre, and the delivered performance matters. Perception often trumps reality. A government may introduce an imperfect policy, but if it's seen as bold, decisive, and morally aligned with voters and its audience, it will most likely succeed politically. In contrast, a more technically rigorous policy might fail if it feels threatening, confusing, or just uninspiring.

In associations or corporate life, perception can make or break the organisation and/or careers. Hence, an organisation and/or leader who displays confidence and clarity is often trusted more than those who are technically brilliant but stumble when it comes to communication. Boards and investors support and trust leaders who can inspire them, not necessarily the ones with the soundest spreadsheets.

Does this mean that ethics don't matter? Not at all. In fact, ethics form the backbone of political credibility. A politician who consistently bends the truth may win short-term victories but risks losing public trust. An executive director

of an association who chooses to manipulate and convince stakeholders may secure short-term success but undermine confidence and trust among investors and stakeholders in the long run.

The truly great leaders balance persuasion with principle. They understand that while perception may dominate in the short term, credibility and trust support long-term sustainability. They know that persuasion without integrity may crumble, as it breaks if people feel deceived.

Lessons for leaders

For anyone navigating politics – whether in associations, government, a boardroom – the lessons are clear:

1. Facts are necessary but not sufficient. Evidence provides credibility, but it is rarely convincing on its own.
2. Framing is conclusive. Whoever defines the issue shapes the result.
3. Emotion beats logic. People are more inclined to be moved by stories, values, and visions rather than statistics.
4. Ethics is sustaining influence. Persuasion without integrity may win battles but lose wars.
5. Perception is power. What people believe or think about a decision matters often more than the decision itself.

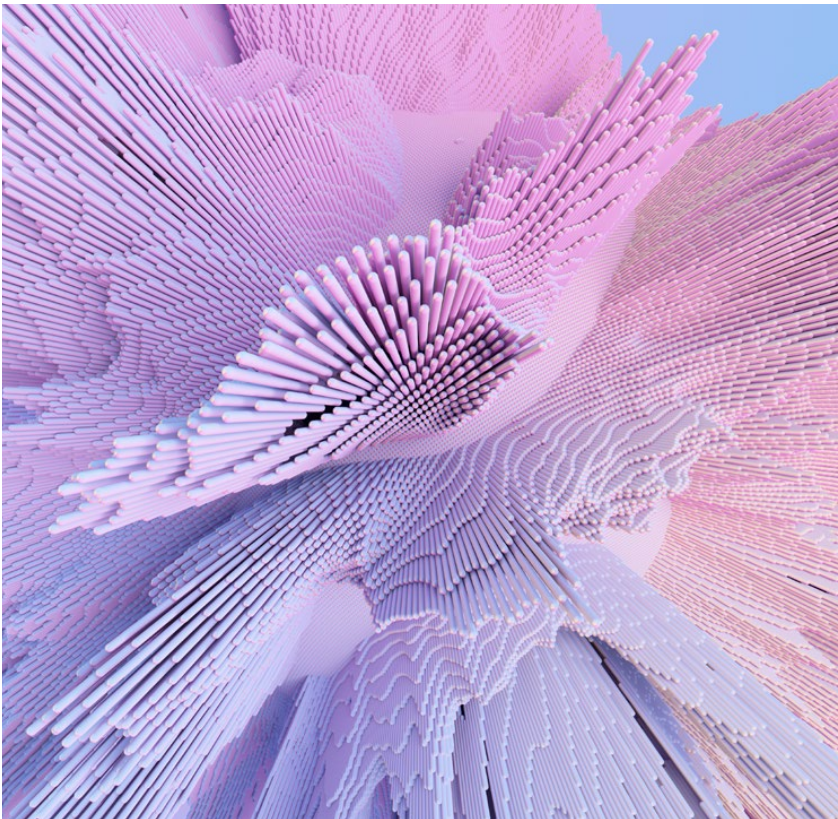
In the end, the winning argument matters more than being right – but great leaders learn to do both.



By: Elizabeth Powell

From Digital to Dynamic: How Associations are Adapting to the Changing Events Landscape

As associations continue to rethink their event strategies amid new challenges, perception and reality often diverge. This article challenges the post-COVID default to virtual and explores how rising costs, evolving sponsor demands, and the quest for personalized, high-value engagement are reshaping in-person and hybrid gatherings today.



On the heels of ongoing government policy changes starting in spring 2025, associations across industries continue to assess their event strategies and work to identify the best ways to engage member audiences in a constantly—and rapidly—evolving environment. Notably, there has been a shift from the post-COVID virtual gathering playbook to a culture of pilots and experimentation rooted in technology integration and data-driven initiatives.

This shift underscores a growing imperative for association event planners to stay closely attuned to member preferences, translating subtle signals and shifting expectations into more responsive, flexible event strategies.

From Member Preferences to Event Planning Solutions

With evolving member preferences and behaviors top of mind—such as costs and time for travel, DEI policy impacts on attendance, etc.—associations are

rethinking how they deliver value through events, while maintaining agility and cost-consciousness in their solutions. As a result, associations are increasingly consolidating in-person events or shifting to smaller gatherings. This allows organizations to address attendance uncertainty and budget constraints, while fostering community for members.

Due to the unpredictability of registration and ticket sales seen in early 2025, associations are looking at their bottom line and seeking ways to augment the non-dues revenue that comes from supplemental services like course offerings, certifications, and sponsorships. Given the longer lead time for selling event sponsorships, it is important to measure audiences' engagement with these non-dues revenue plays to most strategically and sustainably grow profits.

But how is the right balance between revenue growth and rising costs realized? Organizations at the forefront of this new age of event planning are integrating event technology not just for logistics, but to optimize connecting event outcomes with broader organizational goals, helping justify investments and demonstrate the impact of these gatherings to leadership. At a minimum, this looks like event tech that leverages AI, decreases the need for manual processes, easily integrates with their AMS or CRM, and allows for intuitive reporting and information sharing across departments for mission-driven goal setting.

As associations strive to align event performance with strategic goals, they're also recognizing that traditional post-event surveys fall short—prompting a shift toward

more dynamic, personalized feedback mechanisms that better reflect attendee experiences and expectations.

Beyond the Post-Event Survey: Unlocking Personalized Insights

To truly understand what drives attendee satisfaction and event success, organizations are moving away from traditional feedback mechanisms like the static post-event survey. The idea that “content is king” is being challenged, and in-person registration is increasingly driven by personalized, unique experiences that go beyond information delivery. With the level of data processing required to capture and activate on advanced personalization tactics, associations' future programming efforts will likely be rooted in tech-integrations that streamline this process.

Through behavioral data collection and analysis, associations are able to implement personalized, real-time engagement strategies, informed by members' unique experiences.

Turning Trends into Tactics for Association Event Planners

The evolving event landscape demands more than reactive planning. It calls for intentional, data-informed strategies that reflect the real preferences and behaviors of members. Despite the initial assumption around virtual events remaining the default, associations are finding success by consolidating in-person gatherings, experimenting with smaller formats, and aligning event design with

both budget realities and audience expectations.

To refine event planning strategies for the member audiences of the future, consider:

- **Listening actively and more often than ever before.** Instead of relying on post-event surveys, integrate real-time feedback tools and personalized engagement touchpoints throughout the event lifecycle.
- **Prioritizing flexibility.** Piloting smaller, regional events to test engagement strategies before scaling them nationally can allow for planning agility without overcommitting resources. Pivoting back to pre-COVID isn't realistic, given the changing economic and political realities.
- **Rethinking how to leverage technology strategically.** Assess the integrated functionality of your existing tech stack and invest in platforms that streamline activities while increasing the operational capacity of staff.
- **Reimagining sponsorships.** As costs rise, creative sponsorship models can help offset expenses while delivering value to both members and partners.

By leaning into member data and trends, associations can design events that are not only more engaging and efficient, but also more aligned with their mission and member needs. The key is to stay curious, stay connected, and continue evolving—just like the audiences they serve.

This article originally appeared on ASAEcenter.org. Reprinted with permission. Copyright ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership (September, 2025), Washington, DC



The background of the entire page is an abstract, textured composition of brushstrokes. The colors are primarily teal and green, with prominent streaks of orange and red, creating a sense of movement and depth. The strokes are layered and vary in thickness, giving it a painterly, almost impasto-like quality.

FEATURE

The Next Chapter of Association Management

From AI to new models of engagement, associations are navigating a period of profound transformation. What it means to connect, lead, and create impact is being rewritten by technology, culture, and global forces. To make sense of what's ahead, ESAE, IAPCO, AIPC, and ICCA offer their perspectives on the trends reshaping the future of association management.

By Ewa Abramiuk-Lete, Member of the Board of ESAE

Shaping the Future of Association Management

Leading an association today means leading through transformation. The world is shifting, driven by technology, new member expectations, and a growing call for purpose, trust, and agility. What worked yesterday won't carry us forward tomorrow. To stay relevant, we need to evolve, faster, smarter, and with greater intention.

Through my work and exchanges with peers at the European Society of Association Executives (ESAE), I see a common understanding emerging: shaping the future of association management isn't about reacting to change, but guiding it. It's about using our leadership to connect strategy with purpose, technology with empathy, and innovation with trust. The associations that will thrive lead with clarity, understanding who they serve, how they create value, and how they use every tool available to build meaningful relationships in an increasingly complex world.

Technology with Purpose

Technology is transforming how we lead, connect, and deliver value. Artificial intelligence, automation, and data-driven tools now sit at the core of association operations: they streamline renewals, events, and communications, freeing time for what matters most, ie strategy, relationships, and purpose.

But efficiency alone doesn't shape the future. The real opportunity lies in how we use technology to reimagine connections—not just with members but also with partners, policymakers, and the wider ecosystem. Our role as leaders is to use these tools to listen more deeply, understand more fully, and communicate more meaningfully.

We operate in a world of information overload. Members and stakeholders are bombarded with messages daily. In this environment, clarity becomes a form of leadership. Technology can help us cut through the noise—by using data to tailor messages, choose the right channels, and deliver the right

content at the right time. But tools alone are not enough. Intention truly matters, focusing on what's essential, speaking authentically, and ensuring our message reflects our purpose and values.

Relationships remain the heart of association management. Technology should amplify, not replace, the human connection that defines our work. With the right systems, we can hear our communities more clearly, anticipate their needs, and design experiences that resonate.

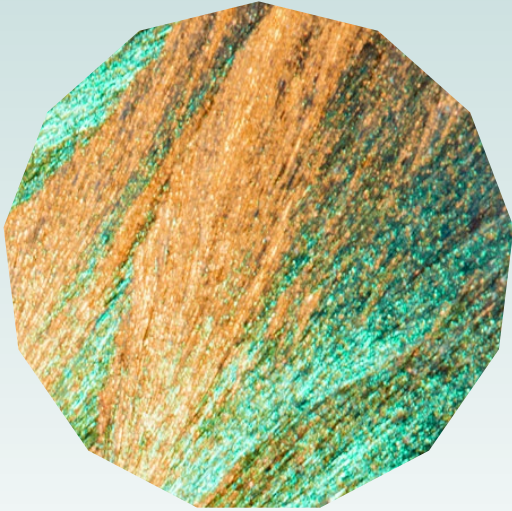
Leadership in the digital era requires discernment. More tools don't automatically mean more impact. What counts is how we use them, guided by ethics, transparency, and strategic clarity. Thoughtfully applied, technology becomes a catalyst for insight, empathy, and trust—the foundations for associations to thrive in the years ahead.

New Expectations from a New Generation

As a millennial, I've seen how expectations have evolved. My generation—and those following—seek immediate, meaningful, and personal connection. We want associations that don't just inform but inspire, that don't just serve but understand.

Younger professionals value experiences that reflect who they are and where they're headed—mentoring, learning pathways, and opportunities that grow with them.





They also expect flexibility: one year, it might be a major congress, and the next, a series of webinars, local meet-ups, or digital exchanges. The future of membership is built on *choice*—allowing people to engage in ways that fit their rhythm, needs, and ambitions.

Research such as the Association Engagement Index 2024 reinforces this. Younger members look for seamless access, tailored experiences, and authentic opportunities to connect. Meeting these expectations is a leadership responsibility.

From Consumers to Contributors

Belonging today means contributing to a shared purpose. Many members, especially younger ones, want to shape the direction of their associations. They want to share ideas, lend expertise, and see their fingerprints on outcomes.

Yet not everyone feels invited in. As leaders, we can change that by opening more doors: through micro-volunteering, open calls for input, or collaborative projects. Co-creation builds ownership and trust. When members feel seen, heard, and empowered, they move from consumers of value to partners in impact. And that shift transforms the very fabric of an association.

Events & Value, Rethought

Events remain the heartbeat of association life, but their role is evolving. Members now seek experiences that inspire and connect, not just agendas to attend. Hybrid formats allow us to combine the energy of in-person gatherings with the reach of digital access. Sessions are shorter, more interactive, and designed to spark dialogue rather than deliver monologues.

Sustainability is now central to our planning. Members and partners expect us to walk the talk—reducing waste, choosing responsible venues, and minimising travel where possible. And when travel does happen, it should deliver *maximum value*: combining learning, networking, internal alignment,

and relationship-building in one purposeful experience. Every choice—from venue to content—signals who we are and what we stand for.

Beyond events, members expect ongoing value throughout the year: access to learning, career support, wellbeing resources, and thought leadership. Expanding these offerings strengthens relationships and builds resilience through more diverse revenue streams.

Purpose & Agility

Shaping the future also means rethinking how we lead. Governance models are becoming more inclusive and agile. Teams need space to act, and leaders need the courage to decide quickly and transparently.

Expectations are rising. Members and stakeholders want associations to lead by example, embedding sustainability, diversity, and integrity into everything we do. Trust is earned through consistency, openness, and values in action.

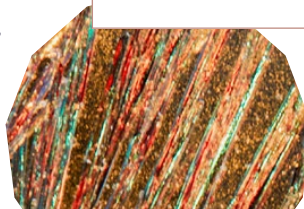
Agility and resilience are now essentials. We need strategies that adapt to change, diversified income, and teams equipped with the skills and confidence to navigate uncertainty. The associations that will shape the future are those that combine clarity of purpose with the courage to evolve and communicate that vision clearly to all they serve.

Building capacity

At ESAE, we're helping leaders build organisations that are not just responsive, but visionary—driven by peer learning, shared experiences, and collective reflection.

If we stay close to our members, listen deeply, communicate clearly, and act boldly, associations will continue to thrive as trusted communities of knowledge, connection, and impact. The future of our sector will be defined by those who lead with purpose and clarity... and who turn insight into action.

This article is part of the exclusive partnership between ESAE and Boardroom. For more information about ESAE, visit www.esae.eu.





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By Dr. Ahmed El Shal

The Purpose-Driven Future: Leading Associations in an Era of Unprecedented Change

For association leaders, the choice is stark: either become architects of the future or be rendered obsolete by it. The challenge is no longer simply to adapt, but to lead with purpose, harnessing innovation not just for survival, but to build more resilient, relevant, and impactful communities.

This new era demands a new playbook. Associations that thrive will be those that master the delicate art of blending a global vision with local soul, leveraging cutting-edge technology while deepening their commitment to human values like sustainability, diversity, and inclusion.

The Twin Engines of Change: AI & ESG

Two of the most powerful forces reshaping the association landscape are Artificial Intelligence and a deep-seated commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles. Far from being separate trends, they are increasingly intertwined.

AI: From Abstract Promise to Practical Powerhouse

AI is rapidly moving from the realm of futuristic hype to a practical tool in the association toolkit. While many organisations are still in the experimental phase, held back by concerns over data privacy and legacy systems, the pioneers are already reaping the rewards. They are deploying AI to personalise member communications, predict lapse risks, curate event content, and automate

operational tasks, freeing up staff for higher-value strategic work.

The playbook for successful AI adoption is clear:

1. **Start Small, Scale Wisely:** Pilot AI in non-critical workflows, like member segmentation or initial email drafting. Build confidence and demonstrate value before expanding to more complex applications.
2. **Invest in People:** Technology is only as good as the people who use it. Investing in staff training and establishing clear ethical governance is not just important; it's the foundation of successful implementation.
3. **Deliver Tangible Value:** The ultimate goal of AI is to enhance the member experience. When AI is used to anticipate a member's needs, personalise their learning journey, or connect them with the right peers, its true power is unlocked.

Sustainability & ESG: The New Bedrock of Trust

Simultaneously, the call for sustainable and responsible operation has become deafening. Members, particularly younger

generations, expect the organisations they belong to to "walk the talk."

This extends from executing green events and adopting digital-first operations to ensuring inclusive procurement and transparently tracking carbon emissions. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are central to this, moving from symbolic gestures to measurable goals. Leading associations are embedding DEI into their governance structures, recruitment processes, and program design, ensuring that leadership reflects the diversity of their membership. Here again, technology can be a powerful ally, helping to identify biased language or analyze representation gaps – but only when guided by a strong ethical framework.

The Global Mindset with a Local Touch: Lessons from the MENA Region

While these trends are global, their application must be intensely local. A one-size-fits-all approach is doomed to fail. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region serves as a fascinating microcosm of this dynamic, offering powerful lessons for associations worldwide.

The MENA region is a vibrant landscape of youthful ambition, technological leapfrogging, and deep cultural traditions. With a projected 10.5% growth in the association meetings market from 2023–2028, it's a hub of innovation. Many associations here have bypassed legacy systems, moving directly to agile, cloud-based platforms. This digital-native approach, combined with a young, tech-savvy professional class, makes the region a testbed for the future. In 2022 alone, the region hosted over 860 association meetings, a testament to its growing importance on the world stage.

Associations succeeding here are those that honor tradition while empowering innovation. They offer multilingual content, develop programs that respect cultural nuances, and forge powerful public-private partnerships, demonstrating that the future of association management lies in this blend of global best practices and local resonance.

The 10 Pillars of a Future-Ready Association

Looking ahead, a clear blueprint for success is emerging. Ten core trends are shaping the next chapter of association management, offering a strategic roadmap for leaders ready to embrace the future.

1. **AI Across the Enterprise:** From personalising member journeys to automating operations and generating deep insights, AI will become woven into the fabric of any organisation.
2. **Year-Round Community:** The annual conference is no longer enough. The focus is shifting to "always-on" digital platforms that foster connection, collaboration, and learning 365 days a year.
3. **Skills-Based Learning Ecosystems:** Members need continuous professional development. Associations are responding with stackable micro-credentials, digital badges, and flexible learning pathways tied to real-world workforce needs.
4. **Revenue Diversification:** An over-reliance on dues and event registrations is risky. The future lies in innovative revenue streams: sponsored knowledge hubs, premium data products, and subscription-based content.
5. **Sustainability as a Core Strategy:** Moving beyond intent, associations will embed ESG principles into their governance, with transparent reporting, sustainable supply chains, and carbon reduction targets becoming standard practice.
6. **Geopolitical Resilience:** In a world of increasing disruption, scenario planning, diversified event markets, and flexible venue strategies are essential to mitigate risks from travel friction, inflation, and political volatility.
7. **Data as a Strategic Asset:** A robust first-party data strategy, built on a foundation of privacy and trust, will be the fuel for personalisation and informed decision-making.
8. **Evolving Talent Models:** Hybrid teams, strategic partnerships with specialists like AMCs and PCOs, and a focus on upskilling staff in AI literacy, data storytelling, and community management will define the modern association workforce.
9. **True Hybrid Fluency:** Digital and in-person experiences will be designed as equals, with a focus on equitable participation, multilingual access, and seamless integration.
10. **Measurement That Matters:** Success will be measured not by vanity metrics, but by value indicators: member retention, learning outcomes, community health, and demonstrable sustainability impact.

Your First 90 Days: An Action Plan for Transformation

The journey to becoming a future-ready association can begin today. Here are actionable first steps to build momentum over the next three months:

- **Map Your Member Journey:** Identify your key member personas and outline their touchpoints with your association. Where can you add more value? Where are the friction points?
- **Launch a Personalisation Pilot:** Select one program – perhaps your annual conference or a webinar series – and use AI-driven tools to recommend tailored sessions and networking opportunities.
- **Establish a Sustainability Baseline:** Choose one event and measure its carbon footprint. This will provide the data needed to set realistic reduction targets for the future.
- **Build an Insights Dashboard:** Audit your data sources and consolidate key metrics into a simple dashboard focused on outcomes like retention, engagement, and sponsorship ROI.
- **Repackage Your Content:** Take your top-performing sessions and transform them into short courses, micro-credentials, or sponsored knowledge kits to extend their life and value.

The path forward is clear. The associations that will define the coming decade are those that lead with a dual vision: embracing the transformative power of AI and technology while staying deeply rooted in the human values of community, purpose, and inclusion.

By pairing AI-powered insight with values-driven design, we can build not only better organisations but stronger professions and more resilient industries for the future. The time for bold leadership is now.

Dr. Ahmed El Shal, Chairman and founder of ICOM, leads a premier IAPCO certified events firm of 190+ professionals, delivering 350+ MICE events annually. IAPCO members are Professional Congress Organisers (companies, not individuals) who 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. www.iapco.org



By Senthil Gopinath, CEO of ICCA

The Association's Big Pivot: Learning to Adapt to the Future

For associations everywhere, and for all members of the business events community, the days of calm, predictable operations are in the past. We are living through what could be called a “big pivot.” Things are moving faster than most of us have ever experienced. To keep up the pace, associations cannot just keep doing the same old things. We need to step up, lead, and show our industries what genuine business value looks like.

This pivot is happening in three key areas: embracing digital technology, responding to fast-changing member expectations, and climbing into a bigger, more global role that demonstrates resilience and impact.

The Digital Shift: AI & Data

One of the biggest and most obvious changes we see today is the rise of Artificial Intelligence. This technology is not science fiction anymore; it is real, practical, and it is already changing how associations work.

AI helps in two big ways: improving the member experience and making back-end operations smarter and more efficient. On the member side of things, AI tools can suggest learning opportunities, anticipate when someone might not renew their membership, or even recommend specific volunteer roles. Chatbots can give members instant answers, so staff can focus on the more human business of personal relationships and strategic work.

Behind the scenes, AI can take dense reports and turn them into simple, easy-to-understand updates, or scan long policy documents and pull out the essentials. Most importantly, it helps us stop the “guessing game” of what members want.

Clean data and smart tools give us tangible evidence for decision-making.

But of course, more data brings more responsibilities. Associations must invest in cybersecurity and be careful to use AI ethically and fairly.

Membership Is Changing

Membership today looks very different from membership in the past. Younger professionals in particular see it as a short-term investment. If value is not clear and constant, they will walk away.

That is why we are seeing more flexible models among associations, including different tiers, pay-as-you-go options, or even trial memberships. The way we learn is also changing. People want micro-learning and bite-sized resources they can use immediately, rather than long, rigid courses that take a lot of time to complete.

Community doesn't end with the annual congress any longer. Today, members want digital connections — regular, small touchpoints online. Associations need to create these spaces for connection and collaboration, because belonging now means both professional growth and personal well-being.

It is no longer enough
to run events, publish
papers, or hold summits.
Stakeholders want
to see legacy and impact.

The Global Role: Purpose & Resilience

Associations are also being asked: *“What difference are you making?”* It is no longer enough to run events, publish papers, or hold summits. Stakeholders want to see legacy and impact. That means showing how we reduce carbon footprints, embrace more inclusive practices, and contribute to society in meaningful ways.

At the same time, resilience matters. Relying only on membership dues is risky. Forward-looking associations are exploring new income streams, including sponsorships, online courses, and digital certifications.

The framework for success is changing fast, and we need to plan with flexibility, ready to adapt quickly when the world shifts.

Meetings Still Matter

Even with all this digital innovation, face-to-face meetings remain powerful. They are where ideas become strategies, where relationships get stronger, and where members see the true value of their association.

Association management today is about leadership, sensible use of technology, and creating results that last. Attendance numbers still matter, but real success is about impact — the difference we make for members, industries, and communities. That is the challenge ahead of us, and it's also our greatest opportunity.

More about ICCA and how your association can
benefit from being a member: www.iccaworld.org



By Sven Bossu, CEO of AIPC

It's the Way You Do it, You See

The big trend in association management is not so much the “what”, but the “how”. With the arrival of AI – even in the basic ChatGPT form – associations can use their resources far more effectively and focus on what really matters: member engagement.

Some of you might remember the song *It Ain't What You Do (It's the Way That You Do It)*, released in the early eighties by Fun Boy Three and Bananarama. But not that many will know that the first recording of the song actually

dates back from 1939. Turning it into a new wave song with ska elements just allowed to adapt it to a new cultural landscape.

The same goes for association management. At its very core,

managing an association is about generating the member engagement required to achieve the mission of the association. For AIPC, this has not changed since 1958. However, a number of things have changed



over the last decade. First of all, there is the generational shift, which is leading to new requirements and expectations from members, which need to be understood and translated into an updated value proposition. Secondly, there is the overall resource shortage in the world of associations. It is extremely hard to get and retain talents. This is not only the case in the world of associations, but because we tend to be smaller organisations, the impact of persons leaving is higher. Fortunately, there is a third big change: the digitalisation and the rise of AI.

A decade ago, the combination of changing needs and a shortage of resources to understand and address these changes, could have been dramatic, possibly resulting in an association losing its relevance. Today, this does not have to be the case any longer as a result of the efficiencies technology can bring. We are now able – with very limited resources – to collect and mine huge amounts of data, both internal and external, allowing us to increase the value offered to members in a cost/effective way.

But this brings me to a different quote, from the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau: *"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."* At first glance, the quote seems simple and straightforward – that our interpretation and understanding of the world around us is more important than the mere act of observing. However, when delving deeper into this statement, it becomes clear that Thoreau is touching upon a much larger philosophical concept – the

ability to see beyond the surface level and engage in a more intentional and mindful way.

Just to give an example: one of the trends in events is the need for participants to have individualised tracks and the ability to “step out” and have “me time”. Tomorrowland, a massive dance/music festival, took this to the next level and created a gym on the festival zone, which in addition to “me time” also alluded to the need for wellbeing and health. Tomorrowland looked at the full picture. Associations need to do the same: they will need to look at the data from their members and enrich this with data on overall trends (societal, political, etc.) to have a true and profound understanding of what is needed and demonstrating their thought leadership when it comes to not only understanding their communities but also being able to translate this understanding into tangible member value.

Obviously, this is not an easy endeavor. And sometimes, we might get it wrong – which is ok, if we're fast to realise that. Transparency can be of help here: telling your members that you are trying out something new, providing a clear rationale and asking them for their support – which could be by providing candid feedback – will create the feeling of being on a joint journey, which is exactly what any associations wants to achieve.

Our world is one of change on all fronts and embracing that change will allow us to deliver the value our members want and to achieve the mission of our organisation. It's just the way you do it.

Sven Bossu is CEO of AIPC, which represents a global network of over 200 leading centres in 55 countries with the active involvement of more than 1000 management-level professionals worldwide. www.aipc.org

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Basel Sets New Standards for Major Events

Basel's recent run of major events highlights how a clear strategy, collaborative mindset, and strong local ecosystem can turn a compact city into a world-class stage for culture, sport, and congresses.

Basel has experienced some exciting months recently. In May, the Eurovision Song Contest brought plenty of glamour to the Rhine, followed shortly after by the UEFA Women's Euro 2025 – a football festival that also generated great enthusiasm. Within just a few weeks, Basel became the centre of Europe twice and welcomed around one million visitors. All parties involved proved that they can not only offer modern infrastructure but also the necessary experience and charisma to host events of this magnitude.



In Basel, you'll find in a compact ecosystem what is rarely found elsewhere: world-class companies, renowned research institutions, cultural diversity, and an open-minded population. Thanks to its location in the tri-border region, the city is easy to reach – whether by car, train, plane, or ship.

For organisers, it means easy and smooth cooperation between all local stakeholders, from authorities and police to hotels and restaurants, as well as infrastructure providers and institutions. Added to this are, of course, Switzerland's typical precision and deeply rooted commitment to quality.

When it comes to venues, planners are spoilt for choice: the Messe and Congress Center Basel offers 25 conference rooms and five halls, providing the right spaces for all kinds of events. In addition, numerous other event locations are located just a short distance away and can easily be combined. Christian Ortlepp, Director Guest Events & Strategic Partnerships at the Messe and Congress Center Basel, says: *"Basel offers a complete ecosystem for all event formats – compact, well connected, and defined by the highest reliability."*

Hospitality as a Recipe for Success

Those in charge also keep in mind something often overlooked elsewhere: the spirit with which a city welcomes its guests. In this respect, Basel has already set new standards, most notably through the *"I'm part of it"* campaign launched in 2023 to coincide with Art Basel.

Flag-lined streets, additional information points at the airport and the two train stations, and extended restaurant opening hours are just some of the measures that have since been implemented annually each June. *"Most important for us is that residents and local businesses feel like part of the whole and carry this welcoming culture outward,"* emphasizes Letizia Elia, Director of Basel Tourism.



© Canton Basel-Stadt, Andreas Zimmermann



© Canton Basel-Stadt, Marc Gilgen



© Basel Tourism

The success of this approach is clear: several initiatives launched through the campaign were later adapted and used during both the ESC and the UEFA Women's Euro 2025.

When Networking Opens Doors

Basel is also looking to the future of major events. While the canton supports congresses around life sciences, digital technologies, or sustainable economy with targeted contributions, a clear strategy ensures that the city continues to enhance its appeal.

A central element in the congress sector is the Ambassador Program. Renowned researchers, doctors, and entrepreneurs use their networks to bring professional events to the city, playing a key role in acquisition. In sports, the government of the Canton of Basel-Stadt has set itself the goal of hosting either a European or World Championship every three years.

Strong References as a Calling Card

The many references Basel can point to clearly show that this strategy is paying off.

Alongside recent crowd-pulling events, the city has hosted numerous major congresses in recent years, including the Annual Meeting of the German Society of Hematology and Oncology (DGHO), the Conference of the Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE), and the European Stroke Organisation Conference (ESOC).

Political gatherings with international resonance, such as the OSCE Ministerial Council, have also taken place here. Together, these examples illustrate the breadth of Basel's event portfolio, spanning art and culture, science and medicine, as well as sports and business.

Basel Remains on Course for Success

But what impact do these events actually have on economic value creation? A look at the balance sheet of 2025 leaves no doubt about their importance. By the end of July, 907,683 overnight stays had already been recorded – an all-time record, with more hotel stays than ever before. During the ESC, Art Basel, and UEFA Women's Euro 2025, hotels reached up to 95 percent occupancy on peak days, and around one million guests were welcomed.

Restaurants and hotels benefited, as did the retail sector, while the city gained further global visibility. Basel Tourism assumes that this effect will have lasting momentum, boosting leisure tourism and congress acquisition in the long term.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the Messe and Congress Center Basel continues to be well booked even after the big headlines. Next year will see further events strengthening Basel as an event destination, including Swissbau, Art Basel, and numerous national and international congresses such as the Joint Congress of the Federation of European Societies for the Surgery of the Hand and the European Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy in June 2026, which expects more than 2,000 participants. The week-long corporate event of Endress + Hauser, the leading provider of measurement and automation technology, will also return after its successful edition in 2023.

Even if 2026 will not match the record resonance of 2025, the abundance of planned formats proves that Basel has now firmly established itself as an international event city.

More info on how Basel can help you organise conferences: www.messe-basel.com / www.basel.com

More info on Switzerland as a convention destination: myriam.winnepenninckx@switzerland.com / www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings

By Vicky Koffa

Maastricht Leads Brightlands Limburg into a Regional Knowledge Hub

Maastricht has long held a reputation as one of Europe's most welcoming and intellectually charged meeting destinations. But from 2025 onward, its role has expanded well beyond city boundaries. The Maastricht Convention Bureau now operates as a regional bureau for the whole province of Limburg, which internationally positions itself under the name Brightlands Limburg, the innovative, cross-border and open knowledge region of the Netherlands - moving towards a unified approach to attracting international, knowledge-based conferences.

This expansion (forged through a four-year partnership between the Province of Limburg, the municipalities of Maastricht, Venlo, Sittard-Geleen and Heerlen, and the four Brightlands campuses) shows a fundamental evolution in how the region positions itself on the global meetings map. Maastricht Convention Bureau, with more than forty years of expertise, now coordinates a network of sixty suppliers, acting as the foundation in a structure that connects the region's economic strengths with the ambitions of associations worldwide.

According to Jurgen Moors, CEO of Maastricht Convention Bureau and architect of this strategic reorientation shift: *"By putting Limburg's knowledge economy even more prominent on the international map and attracting conferences that tie in with our knowledge clusters, we are giving a huge boost to our innovative strengths and our business climate, creating broad employment and new investment opportunities"*

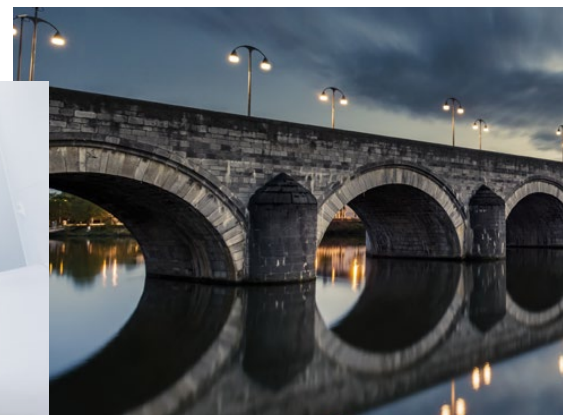
The regional scaling-up allows Maastricht Convention Bureau to select and secure conferences that bring measurable value to Limburg economically, academically and socially. Limburg's central position on the European map (proximity to Belgium and Germany, and its strong concentration of knowledge clusters) translates into accessibility, cross-border collaboration, and the ability to draw from diverse professional communities within a two-hour radius.

A Model of Regional Collaboration

The new structure draws together institutions that were once partners in name but are now partners in practice. Maastricht UMC+, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, and the Brightlands campuses form a network that gives associations direct access to research excellence and innovation pipelines. Venues such as MECC Maastricht remain



Bio-medical lab Brightlands Chemelot Campus



central, but are now complemented by an extended portfolio across Limburg, from academic auditoria to industrial innovation campuses, offering the flexibility and diversity expected by modern associations.

This integration also ensures that meetings taking place in the province are meaningfully connected to the local knowledge ecosystem, transforming every event into an opportunity for collaboration between science, business and government. Associations can now naturally connect with stakeholders who mirror their own values: evidence-based thinking, community impact, and sustainable development.

The regional bureau's expanded role places particular emphasis on four key sectors that define Limburg's economy: health, circular chemistry, artificial intelligence, and plant-based food. Each has a dedicated Brightlands campus anchoring research and enterprise. The Brightlands Chemelot Campus in Sittard-Geleen drives innovation in sustainable materials and green chemistry; Brightlands Smart Services Campus in Heerlen connects AI and data science to practical applications; Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo focuses on agri-food and nutrition; and Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus anchors the life sciences cluster.



Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo

ESO 2026: A Case Study

Perhaps the most visible proof of this new regional approach is the successful bid for the European Stroke Organisation Conference (ESOC), which will take place at MECC Maastricht in May 2026, welcoming around 5,000 participants from across the world. The path to this achievement was long and deliberate. *"MECC Maastricht and the Maastricht Convention Bureau spent no less than eight years preparing to host the European Stroke Organisation Conference,"* recalls Moors when talking to the Brightlands website.

The conference's scientific ambassador is Professor Wim van Zwam, an interventional radiologist at Maastricht UMC+ and one of Europe's foremost authorities on stroke prevention and treatment. Van Zwam was among the initiators of the groundbreaking MR CLEAN study, which redefined stroke intervention worldwide. He committed himself to Maastricht Convention Bureau's efforts at an early stage and indicated that he wanted to take the lead. *"This is how you get the entire medical community moving until it sinks in at the top of the conference organisation that Maastricht is a serious candidate,"* says Moors.

When ESOC convenes in Maastricht, it will bring together the full breadth of the global stroke community – clinicians, researchers, and industry leaders such as Siemens, Johnson & Johnson and Bayer – in a setting that merges scientific excellence with European accessibility. The total economic spin-off for the region is estimated at €5.5 million, but the long-term legacy will be far greater.

For the Province of Limburg, the regional bureau's creation is part of a wider ambition. As Deputy Stephan Satijn noted: *"Limburg has everything organisers need for international conferences. By joining forces to produce well-organised events, we will bring more conferences to our region, building knowledge, creating jobs and generating sales. In doing so, we continue to work on achieving our ambition: to make Limburg one of the most innovative regions in the world – one that has received recognition from the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF)."*

Such recognition showcases the region's mindset. Maastricht and Brightlands Limburg demonstrate how a region's scientific capital, political will, and collaborative culture can combine into a compelling offer for associations.



St Servaas Bridge Maastricht

Discover more about how Maastricht and Brightlands Limburg can elevate your next conference at the new www.maastrichtconventionbureau.com.

By Vicky Koffa

How Brisbane Became a key Meeting Point for the Energy Transition

When it comes to energy, the Australian State of Queensland has always done things on a grand scale. The state that built liquefied natural gas terminals and some of the world's largest coal export facilities is now focusing a new chapter, one that combines industry, innovation and dialogue. And Brisbane, through the activities of the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC), in collaborating directly with industry and universities, is taking a leading role in providing leadership on Australia's energy transition journey.

Few places combine geography and ambition quite like Queensland. Stretching over 1.8 million square kilometres, the state is both Australia's most decentralised and its most resource-rich. It is also one of the world's most weather-exposed energy systems struck by cyclones, floods and bushfires that test its grid regularly. Workforce readiness and supply chain resilience are critical enablers here. The state's dispersed population and vast geography make reskilling, electrification and logistics coordination essential components of the state's transition journey.

Yet what might look like volatility from the outside feels more like experience to those who live it. *"We are a state that loves big infrastructure. We love big projects. My background is in coal and gas, so I know what it takes to get large developments going and we're applying that same discipline to renewables,"* says Katie-Anne Mulder, Chief Executive of the Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC).

Queensland's size and diversity make it a testing ground for the next generation of energy systems. It leads globally in rooftop solar adoption, is home to some of Australia's largest battery and wind developments, and has a government that recognises that "transition" must include both stability and

regional prosperity. The Energy Roadmap sets a course for net zero by 2050, backed by massive investments in transmission, generation, storage and workforce development.

The Energy Roadmap

The state's Energy Roadmap, unveiled in October 2025, comes as a testament to this. It commits to 4.3 GW of new short-duration battery storage by 2030, complemented by another 4 GW of medium-duration assets by 2035. While it stops short of setting hard closure dates for coal-fired stations, it offers something investors arguably value more: clarity about sequencing. *"It's a market-driven approach,"* Mulder explains. *"Government sets the framework, but it's industry that delivers."*

Nationally, programmes like *Powering Australia* (A\$23 billion) and *Rewiring the Nation* (A\$20 billion) complement Queensland's efforts by modernising grids and unlocking new corridors for renewable investment.

The realistic approach of the roadmap reflects Queensland's industrial history. This is a state that understands project finance and risk, that has spent decades mastering large-scale logistics and stakeholder engagement. It is also the state where the global energy conversation is increasingly taking place in person through a growing calendar of high-impact meetings at BCEC.





Brisbane River, South Bank Precinct and Queen's Wharf

BCEC, A Venue with a Strategic Agenda

As BCEC marks its 30th year of connection and impact, the venue has evolved from simply hosting conferences to becoming a true partner in advancing industries. Nestled in South Bank and powered in part by its own solar array, the Centre has earned a reputation for pairing operational excellence with strategic intent. In recent years, its focus has shifted more towards energy, resources, technology and sustainability.

Events such as Solar & Storage Live Australia, Critical Minerals Conference, and the Asia-Pacific Hydrogen Conference have all taken place in Brisbane, leveraging BCEC's infrastructure and its network of partners in government, academia and industry. The Centre is the lead project manager for the Australian Institute of Energy's bid to host the World Energy Congress 2030 in Brisbane, which will firmly place the city at the heart of global energy diplomacy, ready to host the Olympic Games in 2032.

"A meeting can do what bilateral calls take years to do," Mulder says. *"You bring investors, engineers, communities and policymakers into one room, and suddenly you have momentum."* That "momentum" is measurable. Conferences held at BCEC are increasingly expected to leave a legacy: regional training

programmes, pilot collaborations, procurement linkages. The goal has moved from just seeking financial gains to acquiring new skills and changing policies.

Technology, Minerals & Modernisation

But the discussion of "transition" goes side by side with supply chains. Queensland's advantage lies not only in sunlight and space but also in materials. It is home to vanadium, copper, zinc and other metals critical to next-generation batteries. The first vanadium redox flow battery manufacturing facility in Australia has opened in Townsville, reinforcing the state's mining know-how in clean-tech industries. *"We have to move past lithium-only thinking,"* Mulder notes. *"Different chemistries, different applications; that's where resilience comes from."*

These advances are supported by Brisbane's universities and research institutes, which collaborate with industry on grid stability, decarbonisation and advanced manufacturing solutions. The circular economy is another emerging strength. Copper, she points out, is infinitely recyclable and retains almost all its conductive properties after refinement. *"Almost every piece of copper ever mined is still in use. That's the kind of efficiency our industry needs to emulate."*



Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Wind and solar continue to dominate project pipelines, but attention is turning to the supporting architecture: long-duration storage, recycling systems, community-scale batteries and, crucially, transmission. Australia's \$20 billion Rewiring the Nation plan is helping build the transmission links needed to unlock more renewable energy.

Furthermore, as Brisbane is home to PsiQuantum, developer of the world's first utility-scale quantum computer, a new dimension is emerging in the conversation about energy demand. The electrification needs of future computing, data storage and AI-driven industries add another dimension to how Queensland plans for reliable, future-ready energy.

Communities in the Transition

No one understands the human dimension better than those who have seen what major projects can do to regional economies. Mulder recalls how the coal seam gas boom transformed Western Queensland towns two decades ago: *"Coffee shops on every corner, apprentices staying put instead of moving away. When you bring new industries into regional*

Queensland, you don't just diversify the economy, you keep young people in their towns. You give communities a reason to grow again. That's what a new industry can do."

The state's new *First Nations Clean Energy Strategy* reinforces this approach, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities share directly in the economic and social benefits of renewables. But she is candid that renewables must earn the same legitimacy. *"You can't helicopter in a solar farm. You need trust. If ten trucks roll through a small town unannounced, you've lost the narrative."*

That is why BCEC and its partners are embedding legacy into the very design of events. Major congresses are now paired with regional roadshows before and after the main programme. The idea is for engineers and policymakers to travel into the field to meet farmers, councils and local businesses. On the other hand, regional representatives are funded to attend plenaries in Brisbane, making sure the conversation is not just about them, but with them. It is an approach that resonates with international associations looking to add measurable outcomes to their meetings.

Regional Lessons, Global Conversations

Queensland’s journey is not isolated. Japan, South Korea and Germany are long-standing energy partners, once focused on LNG and now moving towards hydrogen and green-ammonia collaborations. The World Energy Council’s recent Asia-Pacific session, held earlier this year, underlined a new need of interdependence. “We can’t do this alone,” Mulder insists. “Keeping our trading partners as partners in the new system is as much about trust as technology.”

Brisbane’s advantage is geographical as well as cultural. It is the closest Australian capital to the Pacific Islands, positioning it as a natural hub for regional cooperation. BCEC’s events attract delegations from across Oceania, South-East Asia and beyond, creating a bridge between developed-market expertise and emerging-market opportunity.

Through these global conversations, BCEC helps ensure that every international meeting leaves behind a tangible legacy: skills exchange, research partnerships, and community resilience projects across regional Queensland.

What Lies Ahead

The numbers tell a confident story. Queensland’s renewable share has climbed from 10% in 2018 to over 27% in 2024, with the state on track to hit 50% well before 2030. More than 54,000 renewable projects were completed between 2020 and 2023 – an output higher than any other Australian state. By 2035, over A\$120 billion in combined public and private investment is expected to have flowed into Queensland’s clean-energy build-out.

But numbers alone do not deliver transition; networks do. That is where BCEC’s convening power makes a difference. The centre’s team works hand-in-glove with Tourism & Events Queensland, the Brisbane Economic Development Agency and industry bodies like QREC to ensure that conferences become catalysts, places where discussions turn into projects.



Mulder sees the future as collaborative rather than competitive: “Energy isn’t about survival any more; it’s about how we thrive. Our two major primary industries – agriculture and resources – are still on the Queensland coat of arms. Renewables are an enabler of what will allow them to keep competing globally.”

Indicator	Figure / Insight
Population (2025)	5.6 million - over 50 % live outside Brisbane, making Queensland the most decentralised state in Australia
Renewable energy share (2024)	27 % of generation mix (projected 50 % by 2028)
Storage targets	4.3 GW short-duration by 2030; 4 GW medium-duration by 2035
Total projected investment	A\$120 billion+ in public and private funding by 2035
Global leadership	World’s highest rooftop-solar uptake; home to Australia’s first vanadium flow battery plant
Strategic events at BCEC	Asia-Pacific Hydrogen Conference (2024); Critical Minerals Conference (2025); Solar & Storage Live (2026); Bid for World Energy Congress (2030)
BCEC credentials	EarthCheck Platinum Certified; World’s Best Convention Centre (AIPC, 2016-2018); more than 30 years of experience hosting high-profile business events

To explore how your next congress can contribute to Queensland’s clean-energy legacy, visit www.bcec.com.au or contact Alison Gardiner from the BCEC team at alisong@bcec.com.au.

Green Thinking Shapes Business Events in Madrid

For today's associations and event organisers, sustainability has become a core part of strategy. The question is not whether a destination is sustainable, but how deeply that commitment runs and how it translates into the delegate experience. Few cities embody that approach as naturally as Madrid.

With a combination of ambitious environmental policies, abundant green spaces, and a proactive convention bureau that supports organisers in leaving a measurable positive impact, the Spanish capital is redefining what it means to host responsible, future-minded events.

A city committed to the environment

Madrid's green spaces, parks, gardens and trees play a key role in the quality of life for both residents and visitors.

In 2019, the approval of the Madrid 360 Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy reflected the city's commitment to the environment. The strategy includes a number of measures aimed at enabling adaptation to climate change, promoting the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency plans, managing water resources, cutting emissions and waste, and encouraging sustainable transport. These measures also seek to foster the creation of green infrastructure and low-carbon urban renewal methods.

A destination with a wealth of green spaces

Madrid's trees are one of the city's greatest assets. Over 55% of its streets are tree-lined, with nearly 300,000 trees helping to improve the capital's air quality, making Madrid home to the world's second-leafiest streets.

Recently, reaffirming its commitment to the environment, Madrid was renamed a Tree City of the World, a distinction awarded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Arbor Day Foundation, which promotes good practices and performs actions to raise awareness of the importance of trees and their care.

A rich natural heritage

With more than 200 parks, gardens, and natural spaces covering almost 6,400 hectares of green heritage, Madrid offers countless healthy settings to enjoy. One standout is El Retiro Park, a historical

treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site in the heart of the capital. Another is Madrid Río Park, which stretches for ten kilometres along the banks of the River Manzanares and is the ideal place for group activities, walking, exercising or simply admiring the area's ecological restoration, which has led to the return of numerous species. Casa de Campo Park is also very close by. Declared an Asset of Cultural Interest (BIC) and boasting over 1,500 hectares for leisure, sports and recreation, it's the perfect space for outdoor activities.

And that's not all. Madrid is also developing new green spaces, such as the Metropolitan Forest, a planned 75-kilometre green belt around the city featuring vast open areas.

PLUS platform

In keeping with Madrid's firm commitment to environmental protection, Madrid Convention Bureau developed the **MICE Sustainability Guide** and the digital platform **PLUS** for event organisers. The latter is a pioneering initiative in Spain which helps organisers to effectively manage the social and environmental sustainability of their events in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the UN's 2030 Agenda.

The tool was recently upgraded and enables the creation of specific sustainability reports for every meeting organised in Madrid, including recommendations that can be implemented before events are held to minimise their environmental and social impact. After the event comes to a close, the platform can also be used to calculate its carbon footprint.

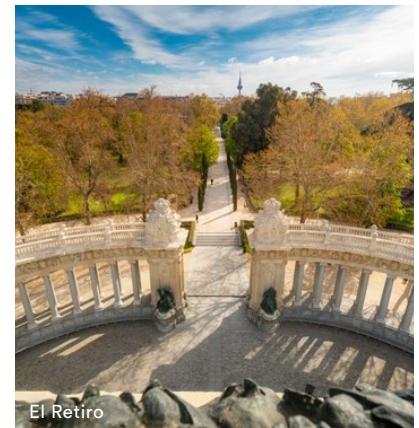
A major enhancement regarding an event's carbon footprint is that the platform can now classify emissions by scope (Scope 1: direct emissions; Scope 2: indirect emissions; and Scope 3: supply chain emissions).

Meetings with a mission

Another of Madrid Convention Bureau's objectives is to support associations—and private organisations—that want to ensure their conferences and events help bring about change in the city. There is a growing conviction in the sector that event organisation should be underpinned by respect for the destination, and associations and companies are increasingly bringing their missions and visions into line with the aims of the places where they hold their meetings. Madrid Convention Bureau strives to be a key point of liaison, ensuring that meetings held in Madrid leave a positive legacy in the city.

To this end, the PLUS platform itself provides organisers with a catalogue of social organisations in Madrid which they can use to find and select actions with a positive impact to include in their meetings' agendas. This catalogue is complemented by an open directory of the same social organisations.

Gathering in Madrid, exploring the city on foot, enjoying the fresh air and leaving a positive legacy are just some of the city's attractions for meetings and events that prioritise sustainability – knowing that together we can build a greener future for Madrid and the planet.



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More information: esmadrid.com/mcb / info.mcb@esmadrid.com

By Vicky Koffa

Mumbai Rising to a Knowledge Hub Powering Association Growth in India

The global association community is shifting, looking more into destinations to collaborate through knowledge exchange and long-term engagement. Also, destinations with fresh ideas and forward-thinking views. Maharashtra, and its capital city Mumbai, stands out as a region built for the future. Known as India's financial powerhouse, the area has evolved into a thriving knowledge economy, a magnet for investment, innovation, and collaboration.

Mumbai's appeal goes far beyond its skyline of corporate towers. It is home to India's most prestigious research and academic institutions, including IIT Bombay and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, as well as to major players in finance, media, healthcare, and technology. The city contributes nearly 6% of India's GDP making it the commercial capital of a nation that is now the world's fourth-largest and fastest growing economy.

Over the years, India has made significant headways across key sectors being the 3rd largest Pharma market globally, the 3rd largest Digital economy globally, the 2nd largest Mobile subscriber base, and the world's largest Mobile data consumer.

Additionally, India's healthcare industry is currently estimated to be USD 600 billion by end of 2025.

This concentration of disciplines has made the city one of Asia's most significant think tanks, where public policy dialogues meet start-up innovation and industrial know-how.

For associations, hosting a congress in Mumbai means tapping directly into this intellectual capital. It offers an opportunity to grow membership in one of the world's fastest-expanding markets, engage deeply with local chapters, and connect with new generations of professionals shaping their sectors from within India's economic network.



Bandra-Worli Sea link connecting BKC and South Mumbai



Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai

At the epicentre of this transformation are two significant milestones that have shaped the way the city and the state host events – the launch of the Jio World Convention Centre (JWCC) in March 2022 and recent announcement of the Maharashtra Convention Bureau (MCB) at IMEX Frankfurt in May 2025.

JWCC is at the core of India's Global MICE Vision

Jio World Convention Centre, a venue envisioned to bring the best of India and the world together is an epicentre for culture, community, and collaboration, acting as a catalyst for growth and innovation.

Located in the city's central business district – Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) – JWCC spans over one hundred thousand square metres making it one of India's largest and most advanced convention facilities, purpose-built to host international congresses, exhibitions, and large-scale conventions.

In the past JWCC has hosted globally significant events, including the World Congress of Accountants, G20 Summit Meetings, the International Olympic Committee's 2023 session, Miss World Grand Finale 2024, the 11th Indian Association Congress, WAVES Summit 2025, and the annual Global Fintech Fest, among many others.

The Centre's growing popularity as a preferred business events venue is further highlighted by the upcoming array of prominent events such as the Asian Seed Congress 2025, the International Federation of Landscape Architects Asia-Pacific Regional Congress 2025, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names & Numbers (ICANN) 2026, the International Baccalaureate Global Conference 2026, the 35th International Congress on Occupational Health 2027, the UIA International Architecture Forum 2027 and the SICOT Orthopaedic World Congress 2030.

The above events are a testament that the Mumbai offers association events a seamless blend of culture, commerce and entertainment thereby providing a holistic experience that extends much beyond the convention arena.

Maharashtra Convention Bureau

The announcement of the Maharashtra Convention Bureau (MCB) during IMEX Frankfurt 2025 marked a unique moment in India's MICE journey. The Bureau aims to position Maharashtra as a gateway for international meetings and association events. This is the first state-led initiative focused on cementing the state's position as a compelling destination for global conventions, exhibitions, and business events. Beyond Mumbai, the bureau's remit extends across Maharashtra, encompassing cities such as Pune, Nagpur and Nashik as extended hinterland within a connected ecosystem. The objective of the bureau is to facilitate collaboration between the public sector, private industry, and international

JWCC AT A GLANCE

Area: Spanning over 1.03 million sqm

Destination: Housed within a mixed-use development Jio World Centre that includes a multi-disciplinary cultural centre, a luxury retail complex and diverse dining experiences.

Spaces:

- Three Exhibition Halls spanning over 15,000 sqm
- Two Pillarless Convention halls spanning over 10,000 sqm
- A Majestic Ballroom spanning 3,000 sqm
- 27 Meeting Suites and Lounges
- 5000+ Car parking
- 39 Loading & Unloading Bays
- World's largest passenger elevator with an area of 26 sqm

Sustainability: Jio World Centre is a LEED Platinum-certified precinct, with 75% of area illuminated by natural daylight, 30 % energy savings optimised through energy efficient measures, zero-discharge water recycling, in-house composting and EV charging points in the parking.

Access: Located in Mumbai's Bandra Kurla Complex - 5 minutes from the nearest metro station, 20 minutes from the airport, surrounded by 5-star hotels.

To explore how Mumbai can be the perfect destination to host your next association event visit www.jioworldconventioncentre.com or scan this QR code



event organisers, creating a streamlined ecosystem that attracts high-impact conventions. The initiative also highlights the state's recognition that business events are not merely economic drivers but also vehicles for knowledge transfer, investment, and social progress. It aligns with Maharashtra's Tourism Policy 2024, reinforcing business events tourism as a strategic pillar in boosting the visitor economy.

By convening in Maharashtra, associations team up with a destination that measures success in the knowledge, partnerships, and legacies their events leave behind. With world-class infrastructure and unmatched connectivity, Maharashtra is ready to lead India's MICE revolution.

By Remi Deve

Meetings with Meaning in Brussels

Walk through Brussels on any weekday morning and you can sense the quiet choreography of influence that defines the city. Ministers, scientists, association leaders and lobbyists move between meetings, ideas circulate in cafés near the European Quarter, and conversations held here can shift policies across an entire continent. This subtle dynamism is what makes Brussels far more than the European Union's administrative heart - it is where Europe comes to imagine the future. For the association community, that makes it an extraordinary stage.

A capital built on ideas & connections

It's impossible to overstate the city's international density. Brussels hosts the European Parliament, the European Commission, NATO, and more than 26 associated agencies - institutions that together make up a quarter of the city's economy.

It also leads global rankings as the world's top city for international associations and for congresses organised by and for associations, according to the Union of International Associations (UIA 2024). More than 2,500 association headquarters call Brussels home, drawn by its accessibility, expertise and spirit of collaboration.

But what truly sets Brussels apart is its human scale. Lobbyists, academics, diplomats, civil society representatives and business leaders share the same cafés and co-working

spaces, where a casual conversation can turn into a collaboration, a research project or even a policy shift.

Far from the cliché of bureaucracy, Brussels brings the European project to life, transforming institutions into conversations and policies into partnerships. This culture of connection gives every event held here immediacy and purpose, turning meetings into catalysts for real change. Professional exchanges often evolve into concrete outcomes and lasting legacies that ripple through communities, public policies and entire sectors.

A city that turns meetings into impact

Hosting a congress in Brussels means much more than finding a venue. It's about situating your event at the very crossroads of European decision-making. The ecosystem here helps



© Eviat.brussels - Jean-Paul Remy



© Jean-Paul Remy

transform meetings into platforms for advocacy, knowledge sharing and innovation. Whether an event focuses on health policy, clean technology, education or digital governance, Brussels offers direct access to experts, institutions and partners who can bring those discussions to life.

As meetings increasingly need to demonstrate their social and political value, Brussels provides the context that amplifies meaning. Events held here don't exist in isolation – they plug directly into the currents of European dialogue, benefiting from the city's unique blend of influence, visibility and diversity.

Adding to this is TAP – The Association Place, a new physical hub designed specifically for the international association community. Located in the heart of the European Quarter, TAP serves as a collaborative space where association professionals can meet, work, learn and connect. It regularly hosts networking events, training sessions and knowledge-sharing activities, fostering exchange between associations, local stakeholders and the broader Brussels ecosystem.

The charm of the slow months

While Brussels is busy all year round, it reveals a different, more intimate side during its slow months, ie January, February and August. These quieter periods bring both practical and experiential benefits for organisers. Venues and hotels offer greater availability and more attractive rates, allowing planners to secure premium facilities and service flexibility. Delegates, meanwhile, experience a calmer city that feels effortlessly welcoming: easy to navigate, rich in culture, and full of hidden gems best enjoyed at an unhurried pace.

Cultural life doesn't stop in the slow months: it simply feels more personal. Events such as the BRAFA Art Fair, the Bright Festival, or the Flower Carpet transform the city into a backdrop of art and light, giving visiting delegates a taste of local creativity. As visit.brussels likes to put it, *“that's how the quiet season becomes your highlight – with Brussels feeling almost as if it belongs entirely to you and your guests.”*



© visit.brussels

A paragon of reinvention

Brussels is also in the midst of a new phase of cultural and urban renewal that will further enrich the delegate experience.

One of the most anticipated milestones is the reopening of KANAL – Centre Pompidou in November 2026. Spanning 40,000 sqm, this vast museum of modern and contemporary art will combine exhibition areas, performance halls, restaurants and meeting spaces.

At the same time, the city's hotel landscape continues to evolve, with several new international brands and boutique properties adding to the accommodation mix. Among them let's mention the opening of Cardo Brussels with its 532 rooms and the much-anticipated reopening of the Corinthia Grand Hotel Astoria in 2024. The National by Radisson, Hilton Garden Inn Airport, The Standard – featuring a rooftop and greenhouse – and the boutique Faubourg21 also all opened their doors recently. Looking ahead, 2026 will see the DoubleTree by Hilton complete its extension, adding a second ballroom, while Cloud One (by the Motel One group) will debut in the heart of the city in the De Brouckère district.

Ultimately, what gives Brussels its enduring appeal is its humanity. Despite its reputation as the capital of Europe, it remains approachable, walkable and deeply diverse. As the second most multicultural city in the world, it embodies the European values of inclusivity, creativity and freedom of expression. Its people are multilingual, open-minded and accustomed to working across borders, qualities that extend naturally to the way the city hosts international events.

To stay up-to-date with Brussels' latest developments you can subscribe to the Visit Brussels Meetings & Events Newsletter at <https://bit.ly/MeetingsBrussels> or scan the QR code.



By Remi Deve

Dijon: A Medical Congress Destination with Depth

As far as international congresses are concerned, competition among host cities has intensified. Choosing a destination is not just a matter of venue capacity and logistics, but also about alignment with scientific excellence, accessibility, and the ability to create meaningful experiences for delegates. Dijon, capital of Burgundy and long celebrated for its cultural heritage and gastronomy, is increasingly making its mark as a hub for health innovation and a destination of choice for medical gatherings.

A fertile ecosystem for medical innovation

At the heart of Dijon's rise as a congress city is its strong ecosystem in health and life sciences. Anchored by Santenov, the local health cluster, Dijon is home to more than 150 pharmaceutical, medical device, e-health, and biotechnology firms. The numbers are significant: over 6,000 jobs, €1.5 billion in combined revenue, and a robust academic backbone that includes the University of Burgundy, INSERM, CNRS, and the Centre Georges-François Leclerc cancer centre.

This convergence of actors provides congress organisers with more than a venue: it offers access to a network of expertise, high-level speakers, and opportunities for site visits or workshops that connect directly to ongoing research. The presence of industry leaders such as URGO, headquartered in Dijon and globally recognized for medical devices, further illustrates the city's credentials.

Such an ecosystem is a real draw for associations. Professor Yannick Béjot, Vice President of the Société



Française Neurovasculaire, put it this way: *“Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, the SFNV, the national scientific society that brings together all professionals involved in the management of cerebrovascular diseases, including strokes, has chosen the city of Dijon to host its annual national congress, taking place from 19 to 21 November 2025. With a long-standing research tradition rooted in Dijon and excellent infrastructures that ensure optimal conditions for participants, the city is a natural choice to host this large-scale event.”*

Accessibility & scale

Of course, accessibility remains a deciding factor for international associations. Dijon scores highly here: just 1 hour 35 minutes from Paris and 1 hour 40 minutes from Lyon by high-speed train, with the central station located in the city centre. The Palais des Congrès and Parc des Expositions (Dijon Exhibition and Convention Centre) are a six-minute tram ride away, eliminating the need for complicated shuttle logistics.

The city also offers more than 31,000 square metres of flexible event space, including an amphitheatre for 610 delegates and an auditorium exceeding 1,600 seats at the Palais des Congrès. With 4,500 hotel rooms including business hotels, boutique properties, and upscale accommodations, Dijon has the capacity to host events of all sizes and formats without overwhelming the local infrastructure.

For international planners, this balance – large enough to host international gatherings, small enough to remain manageable – can be attractive. It ensures that congresses do not become lost in the anonymity of a mega-city, while still offering the reliability of professional facilities.

The art of living as an asset

But Dijon's story is not only about science and infrastructure. It is also about the art *de vivre* that has long defined Burgundy. For associations, social programs are, indeed, an integral part of the delegate experience.

Dijon leans into its strengths: the Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie et du Vin, UNESCO-listed vineyards, and historic châteaux such as Clos de Vougeot offer backdrops for gala dinners and networking receptions that are hard to replicate elsewhere.

In fact, the city's ability to blend high-level scientific content with cultural depth may be its strongest differentiator. *“In Dijon, knowledge is something to be shared, but also savoured,”* notes the local tourism office. That sentiment resonates with the growing demand for congress experiences that feel both professionally enriching and personally memorable.



Positioning in a shifting landscape

Globally, the medical congress sector is changing. Hybrid formats are still being tested, sustainability is now a baseline expectation, and organisations are under pressure to demonstrate legacy and impact in host destinations. Dijon's advantage lies in its ability to offer compactness and connectivity and to embed congresses in a rich local ecosystem where legacy can take root.

And there are success stories that prove the point, like the 45th World Congress of Vine and Wine in 2022, an event that brought together experts from across the globe and which inaugurated the city's role as home to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV).

For the OIV, relocating from Paris to Dijon reflected confidence in the city's unique blend of academic expertise, cultural heritage, and institutional support. As Pau Roca, Director General, put it, *“This congress in Dijon marked the beginning of a new era for the OIV, anchored in a city that symbolises both heritage and innovation.”*

A destination to watch

As the global meetings industry recalibrates, Dijon's positioning is timely. It combines a genuine scientific base with logistical ease and cultural depth. For associations seeking more than a neutral backdrop, it offers the promise of congresses that are not only well executed but also enriched by place.

The coming years will determine whether Dijon can leverage these assets to secure major international medical events. But the fundamentals are in place, it's the least one can say.

More information:
congres@otdijon.com / www.destinationdijon.com

By Pamela Wilton

How Perth Brought the World's Neuromuscular Congress Home

In October 2024, the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre hosted the 18th International Congress of Neuromuscular Diseases (ICNMD) - returning to the city for the first time since 1971. The event brought together 720 researchers and clinicians from 45 countries for the World Federation of Neurology's premier forum on neurology and brain health - a major win for Perth and Western Australia's scientific and medical community.



Perth's Research Legacy

Western Australia's neuromuscular research legacy began with an unexpected discovery. In the 1960s, Professor Byron Kakulas was studying Rottneest Island quokkas when he observed something remarkable: their degenerated muscle could regenerate. This breakthrough observation at the University of Western Australia laid the groundwork for decades of research into Duchenne muscular dystrophy and paved the way for the genetic and molecular therapies being developed today.

That pioneering work established Western Australia as a serious player in neuromuscular research. Today, the Perron Institute for Neurological and Translational Science is Western Australia's longest-established medical research institute, specialising in the study of neuromuscular disorders.

These disorders affect the communication between nerves and muscles, causing muscle weakness, atrophy, and mobility challenges. Its team of more than 250 clinicians, researchers, and medical professionals

work collaboratively across multiple disciplines to advance understanding and treatment. The Institute's partnerships with over 450 research organisations in 44 countries reflect how far Perth's influence has spread.

Researchers from the Perron Institute, the University of Western Australia, and Murdoch University have built on this foundation, with breakthrough discoveries spanning FDA-approved therapies, molecular genetics, and innovative treatment approaches.

The Western Australian Government has strategically backed this research strength, investing \$8.65 million from 2021 to 2025 to support innovation, workforce development, and infrastructure. The combination of six decades of research excellence, world-class facilities, and sustained government support gave Perth what it needed to compete for one of the world's premier neuromuscular congresses.

Winning the Bid

Securing ICNMD 2024 required more than credentials. The bid was highly competitive. Business Events Perth needed to prove that Perth could deliver at the same level as any major global city. They assembled a committee of leading Western Australian researchers, including Professors Sulev Koks, Steve Wilton, Byron Kakulas and Sue Fletcher, to demonstrate the state's depth of neuromuscular expertise.

And when COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented in-person attendance at the final presentations, the team adapted quickly. They delivered a hybrid presentation that maintained a high-quality, interactive experience for the judging panel. This pivot showed Perth's digital capabilities and reinforced the city's ability to deliver under pressure.

In the end, the strategy centred on relationship-building. After securing the bid, representatives from Business Events Perth and the organising committee travelled to Brussels for the 2022 edition of ICNMD to connect directly with delegates - a proactive effort to strengthen engagement and boost attendance for the Perth congress.

The Congress Delivers

Finally, in October 2024, the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre brought together 720 researchers and clinicians from 45 countries. More than 120 industry leaders presented, sharing the latest advancements in the treatment of conditions such as

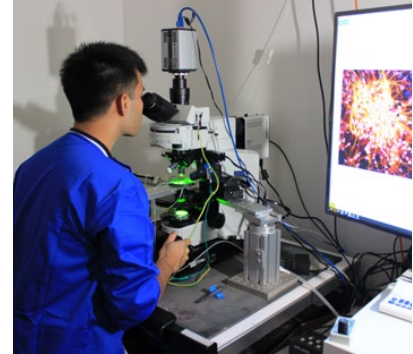
Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Inclusion Body Myositis, and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, commonly known as ALS.

Delegates participated in a series of interactive workshops, hands-on courses, and specialised scientific sessions exploring areas including muscle biology, motor neuron disorders, nerve function, and neuromuscular junction research.

The congress created a forum for collaboration between Perth's local expertise and the international neuromuscular community, strengthening connections that will drive future research partnerships.

"It was also a great opportunity for leaders in their fields to network and share the latest knowledge, and we were delighted to provide a hospitable welcome and host delegates in sunny Perth," said Professor Sulev Koks.

Successfully bringing ICNMD back to Perth after 53 years validated Western Australia's research investment and



strengthened Perth's position in the global neuromuscular research community. The congress demonstrated that authentic scientific credentials, combined with strategic relationship-building, can compete at the highest level.

Perth continues to build on this success, offering associations world-class research infrastructure, modern facilities, and a collaborative environment that makes major international medical events possible.

PERRON INSTITUTE'S BREAKTHROUGH DISCOVERIES

First FDA-approved targeted therapies for Duchenne muscular dystrophy, developed by Professors Steve Wilton and Sue Fletcher. These splice-modifying therapeutics are currently in clinical trials.

Molecular identification of congenital myopathies, led by Professor Nigel Laing's group, including breakthrough work on nemaline myopathy and congenital fibre type disproportion.

Sodium valproate treatment for McArdle's disease, discovered through Professor John Howell's work at Murdoch University on animal models of muscle glycogenosis, restoring myophosphorylase expression in skeletal muscles.

Anti-cytokine therapies for muscular dystrophy, pioneered by Professor Miranda Grounds, demonstrating reduced muscle injury severity in animal models of DMD.

Australia's first AI-powered national Myositis Registry and the **International Multicentre Rapamycin Trial for inclusion body myositis**, led by the Myositis Discovery Program at the Perron Institute.

Discover how Perth can support your next international medical or scientific event at www.busesseventsperth.com.

An Interview with Professor Philippe Liverneaux by Remi Deve

“FESSH 2028 Will Show What Strasbourg Can Do”

Professor Philippe Liverneaux, MD, PhD. Strasbourg University Hospitals will preside over the FESSH (Federation of European Societies for the Surgery of the Hand) 2028 Congress in Strasbourg. The meeting is expected to welcome around 2,000 international delegates at the *Palais de la Musique et des Congrès*, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary. In this conversation, he explains how the bid came together, and how accessibility, infrastructure, and a strong local ecosystem ultimately carried the day.



Professor Philippe Liverneaux

How did you first get approached about leading a bid for FESSH 2028?

The turning point was a call from Ramona Fischer, Chief Marketing and Business Development Officer at GL Events – Strasbourg, the management company of Strasbourg’s Congress Centre. She identified our congress

as a significant opportunity for Strasbourg. We agreed to meet, though I initially needed strong and convincing arguments, as I wasn’t particularly motivated to take on such a commitment so close to my retirement. Yet, as we explored options and challenges together, we built a strong connection, and one thing led to another.

Strasbourg wasn’t selected the first time you tried. What happened?

Our initial candidacy did not even reach the voting stage. The concern raised about Strasbourg was that it was “peripheral,” with questions regarding accessibility and infrastructure. I was deeply disappointed, as I knew Strasbourg to be a European capital with an active university, the renowned IRCAD (Strasbourg Institute for Image-Guided Surgery), Nobel laureates, and a strong track record in hosting large congresses. I couldn’t hide my disappointment

and share my perspective with the FESSH Board, to reaffirm our city’s eligibility. It took some effort and a lot of convincing arguments from Ramona to re-engage me in the process.

What did you change in the second bid?

The bid itself didn’t change much, but the criteria did. That shift, combined with the motivation we shared with Ramona Fischer, made us even more determined. I launched an intensive campaign, presenting our case country by country. Our pitch emphasized the strength of the city rather than individuals, and we supported it with a purpose-built video along with many other tailored concrete arguments....And here we go, Strasbourg will host FESSH in 2028 after Prague in 2027 and before Porto in 2029!

You’ve said accessibility was decisive: can you unpack that?

We framed accessibility in an eco-responsible way. Strasbourg sits on high-speed rail lines to Paris, Basel, and Frankfurt – with Berlin–Paris via Strasbourg, which recently began to operate. Many delegates can combine air + train and arrive right in the city centre, not needing a 30-minute taxi ride. For countries where flying is discouraged when rail is practical, it matters a lot. The point was: accessibility isn’t only about direct flights and major airport hubs; it’s about credible, low-carbon door-to-door options.

And the local infrastructure?

Strasbourg Congress and Exhibition Centre comfortably handles a 2,000-person congress, with a great location, ample breakout space, three large auditoriums as well as wonderful surroundings. On hotels, even during European Parliament sessions, there's enough capacity to host our community with an overall capacity of 11,000 rooms. Besides, we can keep the industry exhibition as a central place in the venue – in the foyers and contiguous spaces – so delegates stay close to exhibitors during coffee breaks and lunch.

How will you structure the exhibition and networking?

As mentioned, the exhibition will be embedded in the main venue footprint, with catering integrated to drive footfall for industry partners. On the social side, there will be two signature moments: the President's Dinner, a more protocol-driven evening for national leaders and VIPs, which we would love to host at the Palais Universitaire, and the FESSH Party on Friday, which is deliberately intergenerational and festive to spark conversations between younger and senior surgeons.

What sort of support did you receive from Strasbourg for the bid and for preparing the congress?

We had robust, practical support across the board. The venue coordinated the bid work – letters of support, technical data on the venue and a detailed swot analysis of the destination and also coordinated a very efficient sequence of site visits. Hotels aligned early around allocations and rate frames, and we had clear guidance on transport options so we could emphasize lower-carbon access by rail. Overall, having a single, responsive point of contact simplified decisions and let us focus on the scientific agenda.

Beyond infrastructures, what strengths does Strasbourg bring scientifically and academically?

Strasbourg is a university city with an internationally recognised hand surgery service. Our team has trained many international fellows – Japan, the US, South America – and we've published extensively in the field. Add to that IRCAD for skills training, and a major university with a strong research profile and multiple Nobel laureates, there's a genuine scientific ecosystem here. It's not just a place to meet; it's a place to learn and collaborate.



What impact do you expect FESSH 2028 to have in France and locally?

Nationally, we want to boost French attendance and participation in FESSH. Despite France's stature in hand surgery, our numbers at recent FESSH meetings have lagged. Hosting at home is a chance to change that, with early communication already underway.

We also plan to increase the number of French candidates taking the highly regarded FESSH examination, held just before the congress. The FESSH Hand Surgery Diploma is a true milestone and a mark of international recognition at the start of a young surgeon's career. Candidates come from all over the world, not only from Europe, to compete for this prestigious diploma.

Not to mention, a meeting of this scale brings obviously economic benefits for the destination – but also scientific visibility that fosters ongoing exchanges with international teams and attracts young surgeons.

More information: rfischer@strasbourg-events.com / www.strasbourg-events.com

By Remi Deve

What Estrel Berlin's Expansion Means for Associations

In Berlin's southeast, the last panes of glass have slid into place on the Estrel Tower, the new addition to Estrel Berlin, Europe's largest hotel, congress and entertainment complex. The façade is finished; the work is now moving inside. Internally, the team has been calling it the next phase of "Estrel World": not just a building, but a campus-level reframe of what the company offers to associations: more dedicated service, stronger tech, and healthier, more inventive food solutions aligned with complex, multi-day programs.



© Estrel Berlin

Berlin's meetings market is about to get a capacity and capability upgrade. Estrel has entered a new era with the construction of the Estrel Tower, set to open its doors end of 2026.

Alongside the construction, Estrel has recently rolled out a new corporate identity across the business. They're clear it's not a cosmetic tweak: the CI is meant to express, more explicitly, how the group serves association clients, and what planners can expect in terms of responsiveness, production capability, and the kind of flexibility that reduces friction across the life of a congress. In other words, the "software" is being upgraded while the "hardware" rises.

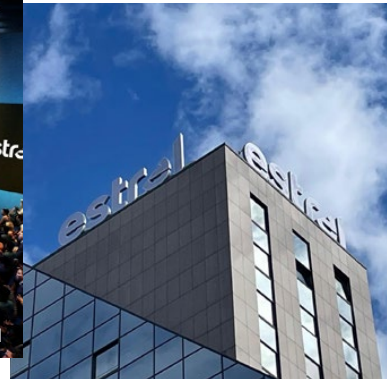
A different kind of experience

What the tower adds is not only height, but a different kind of experience. Designed by Barkow Leibinger, the 45-storey building tops out at 176 meters and is set to become Germany's tallest hotel property when it opens. Its upper levels concentrate meeting and hospitality rooms with city-wide views, spaces intended for board-level sessions, partner showcases and content

capture, connected by an architectural language that responds to each side's solar orientation. As Frank Barkow put it during earlier design briefings, the tower's "*shimmering façade*" was conceived to be present in the skyline, "*a new landmark for Berlin.*"

For planners, the more telling details are inside. The tower layers in around 500 guestrooms and suites, while creating premium event zones at altitude – the Sky Floors on levels 41 and 42 alone account for more than 1,200 sqm of meeting and hospitality space, with a restaurant and bar above them designed for hosted networking with a sense of occasion. The building is physically connected to the original Estrel Hotel and Congress Center via a service tunnel, so the complex can operate as a single organism: freight, food, teams, and delegates moving without the usual seams between venues.

Sustainability has, from the start, been treated as a design brief rather than an afterthought. The project has targeted **LEED Platinum**, pushing the construction program beyond the familiar checklists into



© Estrel Berlin

scrutiny of materials, air quality, and daylight modeling. *“Only by carefully implementing the 45 criteria in numerous categories can we achieve the highest level of certification,”* noted Clemens Planck, the tower’s head of construction, when asked why the team chose this path. The choice of LEED over domestic alternatives is also a signal: Estrel wants a quality mark recognised by an international audience.

A bigger story

While the tower captures attention, there is even a bigger story to tell. Estrel is advancing a multipurpose hall slated for 2028/2029 that would add capacity for up to 10,000 participants – effectively providing a large-format room for high-impact plenaries, general assemblies or concert-scale productions, but still within walking distance of the hotel and congress centre.

When both projects are operating, “Estrel World” is expected to represent roughly 50,000 sqm of event space and 1,647 rooms and suites. For international associations, this speaks to a practical kind of flexibility: the ability to design a week that ramps from hands-on training to exhibition hours to arena-style moments without leaving a unified site.

There is also a shift in the sense of a clearer promise of service: faster answers in the RFP stage; production

ESTREL TOWER AT A GLANCE

- Opening scheduled for end of 2026
- Height: 176 metres - Berlin’s tallest building
- 45 floors in total
- 522 hotel rooms
- Event Space: 3,800 m² total, including Sky Floors (41–42), with 1,200 sqm premium meeting & dining space, and Estrel Forum (1,000 sqm with a 500 sqm foyer)
- Sustainability: Aiming for LEED Platinum Certification
- A new multipurpose hall slated for 2028/2029 (up to 10,000 participants)

and AV delivered in-house; and F&B that reads as healthier and more contemporary without losing scale. *“Berlin’s sustainability framework*

provides a useful backdrop here as well (Estrel is recognised as a “High Performer” within the city’s Sustainable Berlin program), and our team is working on expanded waste-management services to align with organiser reporting needs,” says Heike Mahmoud, Chief Operation Officer at Estrel Berlin. The hope is that campus design plus operational consistency will allow planners to prioritise engagement and legacy over vendor juggling.

If Berlin has sometimes struggled to align its creative identity with business-class infrastructure, Estrel’s next chapter aims to close that gap. The façade is done; the interior is coming into focus; the hall is on the horizon. The question now is less about what the campus-like space will look like than what associations will choose to make of it – how they will use the added height, depth, and flexibility to shape programs that feel both ambitious and grounded. On current evidence, that seems to be exactly what “Estrel World” is for.

More information:
h.mahmoud@estrel.com /
estrel.com / estreltower.com

By Remi Deve

Cairns Hosts Anaesthetists' Congress with Lasting Impact

For the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), choosing Cairns for its 2025 Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) and its 1,900+ delegates was a deliberate move. It brought the college back to the tropics for the first time in over a decade, and the result was a meeting that tested - and proved - the capacity of a regional city to host a truly world-class medical congress, one centered on sustainability, inclusivity, and community engagement.

A Theme with Urgency

'Future Proof' was the theme of the meeting, and it framed the event around three pressing priorities: environmental, workforce, and personal sustainability.

For Dr Andrew Potter, Cairns-based anaesthetist and chair of the Regional Organising Committee, these pillars captured a shared ambition: *"These were equally important. Bringing them together*

under the theme of Future Proof helped frame our shared goal of protecting the future of our profession, and our planet."

From the outset, the Cairns Convention Centre worked with ANZCA to translate this vision into practice. Delegates noted the shift: from reusable cutlery and locally sourced produce to energy-efficient operations and moments that connected them to the natural environment of Far North Queensland.

"The efforts made by Cairns Convention Centre to promote sustainability during the meeting were noted and appreciated by delegates," Dr Potter said. *"It reinforced the key messages we wanted to deliver."*

Flexibility, Authenticity & Flow

Delivering such a complex programme demanded versatility. Jan Sharrock, ANZCA's Executive Director of Fellowship Affairs, described the scale: *"We had 1,946 in-person delegates and 263 contributors delivering over 55 sessions and 115 workshops. The versatility of the Centre's spaces helped us deliver this seamlessly and with an enhanced delegate experience."*

A standout achievement was hosting more than 110 workshops in a single



Cairns Convention Centre

day. *“The Cairns Convention Centre team was flexible with our requests, understood the delivery needs, and adapted as required. It’s not something we see, or say, all the time,”* Sharrock added.

For Janet Hamilton, General Manager of the Cairns Convention Centre, this responsiveness reflects a deliberate approach: *“Our approach is built on partnership. We see ourselves as an extension of the organising team, and that mindset is what allows us to respond quickly and effectively to changing needs on the ground.”*

In addition, the programme was infused with regional authenticity. Local leadership from Cairns Hospital and the anaesthetic department shaped discussions, grounding the scientific agenda in the realities of healthcare outside metropolitan centres.

ANZCA President Professor David Story underlined the importance of this: *“As a college, our commitment is to ensure all fellows and trainees have access to high quality education, research, and science. This should not be determined only by access to large metropolitan cities. We also want to provide opportunities for our regional members to convene an ASM and feel the pride and satisfaction of showcasing their skills, quality of care, and region to delegates nationally and internationally.”*

Beyond the Meeting Room

Delegates were encouraged to connect with the region beyond the walls of the Convention Centre. A guided visit to the Cairns Aquarium, led by marine biologist Jennie Gilbert, linked conference themes to conservation and anaesthesia in marine life. The Emerging Leaders Conference at Thala Beach, and charitable donations to local organisations, added depth and community engagement.

“These optional activities helped reinforce our theme and provided depth to the delegate experience,” Sharrock noted.

ANZCA ASM 2025 BY THE NUMBERS

- **Delegates:** 1,946 in person
- **Speakers & Facilitators:** 263
- **Workshops:** 115 (including 110+ in a single day)
- **Carbon Emissions Offset:** 287.62 tonnes
- **Food Donations:** Unserved catering delivered to YouthLink charity
- **Waste Generated:** 0.84 kg per attendee per day (55% less than average)
- **Funds Raised for Environmental & Charitable Partners:** \$10,000+



“They also created an appreciation for the unique contributions of regional professionals.”

The Welcome to Country by Gavin Singleton proved especially memorable. *“His message was passionate and beautifully aligned with the Future Proof theme,”* recalled Dr Potter. *“He highlighted the importance of country, culture, and sustainability in ways that will stay with our delegates for years.”*

Sustainability in Action

The ASM also set a new standard for sustainable conferencing in Australia. Over 21,500 disposable cups were saved by implementing a no-consumables policy, while prepared but unserved food was donated to local charity YouthLink. Delegates offset 173.99 tonnes of carbon emissions, with ANZCA covering the balance to reach 287.62 tonnes in total, alongside more than \$10,000 in contributions to environmental and charitable partners.

According to MeetGreen’s data, the event generated just 0.84 kilograms of waste per attendee per day – 55% less than the average event. As Hamilton put it: *“It is important as an industry that both clients and venues look for ways to be leaders in delivering sustainable events. It was a privilege to work with ANZCA on a program where sustainability wasn’t just a theme, but a lived experience across catering, logistics, and delegate engagement.”*

Professor Story concludes with pride: *“Feedback from delegates has been extremely positive, including some of our international speakers saying it was quite possibly the best meeting they had been to in a very long time, maybe ever.”*

More information on how Cairns Convention Centre can help you deliver impactful conferences on cairnsconvention.com.au

By Pamela Wilton

Excel London Expands the Possibilities

In 2026, Excel London will host a record number of major international congresses, bringing 80,000 delegates to the city. The milestone follows a £220 million expansion completed during the venue's 25th anniversary year, establishing the venue as the largest of its kind in Europe.

The Expansion

When you're planning a large-scale international congress, venue options in Europe narrow quickly.

René Haller, Account Director at MCI Switzerland, the professional congress organiser managing the ESCRS Annual Congress taking place on 11 to 15 September 2026, explained the challenge: *"Given the size of our annual congress, typically 15,000 to 16,000 delegates, there are limited venues in Europe that can accommodate an event of this scale. Excel London was chosen for its available space, competitive pricing, and strong support, including business event funding."*

Excel's £220 million expansion was built to address exactly that need: the ability to host major conventions alongside substantial exhibition space, all within a single, connected venue. The expansion increased the venue's size to 125,000 sqm, making it Europe's largest fully integrated convention and exhibition centre.

The London Advantage

London's appeal to international associations has never been questioned. The city consistently ranks among the world's top destinations, named TripAdvisor's 2025 World's Top

Destination, Resonance's 2025 Best City in Europe, and ranked among Cvent's top meeting destinations. What has changed is how delegates experience that appeal while attending events at Excel.

The Elizabeth line has brought Excel closer to the rest of London. Central London's major hotel districts, cultural venues, restaurants, and attractions now sit within easy reach. Delegates attending congresses at Excel can explore the West End, visit South Bank, or experience the city's historic landmarks without the distance becoming a deterrent.

The venue now functions as an integrated part of the city's offering.

Marije Koops, Congress Manager for the Annual European Association of Urology (EAU) Congress taking place March 13 to 16, 2026 and expecting over 10,000 delegates, explained the venue choice: *"We selected Excel London because it combines scale, flexibility, and accessibility, ideal for a congress of our size, especially with the new Maritime expansion now available. The venue's excellent transport links, modern infrastructure, and experienced teams allow us to deliver a high-quality event efficiently."*

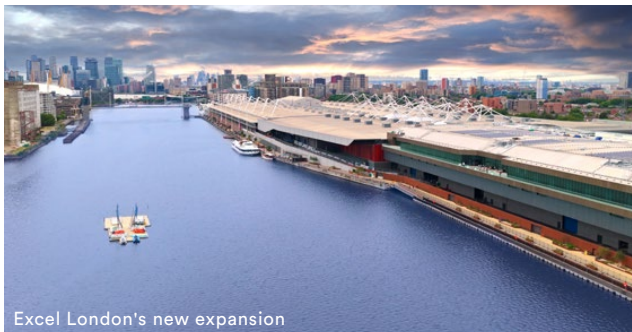
THE ICC MARITIME EXPANSION: SPECIFICATIONS

ICC Maritime Suite

- 14,000 sqm
- Up to 7,000 delegates
- 37 conference and meeting rooms
- Modular walls for flexible capacity
- Dedicated registration and reception areas

ICC Maritime Halls

- 12,000 sqm column-free space
- Capacity for more than 7,600 people (exhibition style)
- Dedicated freight entrance
- Private entrance opposite Aloft hotel



Excel London's new expansion



Excel's Royal Docks location, with its waterfront setting and ongoing regeneration, provides contemporary surroundings. For international delegates, London City Airport is located nearby, while Heathrow and Eurostar connections ensure accessibility from across Europe and beyond. The result is a purpose-built venue with the scale and facilities major congresses require, now directly connected to everything that makes London a destination worth choosing.

Sustainability & Legacy

Sustainability is a core consideration in venue selection, and the Excel expansion has been designed to meet those expectations. The new facilities proudly achieve BREEAM Excellent certification – an internationally recognised benchmark for sustainable building performance.

From the outset, the expansion prioritised low-carbon materials and construction methods, reducing both embodied carbon and emissions during the build. It also delivered a 15% biodiversity net gain, introduced vibrant public green spaces, and improved access to the waterfront – enhancing the venue's connection to the local environment.

Additionally, Excel partners with organisers who are committed to creating lasting impact. As associations increasingly seek to demonstrate their environmental and social responsibility, Excel offers a venue where sustainability is embedded into daily operations, whilst also providing support for social initiatives through their IMPACT

Programme. This ensures every event contributes to a meaningful legacy.

As Haller shared, *"The venue's carbon-neutral commitment also aligned with ESCRS's sustainability strategy, which was an important factor in our decision."* For associations developing similar strategies, finding venues that can support these commitments has become essential.

Another case in point: the ESC

For the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), choosing a host city for its annual congress requires a long list of criteria, from venue capabilities and accessibility to sustainability, healthcare compliance, and local collaboration. *"Only a limited number of destinations in Europe can meet the requirements of the ESC Congress,"* explains Nata Nambatingué, Congress & Event Director at the ESC. *"London ticks all those boxes, and Excel stands out as a state-of-the-art venue."* The city's exceptional connectivity has been, he says, *"a real game changer."* The area surrounding the venue has also evolved significantly, offering delegates seamless integration with the rest of the city.

When ESC last visited London in August 2024, the Excel expansion was nearing completion. *"We had the opportunity to visit the construction site in its final phase and were impressed by how much it will enhance the venue, making it even more attractive and*

functional," notes Nambatingué. As ESC prepares to mark its 75th anniversary, returning to the city where its very first congress took place in 1952 feels particularly meaningful. He adds that Excel's flexibility, its pillar-free spaces and experienced on-site teams, together with the support of London & Partners, make it an ideal partner for complex events of this scale. *"Gathering more than 30,000 delegates is no small task,"* he says, *"and the level of professionalism and collaboration we receive from Excel's teams continues to be outstanding."*

A Record Year

In 2026, Excel will welcome 80,000 delegates, generating an estimated £250 million in economic impact, while demonstrating cross-sector appeal. Medical associations, technology innovators, legal professionals, and scientific researchers have all selected the venue for their flagship gatherings.

Spanning nine months, the schedule includes INTA 2026 in May, EULAR 2026 in June, AAIC 2026 in July, and EuMW 2026 in October, among others, with many events utilising the new ICC Maritime expansion. The diversity demonstrates how Excel can now accommodate different sectors, each with its own specialised requirements and capacity needs.

To explore how Excel can support your event, visit www.excel.london/organiser or email salesenquiries@excel.london.

By Remi Deve

Monaco: A Destination in Perpetual Renewal

For those working in the international association meetings sector, Monaco has long represented something quite different from the way the Principality is sometimes perceived: the rare combination of scale, accessibility, and expertise within a compact urban framework. In 2025, that positioning is being redefined once more.



This year brings a cascade of changes that go beyond infrastructure updates. They speak to a clear intent: to show that Monaco is a destination in perpetual renewal, never standing still, always raising the bar. From the expansion of its flagship congress venue to the redesign of its hospitality portfolio, from digital upgrades to sustainable urban planning, Monaco is sending a strong signal to European and international associations.

A new chapter for the Grimaldi Forum

The centerpiece of this transformation is the extension of the Grimaldi Forum Monaco (GFM), inaugurated in January 2025 during its 25th anniversary celebrations. Presided over by Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene, the

unveiling was the confirmation that the Principality now possesses an events complex on a new scale: an additional 6,000 sqm of flexible, modular indoor space, plus 2,000 sqm of outdoor terraces overlooking the Mediterranean.

The expansion increases exhibition capacity by 50%, opening new possibilities for associations that had previously considered Monaco too intimate for their needs. Organisers can now plan simultaneous conferences and exhibitions, configure plenaries alongside breakout sessions, or integrate outdoor networking events into their program design. Importantly, the new spaces are bathed in natural light and offer separate access points, bringing a level of flexibility that today's associations require.

Yet perhaps the most striking aspect is not size, but philosophy. The new wing of the Grimaldi Forum was conceived with sustainability at its core: high energy efficiency, seawater-based renewable energy, optimized waste management, and state-of-the-art control systems. The venue extension is actually an authentic venue evolution, demonstrating how expansion can coexist with environmental responsibility.

Mareterra: building with vision

The Grimaldi Forum's growth is physically and conceptually tied to Mareterra, Monaco's new eco-district. Built on land reclaimed from the sea, Mareterra extends the Principality's surface area by around three percent. More importantly, it embodies Monaco's forward-looking urban vision: a car-light neighborhood prioritising pedestrians and green spaces, with energy drawn from renewable sources and public areas designed for community use.

For delegates attending a congress, the experience now unfolds seamlessly across a compact, walkable district where the main hotels, the convention centre, and key attractions are all within easy reach. The short stroll between meetings, accommodation, and evening events becomes part of the

experience itself, framed by landscaped promenades, gardens, and the ever-present Mediterranean backdrop.

This holistic urban integration is what allows Monaco to offer something many larger cities struggle to achieve: a sense of continuity and coherence throughout the delegate journey.

Digital tools, smarter mobility

Alongside bricks and mortar, Monaco has invested in its digital face. The relaunched [visitmonaco.com](https://www.visitmonaco.com) provides an interactive venue finder, maps, and tailored itineraries to support organisers during their planning stages. For associations managing multi-stakeholder decision processes, this self-service platform reduces friction and accelerates clarity.

Mobility is another focus. Case in point: the new Taxi Monaco app, rolled out earlier this year, which lets visitors book and track rides, schedule transfers, and pay digitally. For delegates needing to connect to Nice Côte d'Azur Airport, or for groups requiring reliable transfers at peak times, this may seem like a detail – but it is precisely such details that determine whether an event experience is smooth or stressful.

Hotels keeping pace

If venues are the hardware of a destination, then hotels are the operating system. In 2025, Monaco's hotel sector is continuing to evolve through an ambitious, destination-wide investment strategy.

Some of the city's leading establishments are indeed undergoing extensive renovations and upgrades to maintain the highest standards of excellence while embracing sustainable practices. Beyond design and comfort, new culinary concepts are being introduced across properties, ensuring visitors enjoy fresh, distinctive experiences with every stay. Together, these initiatives reflect Monaco's broader commitment to excellence, innovation, and responsible growth.

In the end, Monaco's story in 2025 is not about individual projects. It is about alignment. The Grimaldi Forum's expansion, Mareterra's urban planning, the digital relaunch of Visit Monaco, the new mobility app, and the wave of hotel renovations all converge to form a coherent narrative: a destination that understands that excellence must be renewed to remain relevant.

More information:

conventionbureau@gouv.mc / cvb.visitmonaco.com

WHY MONACO MATTERS FOR ASSOCIATIONS

For European and international associations, choosing a destination is a strategic act. It is about perception, values, and community impact. Monaco offers a distinctive package:

Accessibility: A short transfer from Nice Côte d'Azur Airport, with direct flights from most European capitals.

Capacity: With the Grimaldi Forum's expansion, Monaco can now accommodate mid- to large-scale association congresses that were previously out of reach.

Compactness: Everything is within walking distance – venues, hotels, restaurants, and cultural landmarks – which translates into networking ease and delegate satisfaction.

Sustainability: From Mareterra to energy-efficient hotels, the Principality provides credible sustainability credentials, increasingly vital for associations reporting on ESG commitments.

Public support: A government known for strong institutional engagement ensures reliability and smooth delivery of complex events.



By Remi Deve

Auckland Rising: Where Innovation Meets Aotearoa's Spirit

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is stepping into a new era as a world-class business events destination. As New Zealand's largest and most culturally diverse city, Auckland blends modern infrastructure, academic excellence and indigenous heritage in a way that few global cities can match. With the imminent opening of the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), the city is all set to become a major force in the global business events scene.

"Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is entering an exciting new era as a world-class business events destination," says Ken Pereria, Head of Business Events, Auckland Convention Bureau. "The opening of the NZICC in February 2026 will expand our capacity to host events at a scale never before possible in Aotearoa. Combined with new hotels, world-leading connectivity and a spirit of innovation, Auckland offers an inspiring setting for events that spark ideas and create lasting impact."

Auckland's business events ecosystem sits at the crossroads of knowledge, creativity and opportunity. The city's key growth sectors – technology and innovation, investment, creative industries, the green economy and social innovation – offer fertile ground for conferences seeking content-rich, forward-thinking themes.

Recent initiatives such as the Auckland Innovation and Technology Alliance and the upcoming New Zealand Institute for Advanced Technology (NZIAT) are strengthening the city's reputation as a hub of research and entrepreneurship. For international associations, this means access to a network of experts who can enrich programmes with cutting-edge insight and collaboration opportunities.

Culturally rich & globally connected

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is not only the world's largest Māori and Polynesian city; it is also one of the most culturally diverse globally. This diversity translates into unique experiences for delegates: authentic performances, Māori-led tours, local cuisine, and art that tells the stories of Aotearoa.

Accessibility is another defining advantage. Auckland Airport, already Australasia's best connected to North America, continues to expand with new direct routes and a multi-billion-dollar terminal upgrade for seamless international travel. Within the city, the City Rail Link, New Zealand's largest



ever transport infrastructure project, will open in 2026, making it easier than ever for delegates to move between accommodation, venues and attractions.

Auckland's commitment to sustainability and inclusivity runs through its entire visitor economy. Business events here are encouraged to limit their environmental footprint while creating meaningful cultural and social legacies. For organisers, the Auckland Convention Bureau (ACB) offers free end-to-end support: from bid assistance and local introductions to logistics and delegate engagement.

Upcoming highlights illustrate the city's growing appeal: the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education 2025 will draw nearly 3,800 participants, and the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists Meeting will bring 670 delegates this November.

NZICC: A Gateway to Aotearoa

Opening in February 2026, the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) will redefine what it means to meet in Aotearoa. Designed as a space where innovation, culture and sustainability intersect, the NZICC will be the largest and most versatile conference, exhibition, and entertainment space in the country and will be situated in the heart of Auckland CBD.

It's expected to attract 33,000 new international visitors to Aotearoa annually, which is an exciting prospect as it will act as a gateway to rest of Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. Its proximity to universities, corporate headquarters, and innovation hubs will also make it easy for organisers to connect events with the country's brightest minds.

Prue Daly, NZICC General Manager says, *"We can't wait to welcome the world into the NZICC. The building is world class and distinctly Aotearoa. It's been thoughtfully designed so there's space for intimate meetings or large events of up to 4,500. The NZICC's theatre will also be the largest seated theatre in the country, seating 2,852 people."*

Māori culture is woven into the NZICC's design and operation, ensuring that every guest feels a sense of manaakitanga, warm hospitality and respect. The building itself showcases artworks that tell local stories, while its partnership with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, the tangata whenua (people of the land), ensures cultural authenticity in every detail.

"We have a strong connection to local culture through design. Wrapping around the NZICC are two of the largest pieces of public art ever created in Aotearoa, while inside Lyonel Grant's 17-metre waka is truly breathtaking. We are also collaborating with our local tangata whenua Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei on how to enhance event experiences by reflecting local traditions and heritage," says Daly.

In line with Auckland's broader sustainability goals, NZICC's framework - Activate, Cultivate and Elevate - defines its vision for regenerative impact. This includes championing local culture and

NZICC AT A GLANCE

- Opening: February 2026
- Total floor area: 32,500 sqm
- Exhibition hall: 6,708 sqm, accommodating up to 4,500 people
- Theatre: 2,852 seats, divisible into two spaces of 1,235 each
- Meeting space: 2,700 sqm, configurable into up to 33 rooms
- Location: Auckland CBD, within walking distance of hotels, dining and entertainment, adjacent to the soon-to-be open City Rail Link



produce, partnering with communities, measuring environmental performance, and creating an inclusive workplace that fosters learning and leadership in sustainable event management.

In the kitchen, that philosophy comes alive. NZICC's Executive Chef Rob Cullen explains: *"Sustainability will be front of mind in our food system, beginning with the nose-to-tail philosophy, which champions using all edible parts of an animal in cooking. We will also be using ingredients that tell the story of Aotearoa. Every piece of lamb, every bit of kaimoana (seafood) – we know where it comes from, and we have a connection to the people behind it."* Menus will focus on locally sourced ingredients, traceability and zero-waste practices, making every meal part of the centre's wider commitment to the planet and the community.

More information:

On Auckland: meet@aucklandnz.com / aucklandconventionbureau.com

On NZICC: kiaora@nzicc.co.nz / www.nzicc.co.nz

What to Expect at IBTM World's Association Leaders Forum

At IBTM World, the leading global trade show for the meetings and events industry, the 2025 Association Leaders Forum will convene senior association professionals to tackle the industry's most pressing issues, guided by new themes and a refreshed roster of speakers.

Designed in partnership with ESAE (European Society of Association Executives), this year's Association Leaders Forum examines the role of association events in building strong communities, with a focus on the key role of strategic thinking to engage delegates and energise teams.

Taking place on day one of IBTM World, the forum will offer a full and interactive programme of provocative debates, real-world case studies, and expert insights on AI, sustainable destinations, event innovation, impact, and technology.

Speakers will include Sven Bossu, CEO, AIPC; Amy Hissrich, Vice-President, International Affairs ASAE; Angela Guillemet, Executive Director, INCON; and Stylianos Filopoulos, CEO, Association by Design.

The day's sessions will be punctuated by networking sessions where attendees can make valuable new connections and meet with existing industry colleagues.

Claudia Hall, IBTM World Exhibition Director, said: *"Our Association Leaders Forum has evolved since its inception in 2022 to become the go-to yearly meeting point for association professionals. With a packed programme of topical and engaging sessions designed in partnership with the prestigious ESAE, our forum is the platform for association leaders to exchange ideas, learn, and advance knowledge and best practice. It offers a crucial peer-to-peer setting that supports the sector's advancement, and future prosperity."*

Liesbeth Switten, ESAE Vice-President, said: *"We are delighted to be partnering with IBTM World on its Association Leaders Forum for the third year running. As a key date in the global events calendar, it is the ideal setting*

for association professionals to come together to discuss the important topics shaping the future of the industry. We have an inspiring and thought-provoking programme planned for this year and we look forward to welcoming some of the leading voices in the Association sector."

The ESAE, which Boardroom is the official media partner of, is the leading organisation in Europe for association professionals. It facilitates the exchange of best practice among peers and ensures that current and future leaders understand association business and strategy.

Designed by event planners, for event planners, IBTM World brings together over 12,000 exhibitors, buyers and visitors to do business, learn from inspirational speakers, and network with peers.

For more information on IBTM World, please visit www.ibtmworld.com/en-gb.html or scan the QR code on the facing page.

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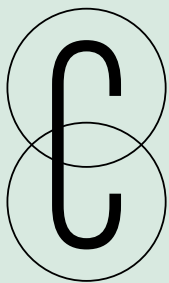
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