

# UIA'S 2014 MEETINGS STATISTICS

For the past 65 years, the Union of International Associations (UIA) has undertaken statistical studies on the preceding year's international meetings. The statistics are based on information systematically collected by the UIA Congress Department and selected according to strict criteria maintained over the years. At the time of producing this edition (May 2015) there were 428,369 meetings in the UIA meetings database of which 384,097 (90%) meet the criteria for inclusion in this report. Of these 384,097 meetings, 364,834 took place in 2013 or earlier, 12,212 took place in 2014, and 7,051 are scheduled for 2015 or later.

*Text Rémi Dévé*

Meetings taken into consideration include those organised and/or sponsored by the international organisations which appear in the *Yearbook of International Organisations* and in the *International Congress Calendar*. For the UIA, meetings are divided into 3 categories: meetings of international organisations, 3-day other international meetings and 2-day other international meetings.

## WHAT COUNTS

Meetings of international organisations are organised or sponsored by 'international organisations', i.e. international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) that are included in the UIA's *Yearbook of International Organisations*, with at least 50 participants.

Three-day other international meetings are not organised or sponsored by 'international organisations' but nonetheless of significant international character, with at least 40% of participants who are from countries other than the host country, with at least 5 different nationalities, lasting at least 3 days, with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 300 participants. Two-day other international meetings have to be attended by at least 40% of participants who are from countries other than the host country, with at least 5 different nationalities, lasting at least 2 days, with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 250 participants.

## CHANGES & CO

No major changes seem to have taken place in 2014, though there was some

reassignment in the Top 3. Singapore, with almost 150 fewer meetings than last year, has dropped two places as a country, leaving USA and Belgium as #1 and #2 respectively, and making Korea Republic disappear from the very top of the list. As to France, it is steadily climbing up the rankings, gaining one place, just like Austria. UK went down the rankings, and Germany had to give up three places as well.

As for cities, Brussels is still strongly standing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, with more than 350 meetings than last year. Paris has gained three places, while Madrid and Geneva stand firmly on their grounds, moving up the ladder as well. If Busan made a striking appearance last year, it disappeared from the Top 10 in 2014, leaving Seoul to represent Korea with 249 meetings. Dubai appears in the Top 20 for the very first time, with 136 meetings.

But, just like last year, what the UIA statistics reveal is the strength of secondary cities. Take Japan for instance: 624 meetings were held in the country in 2014, but only 228 in the capital city Tokyo. That means an outstanding 396 events took place in other Japanese destinations. The same goes for France and Paris, Germany and Berlin: it's not only the capital cities that helped secure a great number of events and a good position in the rankings, but obviously other, dare we say emerging towns... Of course Belgium and Brussels are an exception, but we can guess this is mainly due to the relatively small size of the country.

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Brussels, Belgium

## TOP INTERNATIONAL MEETING COUNTRIES IN 2014

Rank	Country	#Meetings
1	USA	858
2	Belgium	851
3	Singapore	850
4	Korea Rep	636
5	Japan	624
6	France	561
7	Austria	539
8	Spain	513
9	Germany	439
10	UK	354
11	Netherlands	350
12	Italy	330
13	Switzerland	328
14	Australia	287
15	Thailand	280
16	Canada	228
17	China	193
18	Sweden	189
19	Finland	169
20	Un. Arab Emirates	153

## TOP INTERNATIONAL MEETING CITIES IN 2014

Rank	City	#Meetings
1	Singapore	850
2	Brussels	787
3	Vienna	396
4	Paris	325
5	Seoul	249
6	Tokyo	228
7	Madrid	200
8	Barcelona	193
9	Bangkok	189
10	Geneva	173
11	Berlin	167
	Amsterdam	167
12	Dubai	136
13	Busan	132
14	London	125
15	Copenhagen	120
	Sydney	120
16	Stockholm	112
17	Lisbon	106
18	Istanbul	104
19	Helsinki	102
20	Budapest	95

# ASSOCIATION COMMUNICATIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA

## Appropriate and Sustainable



Joel Fischer

We remain in the midst of a period of significant technological change, particularly when it comes to ICT. The phrases “information revolution” and “communications revolution” are not widely used when we speak about every day matters like social media, smart phones and tablet computers but they are important concepts to keep in mind. The turbulence, turmoil and opportunities for both significant change and new realities that are inherent in revolutions of one sort or another must be negotiated with an eye to stability and consistency.

*Text Joel Fischer, Union of International Associations*

Broadly speaking, associations with small staff and tight budgets have dual personalities: on the one hand these restrictions put them in a conservative framework when considering significant changes to standard operating procedures; on the other hand, they are often quick to take advantage of new opportunities and technologies which promise to facilitate their work through cost reduction, simplification of tasks and so on. This is, of course, in contrast to large and well-financed association offices which are often indistinguishable from commercial corporate operations.

In addition to changes in ICT, associations are also experiencing change in the expectations of how they are managed and how they interact with members, partners and the wider world. Professionalised association and nonprofit cultures have taken root through university coursework and staff training opportunities and the continued influence of corporate / business life in organisational life as a whole. In conjunction with modern business practices, associational activity is increasingly evaluated in terms of “value for money” and “return on investment” by all participants.

### EVALUATION & PLANNING

As our business, professional and personal cultures negotiate and adopt new technologies so too do our associations. And as we negotiate the evolutionary aspects of these revolutions part of our mandate is to manage

change. Remember how Facebook was only a thing for young people and now it's a thing for everyone, for your business, for your association? Or Twitter, or Youtube or...

**“BE CONSERVATIVE IN WHAT YOU SEND AND LIBERAL IN WHAT YOU RECEIVE.”**

**JON POSTEL (1943-1998)**

Evaluation, planning and designated responsibilities are a broad framework for a conservative approach to new tools, technologies and opportunities. If your office is large enough then you have someone, or a committee, responsible for communications and information technology. You might depend on outside consultants to assist in redesigning the information/documents that are a daily part of your office life and in retooling your publications strategy to make use of digital publishing and new communication platforms. If you are under-resourced or all this online tech talk is completely new then how do you start to understand it, to make decisions and to negotiate change?

One of the benefits of the current information environment is that we have open access to a wide range of professional and educational materials on just about any topic. Marketing, publishing, online identity and services, public relations and more all feature in current discussions in online

videos, professional publications and more informal forums.

Two such helpful documents were easy for me to locate and they illustrate the approaches that we all need to take when considering our roles as individuals and associations on the internet.

Thorsten Strauss's article, *Digital First!*, for a recent edition of [Communication Director](#) provides a detailed business perspective on Deutsche Bank's theory and practice of integrating corporate communications and digital tools. While the article is written from the standpoint of a commercial enterprise in a competitive business environment there are points and principles which are applicable to all offices seeking to make best use of the current opportunities that technology brings.

[D]igitalisation [must be] a core topic for the entire organisation. Digital communications have to become an integral part of corporate strategy, which means they are emerging from a niche area to a company-wide function. The priority for content and channel management is to develop comprehensive concepts to achieve a consistent and significant digital footprint for the company. New formats must have digital DNA and communication content needs to be more tightly knit with topics that promise to appeal to a broad digital audience.

If we unpack the language a bit, we find some interesting universal points. In what ways is every component of an association now a potential creator of “content” (for newsletters, for press releases, for social medial updates)? How does your association maintain consistency in the digital materials it prepares for the membership and the wider world; how does it maintain consistency in visual identity, institutional personality and so on? How does an organisation transition its office practices into the fully digital age?

Strauss’ article also presents an examination of the “Five principles for successful digital communications” which guide their work at Deutsche Bank. These notes are excellent strategy topics for association staff to examine.

### **MULTIPLE AFFILIATIONS**

The other document that readers will find useful to stimulate discussion and planning is Duke University’s *Style Guide – Social Media Guidelines for Communicators*.

This type of document is notably of interest for association people because they too carry multiple affiliations in their online interactions – either as association staff/officers or as professionals representing other institutions while engaging in association activities.

Reputation issues then become doubled or tripled for an individual participating in an online forum or presenting themselves in an online networking platform. If Bob doesn’t play well with others it might be quite problematic to have him trailing your association name, or company name, across the internet. Consequently, a conservative approach and fully briefed staff/membership are critical, particularly in a world where open communications have democratized who can speak, publish and present their views to the world.

In my experience consistency and stability are important elements of an association’s communication plans. The world is twenty years along in the life of the world wide web and yet some associations still struggle to maintain a basic online presence. In recent months I have come across numerous stale or stalled blog attempts which are the only visible presence of an association online. In other cases there are competing institutional presences on different platforms (blog site vs website vs Facebook page) some of which may be more up to date than the others.

The management of sites related to an association’s conference furthers the complexity with sites abandoned (but left online) as soon as the conference has taken place.

“*What do we do with our archives?!*” is a question many associations have faced, they must now face similar questions in the preparation, presentation, organisation and retention of their digital output.

The tools and technologies available to us should make our organisational lives easier, they will only do so if we approach their use in a planned manner.

Start small and plan for incremental growth; plan for sustainability - don’t announce your association on five different platforms if you don’t have the capacity to maintain your presence there; plan for transformability (can your online white papers or briefing notes be turned into an ebook?) and plan for transferability: your communications operations should be able to be transferred from one staff person to another with little need for orientation. The solidity of your day-to-day operations should be represented in the solidity of your presence and content online.

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