
Section 9: Where and when do international organizations meet?

This section is a reprint of the report

International Meetings Statistics Report 65th edition

Comparative tables on the international meetings
of international organizations

This report is prepared annually by 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 original report is published in colour. Should the graphs reproduced here be unclear, please contact uia@uia.org.

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Introduction

This is the 65th edition of this report.

The "new normal" is still developing as it relates to association life and meeting activities. As with the previous three reports, the massive impact of the pandemic on international association meetings is evident in this report and its ripples will continue to be seen as the years pass.

If you are familiar with this report then you will be aware that our data for a given year generally do 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 900-1,200 new organization descriptions during each annual cycle, and these bring meetings of their own to the statistical picture.

We are not presenting 2019 data again in this report as we have for the past three years but the last good year before the pandemic will remain the baseline for comparison and analysis of the 2020s.

The comparison tables which follow provide an indication of how the data change from year to year.

What of the pandemic years and 2023?

We continue to track meetings which were **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.

We are now more correctly reflecting the participant status of events with **in-person, hybrid, and online/virtual** 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 2023 show the continuing trends of some events having to be rescheduled or changed to a hybrid or fully online format. Additionally, most border controls were lifted in 2022, allowing greater freedom to travel to events. In terms of association life, we are seeing a growing trend of conferences now being planned / scheduled further into the future than in the past four years. At this time, **2038** is the latest year for a scheduled event in the UIA data.

A note on our 2023 data: why does 2023 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.

This has led to:

- a reduced total number of events in the database for the pandemic years;
- 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.

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, 2021, 2022 and 2023. 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
2021	221	855	4986	1121
2022	93	163	1363	1702
2023	18	14	314	945
2024	7	2	54	248
2025	0	1	2	28

This report on the year 2023 takes 517,728 meetings into account, organized in 271 countries, in 12,398 cities, by 29,471 international organizations.

We appreciate your comments and suggestions.

- The UIA Editorial Team