

UFI European Conference 2019 debates evolving business models, drives change

- Around 300 exhibition industry leaders from more than 30 countries gathered in Birmingham for UFI's events
- 2020/21 UFI President elected

Paris - 20 May 2019: Around 300 participants from more than 30 countries attended UFI's events in Birmingham, UK, last week, held at The NEC. A mix of speakers from inside and outside the business events industry covered this year's European Conference theme of "The Organisers' Future: Challenging Business Models". In addition to the conference, two UFI Forums also took place.

"Sessions and conversations among our industry's leaders from Europe and around this week have clearly shown that organisers are evolving and expanding both their strategies as well as their geographical presences, entering into new markets and business areas. As the global association of the exhibition industry, UFI is always working on sharing trends and developments. Holding our European Conference in the UK in Birmingham this year also allowed the UFI community to get 'up to speed' on political developments around Brexit and the upcoming European elections", says UFI Managing Director/CEO Kai Hattendorf.

The conference was opened by keynote speakers Robert Peston, Political Editor, ITV (UK) and Nick de Bois, Former Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union and Chairman of the Events Industry Board (UK). They both provided a compelling overview of the current political scene in the UK, discussing its instability and unfolding the possible consequences of Brexit on the exhibition industry.

Eric Everard, CEO and founder of Easyfairs (Belgium), shared his experience in a session entitled 'Launch, clone, acquire' on how to succeed in the exhibition industry, and revealed his expertise on how to plan for the future.

Eugen Alles, Managing Director, Messe Frankfurt RUS OOO (Russia) and Vasily Grudev, Chairman of Belt and Road Initiative Russian Committee (Russia) talked about opportunities in Russia – China - One Belt One Road (OBOR) – highlighting opportunities for organisers to benefit from government initiatives like this programme.

Gabrielle Weiss, Publisher and Editor, Trade Show Executive (USA) moderated a panel with US organisers looking to grow their business outside of their home market. Mary Larkin, Executive Vice President, Diversified Communications; Cassandra Farrington, Co-Founder and CEO, Marijuana Business Daily; and Dianna Steinbach, Vice President, International Services for ISSA discussed the opportunities and challenges they encounter.

Katie Crocombe, Director, 52eight3 Limited (UK) and Adam Parry, Director, Event Tech Live, Event Industry News (UK) presented the latest applications of innovative technology. Both outlined their different views and the impact of technology on organisers' businesses.

In his session 'What To Do Now? Industry Needs', Denzil Rankine, Executive Chairman, AMR International (UK) outlined how organisers can move to "Exhibition 2.0" as a way to keep events highly relevant and to improve their performance. This session led into one of the two parallel deep dive sessions developing the subject.

All talks will be made available to UFI members in the coming days in the member section of the UFI website (www.ufi.org).

Prior to the conference, UFI also held an UFI Operations and Services Forum, a two-day event for professionals in operations focusing on areas of logistics, security, safety, navigation and mobility, with industry specialists from a dozen countries attending.

In parallel, a packed to capacity one-day Digital Innovation Forum looked at how to implement the right digital innovation strategy, focusing on new solutions and sharing best practice examples from leading organisers like Reed and ITE.

The UFI European Conference also featured the association's regular leadership meetings as well as a multitude of gatherings of UFI's working groups.

As part of the agenda, the UFI Board elected Anbu Varathan to be the association's 2020/21 President. Anbu Varathan is Director General & CEO of the Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association (IMTMA), organiser of the IMTEX exhibitions, which are among the largest machine tool industry exhibitions in the world. He is also the Chief Executive Officer of the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC).

Other onsite activities included a tour of the [The NEC](#) venue, and the UFI Running Club. There was also a welcome reception for all delegates at the VOX, a sumptuous dinner at Warwick Castle, as well as city tours and much more besides.

This year's conference was hosted by The NEC exhibition venue. The conference was supported by representatives of all four UFI Diamond Sponsors: Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau ([TCEB](#)) and Global Experience Specialists ([GES](#)), Qatar National Tourism Council ([Qatar](#)) and [Shenzhen World](#).

Full details of the UFI European Conference 2019 can be found on the event website: <http://ufievent.org/birmingham2019/>.

The UFI European Conference 2020 will take place in Goteborg, Sweden, 13-15 May 2020, and will be hosted by [Svenska Mässan](#).

About UFI - The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the leading global association of the world's tradeshow organisers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI's main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry. UFI directly represents around 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 60 national and regional association members. More than 780 member organisations in 85 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Over 1,000 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.

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