
Section 9: Where and when do international organizations meet?

This section is a reprint of the report

International Meetings Statistics for the year 2010

Comparative tables on the development, geographic distribution, organization, participation and other features of international meetings of international organizations

This report is prepared annually by the Congress Department of the editors of this Yearbook, the Union of International Associations (UIA).

The data are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the UIA and sister publication of this Yearbook.

The report is published in June of each year. Access is reserved for Associate Members of the UIA for the first three months. For more information please contact uia@uia.org.

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Section 9: Introduction

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the UIA.

The presentation of data is intended, firstly, to present details on the current reporting year, and, secondly, to present fully, and give prominence to, those data which are the UIA's specialty: the activities of international organizations listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Prominence is also given to presenting data which, due to the passage of time, can be considered to have stabilized. The editors emphasize that the number of meetings for the current reporting year (2010) is expected to be around 80 percent of that extracted from the database five years hence.

As of the report for 2008 (published in 2009), the UIA meetings database has been enriched by connecting it more closely to its sister database on international organizations, the source of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. This enriches the data available across the time scale and in particular enables historical surveys of international organization meeting activity as far back as 1850. It has also affected the rate of change in data, giving an exceptional boost to the numbers presented as of the report for 2008 (published in 2009).

It should be noted that UIA criteria for collection and inclusion have *not* changed; only the presentation has changed.

In general, the editors have opted for more data and fewer “frills”. The more extensive analyses of earlier editions are no longer included, nor are graphic presentations. The editors welcome comments on the usefulness of previous presentations and suggestions as to possibly more useful presentations.

How many...

	In report for 2010 (published 2011)	In report for 2009 (published 2010)
Total number of meetings in the UIA database	359,673	342,500
Number of those answering the criteria for inclusion in this report	316,534	329,489
Number of those taking place prior to the reporting year	297,724	309,915
Number of those taking place in the reporting year	12,015	11,929
Number of those scheduled to take place after the reporting year	6,795	7,645
Number of countries represented for all years	256	257
Number of cities represented for all years	11,047	11,386
Number of countries represented for the reporting year only	181	194
Number of cities represented for the reporting year only	1,573	1,653

Sections

The report is divided into five sections, each section covering a specified period of time.

Section 1 presents data on all types of meetings for the current reporting year (2010). In Table 1.1. details for all cities hosting international meetings in 2010 are given. This is in contrast to earlier reports in which, in the former Presentation 1/1, only those countries and cities hosting “significant” numbers of meetings were listed separately, with all other countries of that continent being listed under the heading “Other”.

Including all cities may bring to light inconsistencies in spelling or usage. The editors would welcome being given the information necessary to correct these, though some inconsistencies may be due to the preferences of the organizer (for example, indicating a meeting is held in a suburb or distinct district of a major city rather than in the city itself).

While it is not the intention of the editors to take a position with regard to the political or diplomatic implications of geographical names, they have chosen, as of this edition, to use the English names of cities and countries. For example, the city listed under “Wien” in past editions can now be found under “Vienna”.

No continental divisions are presented in this edition. The editors welcome comments on the usefulness of the continental divisions used previously and suggestions as to possibly more useful divisions and groupings of countries.

For all of Section 1, users are reminded that the number of meetings for the current reporting year (2010) is expected to be around 80 percent of that extracted from the database five years hence.

Section 2 presents data on all types of meetings for the past five years. In this section, only those countries and cities with the most meetings are presented.

As for Section 1, users are reminded that data for the years covered in Section 2 can be expected to still change, the latest years more significantly than the older.

Section 3 presents data on the meetings of international organizations listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* only (see page 10, the description of meetings counted under the heading “A”), and only for a ten-year period ending five years ago. Given these two factors of reliability – the inclusion of only those meetings which fall under UIA’s specialty, and the fact that the data can be assumed to now be reasonably stable – more analyses are presented in this section than in the other sections.

Section 4 presents data on the meetings of international organizations listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* only (see page 10, the description of meetings counted under the heading “A”), and that for an unprecedented 150-year period. The editors look forward to further exploring these data in future editions of this report.

The question of geographical names and continuity deserves particular attention for Section 4. The editors have chosen to group defunct countries under their current names in cases where exactly the same territory is covered. In practical terms for this edition, this affects only Germany: in Section 4 “Germany” covers pre-1945 Germany, the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic of 1945-1989, and post-1989 Germany. Likewise, cities, while being listed under the country in which they are currently located, have been grouped and totalled by city, regardless of any changes in country name. Equally, cities with names known by various spellings have been grouped and totalled. For example, Prague is listed as “Prague, Czech Rep”, regardless of the year. Cities so treated are indicated by a “(*)” after the name.

Data for the years prior to 1983 require special mention. The UIA meetings database – the source of this statistics report and of the *International Congress Calendar* – contains, with few exceptions, only information since 1983, the year in which the UIA installed its own computerized data storage system. Most data in this report for the years prior to 1983 were collected not by the rigorous collection methods under which the *International Congress Calendar* operates, but by the more flexible (insofar as recording meeting activity is concerned) standards of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. The *Yearbook* presents a general picture of an organization and its activities (including its events) while the *Calendar* focuses exclusively on documenting events. It should therefore not be assumed that the data for the years prior to 1983, in most cases extracted from the *Yearbook* and not from the *Calendar*, give a complete history of the meetings of all organizations and associations. The volume of data available for analysis in this section is, however, sufficient to make it indicative.

The UIA has a paper archive of information on the meetings which have taken place from 1890 to 1983 and is actively seeking sponsors to support the digitization process, thus enabling a more accurate picture of the growth and development of meetings during this period.

Section 5 presents data on the future, planned meetings of international organizations listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (see page 10, the description of meetings counted under the heading “A”). For obvious reasons, the data in this section should be treated as indicative only.

What meetings are counted in this report?

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the UIA.

At the time of producing this edition (May 2011) there were 359,673 meetings in the UIA meetings database of which 316,534 (88%) meet the criteria for inclusion in this report. Of these 316,534 meetings, 297,724 took place in 2009 or earlier, 12,015 took place in 2010, and 6,795 are scheduled for 2011 or later.

Meetings included are divided into three types. The types are indicated by letters: type A, type B and type C. These letters have, in themselves, no significance in relation to the meetings they group, and are used merely for convenience.

It should be noted that events taking place in more than one city are counted in this report for each city separately.

Meetings counted under the heading “A” are “Meetings of international organizations”:

- meetings organized or sponsored by “international organizations”, i.e. non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) that are included in the UIA’s *Yearbook of International Organizations* (see below “What is an ‘international organization’”) and whose details are subject to systematic collection and updates on an annual basis by the UIA

and

- with at least 50 participants, or number of participants unknown.

In previous editions, this type was referred to as “Meetings of international organizations”. The criteria for this type have not changed since at least the early 1990s, although they were not always fully described in the accompanying notes.

There are 292,086 type “A” meetings included in this edition, and they are included in all sections.

Meetings counted under the heading “B” are “Other international meetings (3 days)”:

- meetings not organized or sponsored by “international organizations” but nonetheless of significant international character, notably those organized by national organizations and national branches of international organizations
- and
- at least 40 percent of the participants are from countries other than the host country and at least 5 nationalities are represented
- and
- lasting at least 3 days, or of unknown duration
- and
- with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 300 participants

In previous editions, this type was referred to as “Other international meetings”. In the edition *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (published in 2008), it was further defined as “Other international meetings (3 days)”. The criteria for this type have not changed since at least the early 1990s, although they were not always fully described in the accompanying notes.

There are 41,872 type “B” meetings included in this edition, and they are included in Sections 1 and 2.

Meetings counted under the heading “C” are “Other international meetings (2 days)”:

- meetings not organized or sponsored by “international organizations” but nonetheless of significant international character, notably those organized by national organizations and national branches of international organizations
- and
- at least 40 percent of the participants are from countries other than the host country and at least 5 nationalities are represented
- and
- lasting at least 2 days, or of unknown duration
- and
- with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 250 participants

This type was included for the first time, at the request of users of this report, in the edition *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (published in 2008), where it was referred to as “Other international meetings (2 days)” and included only in presentation 1/2. Type “B” and type “C” are counted separately in order to ensure continuity with prior editions and the creation of type “C”.

There are 50,013 type “C” meetings included in this edition, and they are included in Sections 1 and 2.

Logically, all meetings counted under the heading “B” are also counted under the heading “C”. The reverse is, equally logically, not true.

All selections have been made on the basis of “at least” 50 participants in the case of meetings of international organizations, and “at least” 300 participants for other international meetings. In editions prior to *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (published in 2008) it has not always been clear if selections were made on the basis of “at least” 50 (or 300) participants, or “more than” 50 (or 300) participants.

In editions prior to *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (published in 2008) it was the intention to exclude meetings of intergovernmental bodies if the title of the meeting contained the words “ministerial” or “summit”. Unfortunately, this criterion was not always strictly applied: some such meetings were excluded, others were included. As of the edition published in 2008, this criterion has been abandoned. Meetings of intergovernmental bodies are included if they meet the standard criteria. The number of meetings concerned is, for the most part, negligible.

What meetings are not counted in this report?

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the UIA.

Excluded from the UIA database are:

- purely national meetings, as well as those of an exclusively religious, didactic, political, commercial or sporting nature, such as religious gatherings, courses, party conferences, sales meetings, contests, etc;
- meetings with strictly limited participation, such as those of subsidiary (internal) statutory bodies, committees, groups of experts, etc, of which the greatest proportion are held at an intergovernmental level and take place at the headquarters of the large IGOs;
- corporate and incentive meetings, the survey of commercial activities and markets being outside the UIA's scope.

The information in this report is biased by the UIA's restriction to:

- meetings organized by non-commercial and non-profit organizations, though these may still include meetings concerned with commercially relevant topics such as those of professional, trade and industry associations, and meetings organized by non-profit organizations in order to generate revenue;
- publicly announced meetings, thereby excluding unpublicized, secret and closed events;
- meetings reported within the time frame permitting their inclusion in this annual review, thereby excluding meetings on which information is available only after this period;
- participation figures generally being those indicated pre-meeting, not post-meeting.

The process of detecting newly announced meetings, and building up an adequate profile, is not as straightforward as might be assumed. Announcements may be tentative, variously misleading according to source, and subject to frequent revision. For these reasons, the UIA retains in its meetings database many meetings that do not meet the criteria for this annual review. At the time of producing this edition (May 2011) there were 359,673 meetings in the UIA meetings database of which 316,534 (88%) meet the criteria for inclusion in this report.

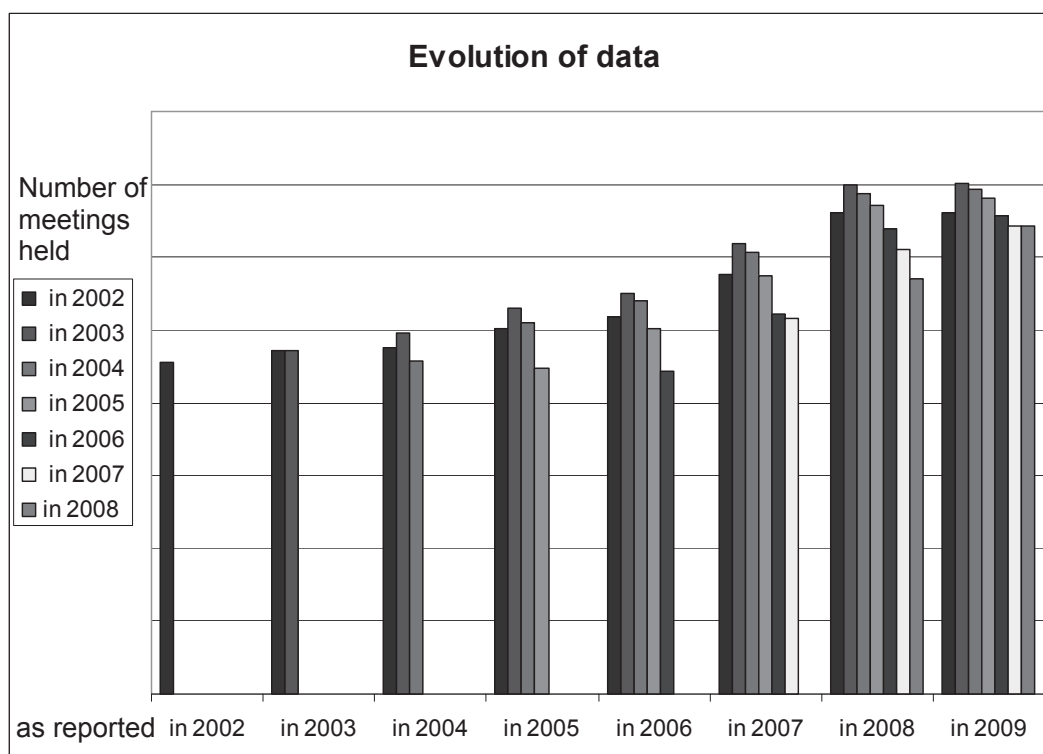
It should be noted that UIA criteria for collection and inclusion have remained unchanged for many years, apart from the addition of type "C" meetings as described above. The above descriptive text has, however, changed: every year we try to make it clearer.

Caveat

Readers are reminded that the tables in this report are re-created each year, using data which are constantly updated.

Researchers following trends in meetings should bear in mind that data for the current year are probably under-reported by about 10 percent on average.

When comparing consecutive years in flux, it should be remembered that both years' totals can be expected to change over time, the latest slightly more rapidly than the older. The number of meetings for the current reporting year (2010) is expected to be around 80 percent of that extracted from the database five years hence, by which time data stability is expected to be more or less reached for 2010.



As noted above, closer links between the meetings database and the organizations database has given an exceptional boost to the numbers presented as of the report for 2008 (published in 2009).

If strictly comparable data are required – for example, the situation for a given city at exactly the same time each year for a number of years – it is advisable to use the UIA's data to compile a time series. The UIA has used the same sources and same editorial practices for many years so, while the database may not be comprehensive, it is reliably consistent in terms of methodology.

Geographical names

It is not the intention of the editors to take a position with regard to the political or diplomatic implications of geographical names or continental groupings used. The country, city, and continental names used in this publication are chosen for the sake of brevity and common usage. Within the limits of standardization required for statistical purposes, the geographical names used by the organizer of the meeting are respected. This may sometimes lead to territories and dependencies being listed separately, which then affects the totals per country.

Methodology

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the UIA.

The method of data collection and selection used for this edition is consistent with that of the past 30 years.

Since 1910 the UIA has collected information on international organizations and their international meetings; a first statistical review was published in its *Revue internationale des congrès* in 1910. Since 1960 the UIA has prepared statistics on the international meetings that have taken place worldwide in the preceding year. This work is based on routine research and surveys undertaken by the UIA for the compilation of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (published since 1950) and the *International Congress Calendar* (published since 1960).

The prime source of information is international organizations. The UIA's researchers work continuously throughout the year on the meetings database, adding and modifying event records using information acquired from international organizations by mail and e-mail and from other sources such as periodicals and the internet.

Data are extracted and compiled from the database at the end of April each year in order to report statistics on the year just passed. So this edition published in 2011 is of data collected in 2010.

While never claiming to be a complete survey of all international meetings, the merit of the UIA statistics is that they have been compiled over several decades from the same sources and using consistent methods and criteria.

Because the UIA's meetings database is always changing, data extracted from the database today differ from those extracted and published previously, whether they refer to the future or to the past. Changes may arise from the re-scheduling or relocation of meetings and from the addition of supplementary information on recorded meetings or the addition of previously unrecorded meetings. As data are modified, more meetings are added to the database than are removed.

Continuity

Since 2003 all data are extracted anew each year from the UIA meetings database. The present format, while differing from that of previous years, is consistent in presentation with that of the past 30 years.

The editors note that there have been initiatives in recent years to determine a standard and generally accepted and applied definition of the term "meeting". While the editors see the need for such an agreement, they point out that the chief merit of the UIA statistics is that they have been compiled over several decades from the same sources and using consistent methods and criteria.

Other resources: ICCA statistical reports

Readers wishing to study the overall association meetings market should also make use of the statistics reports produced by ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association). It too provides only a partial picture because of its criteria for inclusion (see below), but it should be seen as a complementary resource to be used alongside UIA statistics to create a more complete understanding, rather than an alternative or competing view, of the same market segment.

The ICCA Association Database includes only events which occur regularly, which rotate between at least three countries, which are organized by associations, and which attract at least 50 participants. It does not attempt to include all association events, many of which are one-off or tied to a single destination, nor inter-governmental meetings, nor the corporate meetings market. ICCA collects the information from its members, from international associations themselves, and by conducting planned research to fill in the gaps.

What is an “international organization”?

The *Yearbook of International Organizations*, which profiles the organizations whose meetings are a focus of these statistics, catalogues all “non-profit” “international” “organizations” according to a broad range of criteria. It therefore includes many bodies that may be perceived, according to narrower definitions, as not being fully international, or as not being organizations as such, or as not being of sufficient significance to merit inclusion. Such bodies are nevertheless included so as to enable users to make their own evaluation in the light of their own criteria.

The editors of the Yearbook are sensitive to the existence of forms of social organization that may substitute for the creation of a more formal or conventional organizations. A conference series with no continuing committee is one example.

The definition of “profit-making”, and the extent to which any “non-profit organization” may incidentally or deliberately make a profit as defined by particular tax regimes, cannot be unambiguously resolved. This grey area has been treated in a variety of ways with the sensitivity it merits. The editors are attentive to the non-profit objectives of an organization registered under for-profit legal status. Especially problematic are the professional and trade organizations whose existence is in part justified, in their members’ eyes, by the extent to which they defend or improve the members’ income. That said, bodies that are unambiguously constituted as “for profit” are excluded from the Yearbook.

The editors acknowledge that some types of international organization may be totally absent or under-reported in the Yearbook, such as virtual organizations associated with the internet (including those of otherwise conventional structure, and also “usenets”, web discussion groups, “listserv” communities, etc), criminal networks, cartels and price-fixing rings, mercenary groups, spy and undercover organizations, terrorist organizations, secret societies, religious sects, family and fraternity groups, bodies with no formal structure or fixed address, or associations essentially constituted by a journal subscribership.

The editors have always given priority to bodies that are not focussed on, or deriving from, a particular country. This may be construed as under-reporting of certain forms of aid, missionary activity, language and cultural activities, and so on.

The editors have traditionally stressed the importance of involvement of three countries on a more-or-less equal footing, to the exclusion of bi-lateral international bodies and those in which a particular country is dominant. Indications of “internationality” include distribution of board members, location of meetings, rotation of secretariat, source of finance, and membership.

The number and variety of organizations in the Yearbook are sufficient indication of the problems of information collection. Documenting many organizations and their meetings is challenging for reasons such as the following:

- Information on an organization’s activities may take time to filter through communication networks and be registered by the editors.
- Many organizations are ephemeral creations or are only “activated” for infrequent meetings, events or projects.
- Many bodies are reluctant to publicize their activities.
- Organizations may not respond to questionnaires, or may omit significant information from their replies.
- Many active “international” bodies do not perceive themselves as “international” or as sufficiently formalized to be mentioned in the same context as those that are legally established.
- Regional proliferation and functional specialization is such that, frequently, organizational “neighbours” do not know of each other’s existence.
- A significant number of bodies have secretariats rotated among annually elected officers, making continuing contact somewhat problematic.
- Information on the creation, existence or formal dissolution of an organization in a given year may only be received some time later.

In such a dynamic environment, the time required for information collection may even be greater than the effective life of an organization.