

# UFI Reconnects the Global Exhibition Industry Face-to-Face in Rotterdam

- UFI's 88<sup>th</sup> Global Congress marks the return to face-to-face meetings for the association
- 350 participants from around 40 countries & regions attended the event
- Monica Lee-Müller takes over the UFI Presidency

Paris – 9 November 2021: Around 350 UFI members from around 40 countries and regions attended the 88<sup>th</sup> UFI Global Congress, which took place in Rotterdam, the Netherlands from 3 to 6 November, under the main theme “Together again”.

Hosted by Rotterdam Ahoy and Rotterdam Partners, this year’s Congress was the first opportunity to bring the global industry community together, in a face-to-face setting, since COVID-19 lockdowns.

Offering unique content and keynote speakers from inside and outside the sector, the Congress looked at the future of the industry in the post-COVID world. Alongside networking opportunities, attendees had the chance to celebrate the recovery of the sector, exchange lessons learned, and gain new insights and ideas.

Kai Hattendorf, Managing Director and CEO at UFI, said: “Rarely in recent years has a Congress theme matched the sense and spirit of an UFI event this well as ‘Together Again’ did this year. We indeed came together again, we discussed together again – we laughed together again. We shared experiences and observations, learnings and strategies. We mourned the colleagues we have lost to the pandemic, and we celebrated those who showed leadership and innovation, winning the UFI Awards this year.”

## To Recovery – And Beyond

With more than 60 speakers on stage, delegates could follow a multitude of sessions, covering industry recovery, global trends, diversity & inclusion, entrepreneurship, and best practices. They discussed possible paths forward as well as the more immediate needs, challenges and opportunities the industry faces as the world reopens: strategy, sustainability, the power of face-to-face, work force challenges and opportunities, and data ownership.

Keynote speaker and Economist Noreena Hertz stated: “We are creatures of togetherness, our will to connect is actually in our DNA and physical interactions are qualitatively superior to virtual ones! “

Meanwhile, closing keynote speaker, Prince Constantijn Van Oranje commented: “All these things bring new peers together. There is a lot of opportunity that requires to rethink old ways.”

## New UFI research presented

As usual, Global Congress participants were the first to be updated on new, original UFI research findings, as a comprehensive analysis and overview of the exhibition industry’s activities. Two examples:

The “Global Recovery Insights 2021” report, produces with UFI research partner Explori, focused on five key themes which build on the findings of previous Global Insights studies. The latest data reflects optimism in the industry as demand has recovered for live events from both exhibitors and visitors.

[Click here](#)

Building on discussions and panels around the evolution of digital event platforms and their providers at UFI events in recent months, a “Whitepaper on Data Ownership” was presented and discussed, the result of a cross-industry collaboration sharing the organiser’s perspective on data ownership.

[Click here.](#)

### **Net Zero Carbon Events Initiative**

Sustainability took centre stage at the Congress as well, with sessions connecting participants with the Global Climate Summit COP26, currently underway in Glasgow. Delegates learned about the “Net Zero Carbon Events” Pledge – a joint events industry initiative, backed by UFI among others, and hosted by the Joint Meetings Industry Council with the support of the United Nations’ UNFCCC. Numerous UFI member companies already joined the initiative as supporters and initial signatories. On November 10, representatives from across the Events Industry will take the stage at the Climate Summit to launch the initiative officially. UFI announced during the Congress that the association signed up to the pledge itself. [Click here.](#)

### **Special moments and memorable experiences**

The 88th Global Congress included many networking opportunities and special moments including the President’s reception during which the UFI community met with Said Kasmi, Rotterdam Vice Mayor for Education, Culture and Tourism. As usual, the UFI Running Club took place and runners enjoyed the city at sunrise. The Congress Dinner on the ocean steamer SS Rotterdam was a great opportunity for delegates to mingle and find out more about the former flagship of the Holland-America Line, which has sailed the seven seas.

[Click here for pictures](#)

### **Welcome to the 2021/22 UFI President**

Monica Lee-Müller, Managing Director of Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (Management) Limited (HML), formally assumed office as the UFI President for the year to come.

She says: “In taking up the position of UFI President, I am following a long line of distinguished forebears. I am humble, but I am also proud of being the first Asian woman in this role. And I am looking forward immensely to new opportunities to serve the industry I love dearly.”

UFI would like to thank Mary Larkin (UFI President 2019/2020), and Anbu Varathan (President 2020/21) for serving the association and the industry! The association also warmly welcomed Michael Duck as Incoming President.

### **Still together with “UFI Global Congress – Extended”, online, until 26 November**

Many UFI members reached out to the association, sharing that they would not be able to travel to Rotterdam due to COVID related reasons. In response, UFI is organising ‘UFI Global Congress - Extended’, a digital programme scheduled to run until 26 November. This programme will focus on regionally specific content for Asia-Pacific and the Americas. For more information:

[www.uficongress.org](http://www.uficongress.org)

Open to more than 50,000 industry professionals globally who work for UFI member companies, the UFI Global Congress takes place each November and is known as the exhibition industry’s largest global meeting of the year, combining international networking with unique content. In 2019, the event was hosted in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2020, due to COVID-19- related global travel restrictions, the Congress went digital, with programming from Hong Kong, Dubai, London, and Bogota. In 2022, the event will be hosted in Muscat, Oman. Las Vegas, USA, has been selected as the 2023 Congress host.

Attachments:

- [Monica Lee-Müller's biography](#)
- [Monica Lee-Müller's photo](#)
- [Photos of UFI Global Congress](#)
- [UFI Global Congress Visual - Extended](#)

**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 780 member organisations in 83 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Over 900 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.

For more information, please contact: UFI Headquarters: Email: [media@ufi.org](mailto:media@ufi.org) Tel: +33 (0)1 46 39 75 00 or [www.ufi.org](http://www.ufi.org)