
Introduction

This is the 62nd edition of this report.

For all of its 100-plus years of history the UIA has promoted transnational relationships between people as a key element of stability, peace, scientific advancement and the general betterment of humanity. As an observer of, organizer of, and participant in transnational events the UIA extends its condolences to those who have lost family, friends and colleagues to the pandemic and regrets the tremendous difficulties that all nations have faced during the accompanying social and economic upheavals.

The impact of the pandemic will be felt for years to come and we have already seen aspects of the “new normal” in 2020 itself as associations and event organizers brought creativity, resilience and technology to the fore as they sought to re-design in-person conferences and exhibitions.

The massive impact of the pandemic on international association meetings leads us to revise the presentation of this report. This report offers two sections: a re-presentation of the data for events held in 2019 and a presentation of the data we currently have for what took place in 2020.

Why 2019 again?

If you are familiar with this report then you will be aware that our data for a given year generally does not stabilize until a point five years further on. This is due to the fact that we are not immediately aware of what took place in the preceding year and are constantly updating our databases of international associations and their meetings activity. The Yearbook generally adds 900-1200 new organization descriptions during each annual cycle, and these bring meetings of their own to the statistical picture. We are presenting 2019 again here because it now represents the **last good year before the pandemic**. We have added some 900+ additional meetings to the database for 2019 in the period between the reports and we have continued our general process of correcting and updating the information we already have. As we continue to elaborate and extend our understanding of the meetings which took place in 2019, the data will be the baseline for analyzing opportunities for recovery and in examining the potential of new initiatives.

And what of 2020?

The presentation for 2020 forced some changes in our approach. We are now actively tracking meetings which are **cancelled or postponed/rescheduled**. Historically the UIA has not had a firm editorial rule in such matters. Situations where conflict or natural disaster caused problems for scheduled meetings can be seen in our time-scale data by gaps or drop off in activity (the World Wars being the clearest examples). UIA had not traditionally described the planned events which had not taken place. By tracking cancelled and postponed events we are able to present a clearer picture of significant circumstances in an association's life.

Also, we are now more correctly reflecting the participant status of events with **in-person, hybrid, and online/virtual** being added to an event's description in the database. Historically the only meetings in our data which took place outside a defined town or city were those which happened on a cruise ship or those which took place in a national park or “resort”.

The data for 2020 present a first look at the impact of the pandemic on association life: a first quarter of in-person events which terminated in the first week of March 2020 and then a massive scramble to adjust to lockdowns, loss of transportation and so on. The remaining three quarters of 2020 gave rise to postponements, cancellations, and, into 2021, cascading reschedulings of the same planned-for in-person event. Other events pivoted from the in-person approach and chose hybrid options (when feasible) or fully online (aka virtual) platforms to bring people together.

A note on our 2020 data: why does 2020 look the way it does?

Our traditional editorial notes describe the process by which the UIA interacts with international associations and the meetings industry to compile information about association events. As with every other aspect of life during the pandemic the UIA has also faced changes and disruption to our annual cycles of contact and information gathering. These changes include: UIA staff being on mandatory furlough; association representatives being on mandatory furlough; meetings industry personnel being furloughed; associations and meetings organizers having to make quick (in some cases immediate) decisions about event planning and so on.

This has led to:

- a reduced total amount of 2020 events in the database;
- the need for additional editorial attention given to a single event which may have been postponed as many as three times;
- reduced information provided by our partners
- additional editorial time required to investigate the final status of events which were planned as in-person for the period March-December 2020;

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- editors continue their research to reconfirm the final status of events in the database for 2020.

The problem of attributing a location to disrupted meetings

In the case of a hybrid event our expectation is that the location of the in-person element is described as the “location” of the meeting for our purposes. In the case of a planned in-person event which was ultimately held as online/virtual the issue becomes more complicated. Our default approach is that an online meeting with no specified host locale is then attributed to the home office city of the Yearbook organization. For this reason, some traditionally minor cities have risen in the rankings because they host an especially active organization. For example, Piscataway NJ (USA) is home to the meeting-intensive IEEE's headquarters. This reflects the economic aspect of how the event technology is contracted or organized. In other cases, we have seen that the planned locale for an in-person meeting takes on the role of technology partner for the online meeting, thus retaining the geographical credit for the meeting. Neither of these approaches is perfect, but they are sufficient for our purposes of describing what took place in the life of an individual international association. They are less elegant in describing how the local committee may have played the greatest role in making the event happen (reviewing papers, organizing break out groups and so on) or where the technology provider was based. As more meetings are deliberately planned as hybrid or online we will see a reduction in these ambiguities; and we will adjust our approach as needed.

As time passes we will know more about what happened in 2020 and 2021, because 2021 has also been a year of disruption and changed plans. What follows below is a presentation of what we know now, with an expectation of an increase in quantity and range as we move ahead.

What is not displayed in the geographic tables:

- postponed meetings
- cancelled meetings
- identifying / differentiating between in-person / hybrid and virtual meetings

Events in the International Congress Calendar currently marked with meeting-status information				
	Cancelled	Postponed	Virtual	Hybrid
2020	645	1642	2578	118
2021	46	219	729	189
2022	1	16	4	13

This report takes 471,800 meetings into account, organized in 256 countries, in 11,647 cities, by 27,465 international organizations.

We appreciate your comments and suggestions.

The UIA Editorial Team

