



ICCA is re-examining the future of associations

2020-10-27

A study conducted by the ICCA in May 2020 in cooperation with the AfSAE (African Society of Association Executives), APFAO (Asia Pacific Federation of Association Organizations) and ESAE (European Society of Association Executives) analyzed the strategies and plans after COVID-19 for nearly two hundred associations globally.

The study focused in particular on activities undertaken to build more sustainable associations and use the potential of their meetings as a tool for communication, networking and education.

In September 2020, the ICCA launched a short follow-up survey to check the associations' progress in adjusting to the new reality. 71% of respondents indicated that it is based in Europe, hence the results below mainly show the situation in Europe.

Key findings from the studies:

82% of respondents indicated that their largest in-person meeting in 2020 was affected by COVID-19, with 43% having to cancel or reschedule it, and 17% converted it to a virtual or hybrid meeting

In 2021, 15% of respondents are planning to cancel or postpone their largest in-person meeting, and 42% are planning to switch to hybrid or virtual mode

61% expect less attendance at in-person meetings

81% of respondents believe that networking opportunities at virtual events are limited, as compared to face-to-face meetings.

more than 70% of respondents indicate that face-to-face meetings establish a sense of community and provide greater opportunities to meet new people and make new contacts than virtual meetings

88% of respondents indicated that technology has changed the way they conduct their meetings, and 51% only use low-cost solutions to handle virtual / hybrid elements of their meetings. 88% of respondents indicated that technology has changed the way they conduct their meetings, and 51% only use low-cost solutions to handle virtual / hybrid elements of their meetings.

The report concludes by highlighting the fact that the COVID-19 crisis is lasting much longer and is having a greater impact on the meetings industry than many association heads originally assumed. The survey results also suggest that the demand for live meetings will not be fully met by virtual alternatives and face-to-face meetings are particularly important for the international community of associations.