



EUROPEAN  
EXHIBITION  
INDUSTRY  
ALLIANCE

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## POSITION PAPER

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### TODAY IS GLOBAL EXHIBITIONS DAY!

**Exhibitions are the most powerful ECONOMIC GROWTH ENGINES that drive economic recovery and the EU's progress on a fast track mode**

#### **Exhibitions are key to rebuilding economies**

The trade fairs and exhibitions industry will reconnect and rebuild businesses. We are an industry that is proud to be both a contributor to local economies and a stimulus for business growth throughout the world.

Exhibitions are the marketplaces and meeting places for entire industries – regionally, nationally, and internationally. Exhibitions are the much-needed fast track to drive the economic recovery after COVID-19 – especially for SMEs, who represent the backbone of every economy and for whom exhibitions and face-to-face events are the leading sales channel.

The European exhibition industry is the global leader in terms of exhibition venue capacity, quality and turnover. It represents nearly half of the global market share of the exhibition industry and it hosts the majority of all leading international B2B and B2C trade fairs. European trade fairs attract businesses from within the EU and all around the world.

#### **Special connection with travel and tourism related sectors**

Exhibitions and events generate a considerable impact on the local economies and particularly contribute to the travel and tourism related sectors. Exhibitions and events attract high share on business travellers, generating intra-EU and international travel streams and substantial impact on the whole tourism value chain. WTTC figures state that 19% of tourism spending was done by business travellers in 2019.

Consequently, a common understanding of our sector and coordinated approach across Europe is needed: to align the exit measures and lifting of travel restrictions with the permissions to hold exhibitions and events; to avoid quarantine and fragmentation of regulations and to start considering international travel as soon as possible. Attracting attendees and restoring customer confidence will also contribute substantially to the recovery of all travel and tourism related businesses.

## Key messages from the travel and tourism ecosystem



**Alessandra Priante**  
Director - Regional  
Department for Europe  
[World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#)

“Today it’s Global Exhibition Day. Today we celebrate the meetings and events industry, the solid engine of destinations, economies, people. When seeking a coordinated and proper restart of the tourism industry, MICE can play a pivotal role, allowing to pioneer safety measures and master a real holistic approach between all the segments of the tourism sector.”



**Eduardo Santander**  
Executive Director  
[European Travel Commission \(ETC\)](#)

“Business travel is an integral part of the tourism ecosystem, left hardly hit during the COVID-19 crisis. Support for the exhibition industry must be included in recovery plans and actions of all EU economies to help the industry get back on its feet and strengthen its resilience in the long run”.

EUROPEAN  
TRAVEL  
COMMISSION



**Arran Wiltshire**  
Head of Event Strategy  
[ETOA - European tourism association](#)

ETOA

“Exhibitions and other trade events have a fundamental role in the economic recovery and development of the travel industry. Face-to-face interactions foster serendipitous business connections and add nuance to the development of travel product and the negotiation of their distribution – beyond what can be achieved purely online.

Participation at live events by actors in the tourism industry fosters confidence in the recovery of the travel and hospitality sector.

The quick agreement and adoption of standardisation in the conditions for the exhibition sector will hasten the return of these events and the trade’s confidence in them. Uncertainty hinders the planning horizon and suppresses the possibility of a robust recovery.”

### **Clear perspective and timeline needed – starting date 1<sup>st</sup> September latest**

In order to restart and play our role for the economy, we need a clear perspective and starting dates as exhibitions and events have a long lead time. B2B and B2C trade fairs and exhibitions need to be distinguished from other mass gatherings. Our events take place in large, secured and adaptable spaces and the attendees can be guided and protected comprehensively. We acknowledge the latest WHO “Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak” reflect this.

Our industry has developed guidance on safe reopening and all venues and organisers are developing and discussing protocols with their respective authorities. Besides, we urge that tracing apps be compatible and interconnected between the Member States. We need the approval of all these measures quickly to start creating trust and selling to our customers in order to save the exhibitions and events scheduled for the autumn.

### **Economic measures to support exit and recovery**

Among the instant measures made available are credits and tax deferrals to help out with liquidity. These were welcome, however, given the rough idea of starting activity again after the summer only, they are not sufficient. The exhibitions and events ecosystem needs more and longer support in the form of direct subsidies – these shall be included in the EU and national recovery plans.

Grants would help to compensate the additional health measures costs as well as investments into special digital services implemented to serve the sectors of the exhibitions during the time of the Covid-19-caused total stop of activity. Green Deal and digitisation changes will be increasingly adopted by exhibition venues and organisers but need an additional push as investments need to be done at a time when turnover will be far from back to earlier level.

With the aim of allowing companies to participate in the marketplaces or knowledge transfer events we see a huge need for measures on all sides to incentivise companies to travel, exhibit and participate again. Funding hosted buyers’ programmes, matchmaking and investments into digital offers to complement the events will help to kick-start business sales, especially for SMEs, and the overall economic recovery.

### **Vital role of exhibitions and events in the recovery and transformation**

The exhibition and events industry is determined to continue serving the communities and industries in the best possible way. Exhibitions support transition towards the policy priorities like the Green Deal and digitisation, they boost innovation and competitiveness: meeting face-to-face and experiencing new products will always be the basis for exchanges, building trust and striking deals.

But we rely on the efforts by policymakers to ensure that our companies will be able to fulfil that role in the future. If we cannot maintain the European ecosystem of all players that together create the best marketplaces for many industries worldwide, the most important events and the major occasions for people to meet in a healthy and safe environment, we will no longer be there to boost the recovery of economy in general.

**The European Exhibition Industry Alliance addresses you for support and calls upon all EU Institutions to ensure the coordinated implementation of powerful measures for our sector without any further delay across the whole EU by the Member States.**



Barbara Weizsäcker

Secretary General  
European Exhibition Industry Alliance  
(EEIA)

### **Background Information**

#### **About EEIA**

The European Exhibition Industry Alliance represents nearly 400 European exhibition organisers and venue operators in Brussels to the European institutions and stakeholders. 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](http://www.exhibition-alliance.eu) [www.ufi.org](http://www.ufi.org) [www.emeca.eu](http://www.emeca.eu)

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