

88TH UFI GLOBAL CONGRESS

Face-to-face

Due to the pandemic, the last global meeting of the global association of the exhibition industry went digital. But now it will be face-to-face again from 3 to 6 November.

The summer months were a busy time for the UFI. Intensive efforts went into preparing the 2021 edition of the Global Congress, which will take place at Ahoy in Rotterdam. For all attendees the days spent in Europe's leading port city will be very special moments. "We have been unable to meet as a community since Bangkok in 2019," says Anbu Varathan. "So this year's Congress in Rotterdam is the first opportunity to bring our global community face-to-face once again," enthuses the UFI president and director general of Bangalore International Exhibition Centre. He points out that the event will combine international networking with sharing knowledge: "It is an opportunity to gain insight into topics of strategic interest," says Varathan. "Likewise into the trends and challenges that the exhibition industry is currently facing."

The Global Congress in the Netherlands will take place in a mood of much greater optimism within the industry, as the findings of the latest UFI Global Barometer go to show. It was published in late July and contains data from 474 companies in 64 countries and regions. "The results highlight the strong impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the global exhibition industry in 2020," reports Anbu Varathan. "But the situation is gradually improving," adds the UFI president. "And there is a strong belief that the sector – primarily driven by physical exhibitions and business

UFI-Präsident Anbu Varathan: „Der Kongress in Rotterdam bringt unsere globale Gemeinschaft wieder face-to-face zusammen.“



Photo: TCEB

„Seit Bangkok, 2019, konnten wir uns nicht mehr als Community treffen.“
 "We have been unable to meet as a community since Bangkok in 2019."

events – will bounce back quickly." Compared to the last survey in January, the mood has changed significantly: For example, the proportion of companies expecting "no activity" for the last quarter of 2021 has dropped sharply – from 53 per cent to less than ten per cent. The share of businesses expecting

"normal activity" has risen from twelve to almost 50 per cent within six months. The lifting of travel restrictions is seen as the key element to help the bounce-back of exhibitions.

Day one in Rotterdam is dedicated mainly to association committee meetings. On the second day, Anbu Varathan will open the professional part – together with UFI managing director Kai Hattendorf and Monica Lee-Müller, who will serve as UFI president for 2021/22. In the morning there will be updates from around the world and a "Strategy Power Hour": Well-known speakers will address the state of the exhibition industry and the global economy. They will reflect on how we have changed as an industry since pre-pandemic times. The afternoon will be about what makes trade fairs more and more sustainable. Later, a case study will illustrate how to develop a hybrid event. It will explore how the Eurovision Song Contest was hosted at Ahoy in 2021 – this will be followed by the "Data & Digital" session. One focus of day 3 of the congress will be on "Special Interest Groups". These groups offer members a platform to get actively involved in areas they are interested in. And on the last day, the traditional "Post Congress Tour" will be on the agenda (www.uficongress.org). **PB**



Photo: UFI / BIEC

UFI president Anbu Varathan: "The Congress in Rotterdam brings our global community face-to-face once again."