

UFI European Conference examines the future of the exhibition industry from a European perspective

- 221 delegates from 32 countries participated
- 38 speakers shared their expertise and vision for the future of the industry

Paris, 15 June 2021: Taking place over two afternoons, the 2021 UFI European Conference put a spotlight on European excellence and thought leadership in the global context. Led by Nick Dugdale-Moore, UFI's Regional Director for Europe, the digital event offered participants a blend of keynote sessions and expert content, as well as networking, matchmaking and business development opportunities.

Several speakers focused on the new reality organisers must adapt to in the digital event space. Philippe Brocart, from Maison & Objet, shared experiences from six years of running a digital marketplace alongside a face-to-face show. "We are not selling square metres; we are offering business opportunities on the platform," he says.

Olivier Ferraton, CEO of GL events, focused on lessons learned from organising and servicing sports events. "Hybrid solutions are a part of life; they are nothing to be scared about," he says.

Sophie Holt, Managing Director at Explori, presented figures from the third edition of the Global Recovery Insights report, which captures the mood of trade show visitors and exhibitors around the world. Conducted by Explori in partnership with UFI, and with the support of SISO, the Society for Independent Show Organisers, the study shows that 70% of those who have attended digital editions of tradeshows now want to attend upcoming live, on-site events.

The conference provided updates on the reopening of the region, with some countries already up and running, and others struggling to get a "go date". Exhibitions are the fastest of fast tracks to economic recovery, and government recognition and support are essential. Rita Marques, Portugal's Secretary of State for Tourism, confirms: "Exhibitions and business events have a huge role to play in our economic recovery (after COVID)".

UFI worked with technology partner Grip to deliver enhanced networking and interactive capabilities for delegates, including speed networking and roundtable sessions. The opening session included a performance by violinist Andrew Bernardi, accompanied by a piano trio, live from Trinity Laban Conservatoire, Greenwich, London.

The event also hosted the European Footvolley Challenge, where Europe's top footvolley players went head-to-head live from eight UFI member venues: ExCeL London, Messe Frankfurt GmbH, RAI Amsterdam, Fira Barcelona, Fiera Roma, MCH Group, Palais des Festivals et des Congrès de Cannes and Messe Wien.

UFI's Dugdale-Moore says: "Of course, we would have preferred to meet in person, but this year's digital conference offered positive outcomes in terms of lessons learned and a view to what's coming next. On behalf of the UFI team, I want to thank the speakers and panellists for delivering such compelling and valuable content. UFI members can catch up on all the sessions in the member section of the website, once the event platform closes. I am already looking forward to the next European Conference which will take place in Poznan, Poland in May 2022, hosted by our friends at Grupa MTP."

During the final session, Jolanda Jansen, CEO of Rotterdam Ahoy, and host of the upcoming UFI Global Congress 2021, formally invited the global UFI member community to Rotterdam this November. "Rotterdam is a harbour city, and harbour cities are international cities – diverse and welcoming," she says.

Rotterdam Ahoy will host the 88th UFI Global Congress this year from 3-6 November, and UFI is looking forward to welcoming members from around the world as they come together once again.

To register and to receive regular updates, visit our website at www.uficongress.org

Kai Hattendorf, UFI CEO and Managing Director, adds: “From the data debate to M&A, from reopenings to hybrid strategies, we were able to cover a lot of ground during these two days. At the same time, we were able to deliver some hybrid live experiences and networking – to the extent that digital platforms allow. We look forward to meeting everyone face to face again, in Rotterdam!”

The UFI European Conference typically takes place in May-June each year. It has previously been hosted in Birmingham (2019), Verona (2018), Cologne (2017), Basel (2016) and Istanbul (2015), and is open to UFI members and non-members. The event attracts over 200 industry leaders, including organisers, venues and service providers.

Attachment:

- [UFI European Conference Visual](#)

About UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the global trade 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 more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 60 national and regional association members. More than 800 member organisations in 83 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Around 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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