



EUROPEAN
EXHIBITION
INDUSTRY
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POSITION PAPER

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The European Exhibition Industry's contribution to the new EU Tourism Strategy 2025

The European Exhibition Industry

Europe's Global Leadership: Europe boasts the world's strongest exhibition and business events sector. It hosts the majority of the world's leading trade fairs and congresses, making it a vital economic driver and enhancing its appeal as an innovation and business hub. European organisers operate globally, enhancing trade and intellectual links.

Catalyst for Multi-sector Development: Exhibitions and business events create jobs and fuel growth across various sectors beyond tourism – agriculture, energy, health, infrastructure and, manufacturing – boosting Europe's competitiveness and innovation.

Regional Transformation: Exhibition and business events venues serve as engines of regional economic activity, prompting infrastructure investment, contributing to local development and bringing industry sectors and ecosystems to the region.

ESG Impact: Exhibitions and business events can drive positive social change, fostering international adoption of sustainable practices and shared values.

Market Dynamics & Challenges: Adverse geopolitical, economic and regulatory conditions are eroding industry growth, market share and competitiveness. Geopolitical shifts are driving the re-regionalisation of exhibitions and business events, while rising costs, constrained investment and stricter regulations further weaken the sector's competitive position in Europe.

The European Exhibition Industry's main asks:

1. **Data and Statistics** – better representation and recognition
2. **Resilience and Crisis Preparedness** – joint approach
3. **Sustainability and Mobility** – simplification and acceleration
4. **Bureaucracy – Visa and A1** – simplification and acceleration
5. **EU Single Market and Trade policy** – improvements and *Business Events Destination Europe* campaign
6. **R&D, Innovation and Competitiveness** – digitalisation and start-up & SME internationalisation tool

1. Data and Statistics

There is a substantial lack of data on exhibitions, conferences and other business and professional events in official statistics at all levels: national, EU and global, e.g. UN Tourism. The Exhibition and Business Events Industry is not defined and visible as a sector, its ecosystem of many providers is scattered across different sectors and classes of industries.

- Co-develop reliable and consistent **data collection and statistical models** for the Exhibition and Business Events Industry across Europe, with the aim of anchoring such data in the **national statistics and Eurostat**.
- Provide support for the **refinement of the NACE system** to accurately capture all activities included in the Exhibition and Business Events Industry.
- As a first step, support a review of the current **class 82.30** of the NACE code for the Exhibition Industry.
- Include a specific **focus on business travel** within the tourism and transport ecosystems statistics.
- Support the measurement of the **economic impact** and wider value of the Exhibition and Business Events Industry at all levels for Europe.

2. Resilience and Crisis Preparedness

The last years and the current geo-political instability have taught us that crisis preparedness and management, both within sectors and at a systemic level, are fundamental for resilience and for social and economic success. The Exhibition and Business Events Industry is a catalyst for economic activity and business growth, and as such has proved to be a key actor in economic resilience. It should therefore be continuously supported and integrated in crisis management plans

- Work together to increase the Tourism, Travel, and Exhibition and Business Events sector's resilience and implement a **unified approach to crisis management** within the EU.
- Based on **the improved data** and participation in the Data Spaces, ensure the implementation of innovative and efficient business processes that build resilience across the Exhibition and Business Events Industry ecosystem.
- Support exhibition and conference venues to **prepare for crisis** like extreme weather, electricity outage or other catastrophes.
- Prepare measures to maintain **EU-wide business travel functional** as well as exhibitions and business **events open** even in times of crisis.

3. Sustainability and Mobility

The European exhibition and business events industry is committed to leading by example, setting high standards across sectors through sustainable practices. Its goal is to minimise the carbon footprint of every event while maximising meaningful, productive exchanges - all concentrated in a single location and moment. Achieving this ambitious transition requires seamless coordination, cross-sector collaboration, and swift progress.

- **Align sustainability legislation** and policies and provide **simple guidelines** and templates to reduce the complexity of measurement and reporting for all players in the Exhibition and Business Events Industry ecosystem, allowing SMEs to produce reports with internal resources.

- Improve access to **sustainable finance** for both large and small companies, ensuring that the benefits outweigh the cost, and related reporting is simplified.
- Support **sustainable systems** in venue management and exhibitions and business events organisations with the ultimate aim to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Support and accelerate the development of sustainable solutions for **multimodal mobility, accommodation and catering** in Europe, enabling exhibition and business event attendees to reduce their carbon footprint substantially.

4. Bureaucracy: VISA and A1

Both delayed Visa approval processes as well as complicated procedures for the A1 Form impact the exhibition and business events sector, and by extension the wider EU economies. It may damage the industry's reputation and leading position in Europe, forcing companies to visit and exhibit in trade fairs in other geographies with easier processes.

- Coordinate efforts to **increase capacity and to speed up business visa approval** processes, specifically for exhibitions and business events' participants by creating a fast-track procedure with all EU Member States.
- Support from national and EU institutions to maintain market share of globally leading events in Europe and to **leverage the full potential of extra-EU exhibitors and visitors**.
- **Simplify EU's A1 Form** for intra-EU cross-border business travel which currently creates significant administrative hurdles, even for short-term business trips lasting just a few days.
- **Introduce an exemption for trips up to 14 days**, which would allow exhibitions and trade fairs participation, including set-up and dismantling, for companies without extra burden.
- Create a **single digital EU system for social security** proofs to replace A1.

5. EU Single Market and Trade policy

For our industry to continue to lead and innovate, we need favourable economic and political conditions, a strong Internal Market, a level playing field in Europe, fair competition rules and free trade.

- Facilitate a generally **open and fair operating environment** in the EU and globally through trade agreements, while responding to geopolitical challenges.
- Maintain and enhance **Europe's global leadership** and competitiveness in the **Exhibitions and Business Events sector** to ensure the continued success of world-leading conferences, congresses, trade fairs and exhibitions in Europe.
- Create a specific campaign for the brand **Business Events Destination Europe** to attract business players from all over the planet to exhibitions and business events in the EU.
- Speed up **trade agreements** with more countries in the world, especially the pending Mercosur, as well as India, ASEAN, UAE, and improve conditions with UK and US.
- Include **free trade in services** in all current future trade negotiations and improve the terms, so that European organisers and other providers of the exhibition and events ecosystem can operate safely and successfully across the globe.

6. R&D, Innovation and Competitiveness

European exhibitions create the perfect setting to boost innovation by offering a condensed overview of new products, insights on R&D, use cases and key industry trends. Exhibitions enable businesses and research institutions to evaluate the potential of their innovations with potential clients or partners, saving significant time to put them on the market. At exhibitions, European and international competitors meet in one venue, experiencing direct competition first-hand. Exhibitions create a culture of entrepreneurship focused on risk-taking and innovation which helps make Europe more competitive on the global scene. The latest EU SME Internationalisation Study clearly highlights the value of trade fairs.

- Support the **digital transition and integration of AI** in the exhibition sector operations to ensure that Europe remains competitive and at the forefront of the latest innovations, thus providing best customer service and attractive platforms for all other sectors.
- **Avoid overly restrictive rules and obligations** on new technologies.
- Take action to address the **shortage of digitally skilled workforce** by significantly increasing the number of apprenticeships and students in this field as well as upskilling and lifelong learning.
- **Include participation in trade fairs** in all start-up, scale-up, SME and MSME programmes, especially those aiming at internationalising their business – and work with the organisers of the events for the best visibility and results.
- Boost the activities of the European Innovation Council and other relevant innovation initiatives, align them with national programmes and **bring beneficiaries systematically to trade fairs** within and outside Europe.
- Work with exhibition organisers to promote the **protection of intellectual property rights (IPR)** at exhibitions for European companies.



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Background Information

About EEIA

The European Exhibition Industry Alliance represents nearly 400 European exhibition organisers and venue operators to the European institutions and stakeholders in Brussels. These trade fairs and exhibition players are organised in UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry and the European Major Exhibition Centres Association EMECA. For more information please visit:

www.exhibition-alliance.eu www.ufi.org www.emeca.eu

We look forward to receiving any queries and your positive reply.
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