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# Introduction

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the Union of International Associations (UIA), and from the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, the associations database of the UIA.

The presentation of data is intended, firstly, to present details of the current reporting year. Secondly, it is intended to present, and give prominence to, those data which are the UIA's specialty: the activities of international organizations listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

Prominence is also given to presenting data which, due to the passage of time, can be considered to have stabilized. **The editors emphasize that the number of meetings in the database for the current reporting year (2016) will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, and by about 32% over the following five years.**

As of the report for 2008 (50<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2009), the UIA meetings database has been enriched by connecting it more closely to its sister database on international organizations, the source of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. This enriches the data available across the time scale and in particular enables historical surveys of international organization meeting activity as far back as the 1850s. It has also affected the rate of change in data, giving an exceptional boost to the numbers presented as of the report for 2008 (50<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2009); these numbers have, in the intervening years, been further corrected and stabilized.

**It should be noted that UIA criteria for collection and inclusion have *not* changed at any point since the first edition in 1960; only the presentation has changed.** Over the years, therefore, this report provides a series of comparable “snapshots” of international association meetings activity.

In general, the editors have opted for more data and fewer graphic presentations. The editors welcome comments on the usefulness of the data presentations here, and suggestions as to possibly more useful presentations. Custom research reports based on these data and further data from the *Yearbook of International Organizations* are available from the UIA Secretariat. Contact us for more information.

## How many...

	58 <sup>th</sup> edition (published 2017)	57 <sup>th</sup> edition (published 2016)
Total number of meetings in the UIA database	468,700	458,453
Number of those answering the criteria for inclusion in this report	422,522	412,403
Number of those taking place prior to the reporting year	407,255	393,667
Number of those taking place in the reporting year	11,000	12,350
Number of those scheduled to take place after the reporting year	4,267	6,386
Number of countries represented for all years	248	248
Number of cities represented for all years	12,415	12,683
Number of countries represented for the reporting year only	158	178
Number of cities represented for the reporting year only	1,157	1,459

At the time of preparing this report there were 37,678 active international organizations listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*; 21,640 of them are known to the editors to have some form of meetings activity.

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## What meetings are counted in this report?

### General remarks

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the Union of International Associations (UIA), and from the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, the associations database of the UIA.

The criteria for inclusion in the *International Congress Calendar* are broad, reflecting the UIA's focus on the broad spectrum of international associations. (See also below, "What is an international organization".)

- The meeting must have a clear link to an international association as defined by the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, the associations database of the UIA (see below "What is an 'international organization'"). An exception is made for meetings of Types "B" and "C" used in Section 9.1., as described below.
- Meetings of both international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are eligible for inclusion in the *International Congress Calendar*.
- Meetings are eligible for inclusion in the *International Congress Calendar* regardless of their frequency. A meeting can be a one-off event, part of a regular series, or part of an irregular series.
- Meetings are eligible for inclusion in the *International Congress Calendar* regardless of their location. A meeting series can be held always in the same location, or rotate according to a pattern between locations, or change locations randomly.
- Meetings are eligible for inclusion in the *International Congress Calendar* regardless of their participant numbers. However, **in order to be counted in this report**, a meeting must have at least 50 participants, or the number of participants must be unknown.

Some events take place in more than one city; such events are counted in this report for each city separately.

At the time of producing this edition (May 2017) there were 468,700 meetings in the UIA meetings database of which 422,522 (90%) meet the criteria for inclusion in this report. Of these 422,522 meetings, 407,255 took place in 2015 or earlier, 11,000 took place in 2016, and 4,267 are scheduled for 2017 or later.

### Types of meetings

Meetings included in this report are divided into three types. The types are indicated by letters: type A, type B and type C. These letters have, in themselves, no significance in relation to the meetings they group, and are used merely for convenience.

#### **Meetings counted under the heading "A" are "Meetings of international organizations" and meet all the following criteria:**

- meetings organized or sponsored by "international organizations", i.e. international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) that are included in the UIA's *Yearbook of International Organizations* (see below "What is an 'international organization'") and whose details are subject to systematic collection and updates on an annual basis by the UIA
- with at least 50 participants, or number of participants unknown

In previous editions, this type was referred to as "Meetings of international organizations". The criteria for this type have not changed at any point since the first edition of this report in 1960, although they were not always fully described in the accompanying notes.

There are 388,836 type "A" meetings included in this edition for all years; there are 9,566 type "A" meetings included in this edition for 2016 alone. Type "A" meetings are included in all sections of this report.

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**Meetings counted under the heading “B” are “Other international meetings (3 days)” and meet all the following criteria:**

- meetings not organized or sponsored by “international organizations” but nonetheless of significant international character, notably those organized by national organizations and national branches of international organizations
- at least 40 percent of the participants are from countries other than the host country and at least 5 nationalities are represented
- lasting at least 3 days, or of unknown duration
- with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 300 participants

In previous editions, this type was referred to as “Other international meetings”. In the edition *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (49<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2008), it was further defined as “Other international meetings (3 days)”. The criteria for this type have not changed since at least the early 1990s, although they were not always fully described in the accompanying notes.

There are 25,858 type “B” meetings included in this edition for all years; there are 926 type “B” meetings included in this edition for 2016 alone. Type “B” meetings are included in only Section 9.1. of this report.

**Meetings counted under the heading “C” are “Other international meetings (2 days)” and meet all the following criteria:**

- meetings not organized or sponsored by “international organizations” but nonetheless of significant international character, notably those organized by national organizations and national branches of international organizations
- at least 40 percent of the participants are from countries other than the host country and at least 5 nationalities are represented
- lasting at least 2 days, or of unknown duration
- with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 250 participants

This type was included for the first time, at the request of users of this report, in the edition *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (49<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2008), where it was referred to as “Other international meetings (2 days)” and included only in presentation 1/2. Type “B” and type “C” are counted separately in order to ensure continuity with prior editions and the creation of type “C”.

There are 33,686 type “C” meetings included in this edition for all years; there are 1,434 type “C” meetings included in this edition for 2016 alone. Type “C” meetings are included in only Section 9.1. of this report.

Logically, all meetings counted under the heading “B” are also counted under the heading “C”. The reverse is, equally logically, not true.

## **Methods of selection**

Regarding participant numbers, all selections have been made on the basis of “at least” 50 participants in the case of meetings of international organizations, and “at least” 250 or 300 participants for other international meetings. In editions prior to *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (49<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2008) it has not always been clear if selections were made on the basis of “at least” 50 (or 250 or 300) participants, or “more than” 50 (or 250 or 300) participants.

In editions prior to *International Meetings Statistics for the year 2007* (49<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2008) it was the intention to exclude meetings of intergovernmental bodies if the title of the meeting contained the words “ministerial” or “summit”. Unfortunately, this criterion was not always strictly applied: some such meetings were excluded, others were included. As of the edition published in 2008 (49<sup>th</sup> edition), this criterion has been abandoned. Meetings of intergovernmental bodies are included if they meet the standard criteria. The number of meetings concerned is in most cases not significant enough to affect percentages or rankings.

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## What meetings are not counted in this report?

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the Union of International Associations (UIA), and from the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, the associations database of the UIA.

Excluded from the UIA database are meetings of an exclusively national, political, didactic, religious, sporting or commercial nature.

The information in this report is biased by the UIA's restriction to:

- meetings organized by non-commercial and non-profit organizations, though these may still include meetings concerned with commercially relevant topics such as those of professional, trade and industry associations, and meetings organized by non-profit organizations in order to generate revenue;
- publicly announced meetings, thereby excluding unpublicized, secret and closed events;
- meetings reported within the time frame permitting their inclusion in this annual review, thereby excluding meetings on which information is available only after this period;
- participation figures generally being those indicated pre-meeting, not post-meeting.

The process of detecting newly announced meetings, and building up an adequate profile, is not as straightforward as might be assumed. Announcements may be tentative, variously misleading according to source, and subject to frequent revision. For these reasons, the UIA retains in its meetings database many meetings that do not meet the criteria for this annual review. At the time of producing this edition (May 2017) there were 468,700 meetings in the UIA meetings database of which 422,522 (90%) meet the criteria for inclusion in this report.

It should be noted that UIA criteria for collection and inclusion have remained unchanged for many years: the addition of type "C" meetings as described above has not affected the criteria for type "A" and "B" meetings. The above descriptive text has, however, changed: every year we try to make it clearer.

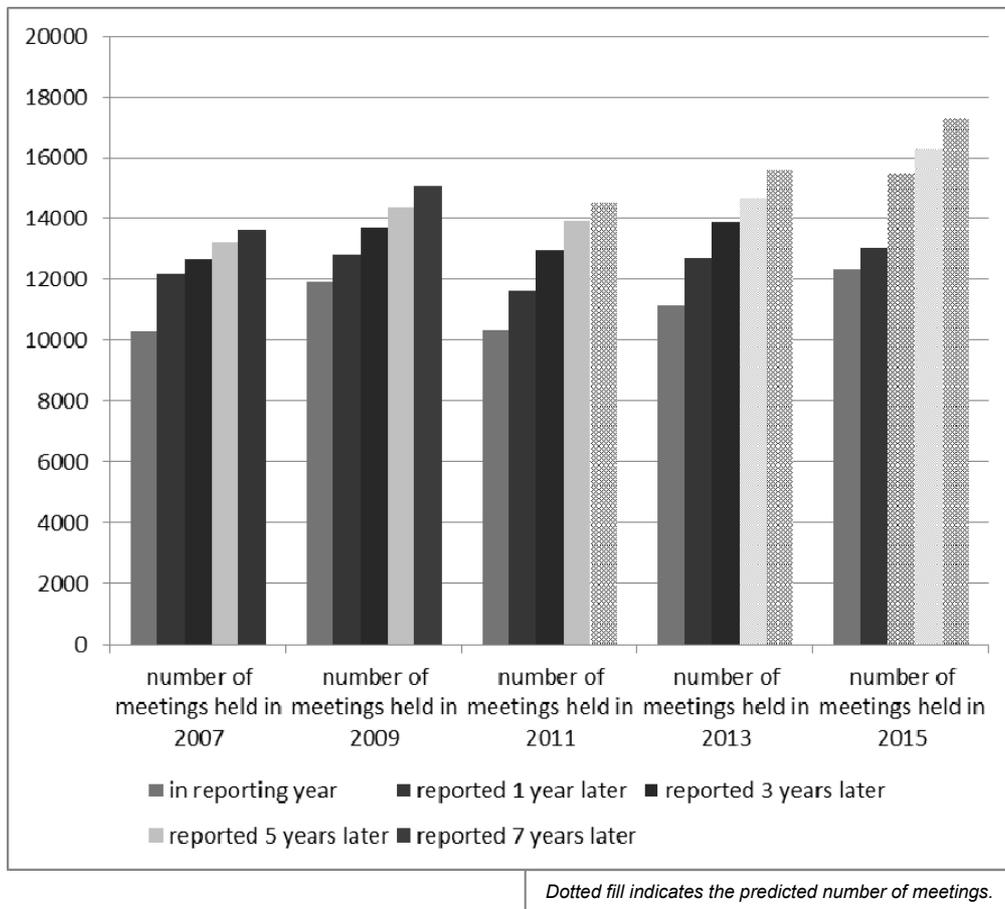
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## Caveat

Readers are reminded that the tables in this report are recreated each year, using data which are constantly updated, also for years (long) in the past. The most current edition of the report is therefore the most up to date and comprehensive set of data available.

Researchers following trends in meetings should bear in mind that data for the current reporting year are provisional: data will change as research continues.

When comparing consecutive years in flux, it should be remembered that both years' totals can be expected to change over time, the latest slightly more rapidly than the older. **The number of meetings in the database for the current reporting year will, on average, increase by about 11% over the next year, and by about 32% over the following five years.**



As noted above, closer links between the meetings database and the organizations database gave an exceptional boost to the numbers presented as of the report for 2008 (50<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2009); these numbers have, in the intervening years, been further corrected and stabilized.

If strictly comparable data are required – for example, the situation for a given city at exactly the same time each year for a number of years – it is advisable to use the UIA's data to compile a time series. The UIA has used the same sources and same editorial practices for many years so, while the database may not be comprehensive, it is reliably consistent in terms of methodology.

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## Methodology

The data in this report are drawn from the *International Congress Calendar*, the meetings database of the Union of International Associations (UIA), and from the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, the associations database of the UIA. The method of data collection and selection used for this edition is consistent with that of the past 30 years.

Since its founding in 1907 the UIA has collected information on international organizations and their international meetings; a first statistical review was published in its *Revue internationale des congrès* in 1910. Since 1960 the UIA has prepared statistics on the international meetings that have taken place worldwide in the preceding year. This work is based on routine research and surveys undertaken by the UIA for the compilation of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (published since 1950) and the *International Congress Calendar* (published since 1960).

The prime source of information is international organizations. The UIA's researchers work continuously throughout the year on the meetings database, adding and modifying event records using information acquired from international organizations by mail and e-mail and from other sources such as periodicals and the internet.

Data are extracted and compiled from the database at the end of April each year in order to report statistics on the year just passed. So this edition published in 2017 is of data collected in 2016.

While never claiming to be a complete survey of all international meetings, the merit of the UIA statistics is that they have been compiled over several decades from the same sources and using consistent methods and criteria.

Because the UIA's meetings database is always changing, data extracted from the database today differ from those extracted and published previously, whether they refer to the future or to the past. Changes may arise from the re-scheduling or relocation of meetings and from the addition of supplementary information on recorded meetings or the addition of previously unrecorded meetings. As data are modified, more meetings are added to the database than are removed.

## Continuity

Since 2003 all data are extracted anew each year from the UIA meetings database. The present format, while differing from that of previous years, is consistent in presentation with that of reports since 1984.

The editors note that there have been initiatives in recent years to determine a standard and generally accepted and applied definition of the term "meeting". While the editors see the need for such an agreement, they point out that the chief merit of the UIA statistics is that they have been compiled over several decades from the same sources and using consistent methods and criteria.

## Geographical names

It is not the intention of the editors to take a position with regard to the political or diplomatic implications of geographical names or continental groupings used. The country, city, and continental names used in this publication are chosen for the sake of brevity and common usage in English. Within the limits of standardization required for statistical purposes, the geographical names used by the organizer of the meeting are respected. This may sometimes lead to territories and dependencies being listed separately, which then affects the totals per country.

The editors are aware there may be inconsistencies in spelling or usage of city names, and would welcome being given the information necessary to correct these. Some apparent inconsistencies, however, may be due to the preferences of the organizer (for example, indicating a meeting is held in a suburb or distinct district of a major city rather than in the city itself).

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## What is an “international organization”?

The *Yearbook of International Organizations*, which profiles the organizations whose meetings are a focus of these statistics, catalogues all “non-profit” “international” “organizations” according to a broad range of criteria. It therefore includes many bodies that may be perceived, according to narrower definitions, as not being fully international, or as not being organizations as such (for example, autonomous conference series), or as not being of sufficient significance to merit inclusion. Such bodies are nevertheless included so as to enable users to make their own evaluation in the light of their own criteria.

The editors of the Yearbook are sensitive to the existence of forms of social organization that may substitute for the creation of more formal or conventional organizations. A conference series with no continuing committee is one example.

The definition of “profit-making”, and the extent to which any “non-profit organization” may incidentally or deliberately make a profit as defined by particular tax regimes, cannot be unambiguously resolved. This grey area has been treated in a variety of ways with the sensitivity it merits. The editors are attentive to the non-profit objectives of an organization registered under for-profit legal status. Especially problematic are the professional and trade organizations whose existence is in part justified, in their members’ eyes, by the extent to which they defend or improve the members’ income. That said, bodies that are unambiguously constituted as “for profit” are excluded from the Yearbook.

The editors acknowledge that some types of international organization may be totally absent or under-reported in the Yearbook, such as virtual organizations associated with the internet (including those of otherwise conventional structure), criminal networks, cartels and price-fixing rings, mercenary groups, spy and undercover organizations, terrorist organizations, secret societies, religious sects, family and fraternity groups, bodies with no formal structure or fixed address, or associations essentially constituted by a journal subscribership.

The editors have always given priority to bodies that are not focused on, or deriving from, a particular country. This may be construed as under-reporting of certain forms of aid, missionary activity, language and cultural activities, and so on.

The editors have traditionally stressed the importance of involvement of three countries on a more-or-less equal footing, to the exclusion of bi-lateral international bodies and those in which a particular country is dominant. Indications of “internationality” include distribution of board members, location of meetings, rotation of secretariat, source of finance, and membership.

The number and variety of organizations in the Yearbook are sufficient indication of the problems of information collection. Documenting many organizations and their meetings is challenging for reasons such as the following:

- Information on an organization’s activities may take time to filter through communication networks and be registered by the editors.
- Many organizations are ephemeral creations or are only “activated” for infrequent meetings, events or projects.
- Many bodies are reluctant to publicize their activities.
- Organizations may not respond to questionnaires, or may omit significant information from their replies.
- Many active “international” bodies do not perceive themselves as “international” or as sufficiently formalized to be mentioned in the same context as those that are legally established.
- Regional proliferation and functional specialization is such that, frequently, organizational “neighbours” do not know of each other’s existence.
- A significant number of bodies have secretariats rotated among annually elected officers, making continuing contact somewhat problematic.
- Information on the creation, existence or formal dissolution of an organization in a given year may only be received some time later.

In such a dynamic environment, the time required for information collection may even be greater than the effective life of an organization.

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## Other resources

Custom research reports based on these data and further data from the *Yearbook of International Organizations* are available from the UIA Secretariat. Contact us for more information.

Readers wishing to study the overall association meetings market should also make use of the statistics reports produced by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) as a complementary resource to be used alongside UIA statistics to create a more complete understanding, rather than an alternative or competing view, of the same market segment.

The UIA and ICCA statistics differ, in the first place, because they are based on differing definitions of what constitutes an “international not-for-profit organization”. All three of those terms – “international”, “not-for-profit”, and “organization” – are large enough, and vague enough, to be interpreted differently. In a matching exercise carried out by UIA and ICCA together, it was found that about four-fifths of the international organizations in the ICCA database also qualify for inclusion in the UIA database; the remaining one-fifth does not meet UIA’s criteria for “international not-for-profit organizations”. UIA’s association database has, of course, many more associations not included in ICCA’s associations database because, firstly, UIA has a broader definition of “international not-for-profit organization”, and, secondly, UIA is not restricted to organizations holding regular, rotating meetings. ICCA’s focus on the meetings activities of international associations, and its definition of “international association meeting”, further refines its selection of the international organizations behind those meetings, while UIA’s broader definitions allow a wider range of meetings and of organizations. For example, UIA’s database also includes organizations which have no (detected) meetings activity at all.

Secondly, the UIA and ICCA statistics differ because they are based on differing definitions of what constitutes an “international association meeting”.

- Both include only events organized by international not-for-profit associations, but, as described above, their interpretations of those terms sometimes differ. (In the UIA report an exception is made for the Types “B” and “C” used in Section 9.1., as described elsewhere in this report.)
- ICCA includes only the meetings of non-governmental organizations; UIA includes meetings of both non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations (and acknowledges the grey zone in between).
- ICCA includes only events which occur regularly; UIA includes meetings regardless of their frequency, including one-off events.
- ICCA includes only events which rotate between at least three countries; UIA includes meetings regardless of their location, including events held always in the same location.
- ICCA includes only events which attract at least 50 participants; UIA includes meetings regardless of their participant numbers. (To be included in this report, however, a meeting must have at least 50 participants, or the number of participants must be unknown.) UIA does not, in general, collect the same depth of information for each event as ICCA does.

Finally, ICCA and UIA, while deriving their information from some of the same sources, differ in their emphases. ICCA collects the information from its members – “specialists in organising, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events” – and also from international associations. UIA derives its information chiefly by direct and regular contact with international associations, and, in the second place, from national, regional, and civic tourist authorities.