

HIGHLIGHTS

13 April 2021

15:00 – 16:30 CEST

COVID-19 and the Future of Global Events

Webinar

COVID-19 and the Future of Global Events

■ About this webinar

Global events, such as Olympic and Paralympic Games, cultural festivals or world expositions, have long been seen as opportunities to re-invigorate local growth and optimise local assets. Candidates and hosts have embedded local development ambitions into their plans and have sought to leverage long-term infrastructure investments, boost tourism and trade, create jobs and promote community development. Still, such events are complex, costly operations that carry risks. Creating local benefits means that events must be deliberately designed and executed in ways that fulfil their promises and meet the citizens' expectations. Good governance, policy alignment and rigorous oversight are critical factors in achieving success and enduring legacy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has heavily affected global events, pointing to the need for a deep reflection on the future of the industry. Events have been cancelled or postponed around the world. Event organisers have adopted new delivery models, going entirely digital or embracing hybrid digital and in-person solutions. On top of momentary uncertainty, the crisis also triggered profound, and potentially long-lasting, changes in production and consumption patterns. As governments prioritise policies to boost economic recovery, the imperative to ensure that global events add value and create equitable public goods beyond their duration becomes even more important.

Over a decade ago, the OECD Local Employment and Economic Development (LEED) Programme began work to support governments seeking to ensure that bidding for and hosting global events created long-term benefits. The OECD Recommendation on Global Events and Local Development, adopted in 2018, offers high-level policy guidance to help countries reap greater local benefits from these global events. As pressure on public budgets continues to rise, especially in light of COVID-19, future event hosts and organisers must demonstrate more than ever that public investments lead to public good.

The objective of this webinar was to bring together key stakeholders, including national and local policy makers, event organisers, hosts, experts and influencers, to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on global events and the future of the industry. At this occasion, the OECD presented ongoing and future work in the framework of the [OECD Recommendation on Global Events and Local Development](#). The interactive discussion provided an opportunity to explore areas of common interest and to shape the policy agenda on global events and local development.

■ Agenda

15:00 – 15:10 **Opening**

Presentation of the Toolkit: Implementing the OECD Recommendation on global events and local development

Karen Maguire, Head, Local Employment, Skills and Social Innovation Division / LEED Programme, OECD

15:10 – 15:50 **The impacts of COVID-19 on global events**

During this session, speakers discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on the global events industry. Speakers presented concrete examples of how global events have adjusted to the new context and sanitary requirements.

Moderator: **Alessandro Kandiah**, OECD

Questions for discussion:

- *To what extent have the COVID-19 travel and sanitary restrictions affected the delivery of Global Events?*
- *How have Global Events hosts and organisers been able to cope during the crisis?*
- *What consequences has the cancellation of Global Events had on local development?*

Panelists:

- **Iain Edmondson**, Founding Director, International Association of Event Hosts; Director, Legacy Delivery Ltd
- **Kathrin Deventer**, Secretary General, European Festivals Association
- **Kai Hattendorf**, Managing Director, UFI, Global Association of the Exhibition Industry

15:50 – 16:30 **The future of global events and local development**

During this session, speakers shared their thoughts about the future of global events and local development. The session identified common areas of interest for future work to ensure global events continue to deliver positive local outcomes in the post-COVID world.

Moderator: **Irene Basile**, OECD

Questions for discussion:

- *What learnings can be drawn from the pandemic crisis and how will they affect future Global Events?*
- *Do Global Events hosts and organisers anticipate any long-term changes in their strategy?*
- *What role can Global Events play in building back better in the world post COVID-19?*

Panelists:

- **Mariëtte Rissenbeek**, Executive Director, Berlin International Film Festival
- **Damien Combredet**, Head of Sport and Society, Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games

■ Summary

Key takeaways

- **COVID-19 has had, and keeps having, a deep impact** on global events across different sectors, from culture to trade to sports, hitting event owners, organizers and participants.
- **The widespread adoption of digital technologies** over the course of the last year has led to the emergence of hybrid events. **Digitalisation cannot replace the in-person interaction** of most events in the long run, however the likely increased use of mixed in-person/digital events calls for new thinking to generate those local benefits, as well as new opportunities to include more people who wouldn't have been able to travel to the event.
- **Overall, uncertainty is still high around global events.** In addition, a rapidly-evolving situation and changing requirements when it comes to social distancing are making the recovery more difficult.
- Finally, participants emphasised the importance of **sustainable, eco-friendly and inclusive local development going forward.** Strengthening impact measurement beyond local tourism has become a recurring concern for the future of global events.

Opening & launch of the Toolkit: Implementing the OECD Recommendation on Global Events and Local Development



Karen Maguire
Head of LESI, OECD

Karen Maguire, Head of Local Employment, Skills and Social Innovation Division/LEED Programme, OECD, opened the event presenting the objectives of the webinar: to bring together actors in global events to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and the future of the industry

She introduced LEED's work, and its mandate is to improve policy implementation, scale up innovative practices, build capacities of local policy makers and promote strategies for local development. She highlighted the policy advice LEED has provided to maximise the impact of global events for local development throughout the years. The work has resulted in the Recommendation on Global Events and Local Development, adopted by the OECD Council at Ministerial Level on 30

May 2018. The recommendation provides high-level guidance to policy makers in ensuring greater local benefits from global events.

She then introduced the toolkit Implementing the OECD Recommendation on Global Events and Local Development. Resulting from extensive consultations undertaken between 2018 and 2020, the toolkit is organised around four priority areas: pre-bidding, bidding and planning; operational and delivery phase; evaluation; and multi-level governance. Within each area, it identifies overall objectives, potential actions, pitfalls to avoid, and good practice examples. It also includes a self-assessment checklist for policy makers, event organisers and hosts, to monitor progress throughout the global event life cycle.



Priority areas of the OECD
Global Events toolkit

The impacts of COVID-19 on global events



Alessandro Kandiah
Policy Analyst, OECD

Alessandro Kandiah, Policy Analyst, OECD, introduced the objectives of the first session: discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on the global events industry and presenting examples of how events have adjusted to the new context. He solicited panellist insights on how the COVID-19 travel and sanitary restrictions affected the global events industry and what innovative practices had emerged.

Kai Hattendorf, Managing Director, UFI, Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, gave the perspective of the exhibition industry. He highlighted that revenue losses in that industry for 2020 have averaged up to 70-75% globally. The fact that 300 million buyers could not attend trade shows prevented hundreds of thousands of businesses (especially SMEs) from securing sales. In the past, face-to-face events had been the dominant sales channel for SMEs.



Kai Hattendorf
Managing Director, UFI

He illustrated how exhibitions and business events had to rely on digital channels to keep connected the industries they serve. While there are elements of a business event that can easily take place online, others cannot and have not. This is especially true for all the transaction activities that take place on site. From the surveys and direct customer feedback UFI has received, it is clear that businesses are eager to return to onsite, face-to-face, physical events. He explained that, where these in-person events took place (e.g. in Japan, increasingly the United States, China and the United Arab Emirates), exhibitors report good to excellent business. To him, there is no question that trade shows can run safely, given the extent and rigour of the protocols and procedures in place (e.g. UFI Global Framework “All Secure Standard”). Nevertheless, the exhibition and business event industry depends on the travel and hospitality ecosystem providing the same level of safety. This also explains UFI’s support for global vaccination and testing efforts.



Iain Edmondson
Founding Director, IAEH

Iain Edmondson, Founding Director, International Association of Event Hosts and Director, Legacy Delivery Ltd. (IAEH), added the perspective of event hosts describing the impacts of COVID-19 on mass engagement events. Event hosts have pro-actively been involved in measures to support the events industry, including financial support. The pace of return to major events differs across the world, and will continue to vary across countries and regions throughout this year.

He also described the impact that the cancellation of global events has had on local development opportunities. Events have adapted to be able to continue to engage with audiences, despite the limitations on physical movement, but this has been very costly. The expectations of “success” have to be reevaluated, with a wider focus on social impacts and contributions to Sustainable Development Goals. To counter the negative effects of COVID-19 on the sector, some countries have put in place specific event funding and grants for stakeholders (e.g. Canada, Norway and Sweden).

Overall, he emphasised that sustainability and impact measurement had become more important in the course of the past year. For example, the IAEH has recently partnered with the Association of Summer International Olympic Federations, committing to common measures to track event impacts, covering broader sustainability concerns and linking to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Kathrin Deventer, Secretary General, European Festivals Association (EFA), described how the effects of the crisis on festivals were slightly different. Live arts and cultural events came to an almost complete halt in 2020 due to their intrinsic characteristics: people meeting the arts, meeting each other. The crisis and sudden cancellations put a spotlight on the value that these events have.

The impossibility of holding in-person festivals has also meant missed local development opportunities for many places. She raised the question of whether the collaborative spirit of the festival-city ecosystem could be further developed, and the bottom-up approach at the city level strengthened. She shared EFA's current efforts to seek new forms of collaboration, co-creation and co-production between festival organisers and city representatives, such as in the locally embedded slow arts and tourism sectors.



Kathrin Deventer
Secretary General, EFA

The future of global events and local development



Irene Basile
Policy Analyst, OECD

Irene Basile, Policy Analyst, OECD, presented the objectives of the session: discussing what may be the potential long-term impacts of COVID-19 on global events; looking at examples of how these have adjusted to the new context; and understanding if global events hosts and organisers have adapted their strategies over the long term.

Mariette Rissenbeek, Executive Director, Berlin International Film Festival (BIFF), described how the strength of cinema as a global and local communal experience could be maintained in the post-COVID future. The Berlinale had to adapt its format so that the 71st edition could take place under the current circumstances. It was split into two separate events: one for the film industry, which took place mostly online with professionals and accredited representatives earlier in the year, and a summer special edition, which will be open to the general public in June. Buyers that would usually come to Berlin in February were unable to come to the city. She considered the online edition to be a temporary interim solution that was born out of necessity. For the event in June, her team is facing restrictive sanitary measures (e.g. one third occupancy, more time between screenings, reduced receptions). The digital meeting was praised by participants, but most also highlighted that they missed the in-person experience, in particular to discuss and exchange with others. One advantage of the digital format was the possibility for people that would have normally been unable to travel to Berlin.



Mariette Rissenbeek
Executive Director, BIFF

She explained that the final effects of the pandemic are not yet completely visible. In her view, the crisis has further accelerated a pre-existing trend: more and more people watch films through streaming platforms. "Big screen" films will further need to distinguish themselves and create a special experience to bring people back to the theatres. Films will need to have a very strong profile in their entertainment value, in the topic they address or their artistic shape. There needs to be an in-depth reflection on this issue, even in regions like Europe, where the "big screen" has so far been relatively protected compared to North America, Latin America or Asia.



Damien Combredet
Head of Sport and Society,
Paris 2024

Damien Combredet, Head of Sport and Society, Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, agreed that it is still too early to draw lessons from this historic crisis. While the context is uncertain, the vision of Paris 2024 remains unchanged and has become even more relevant than before. These will be the first Olympic and Paralympic Games with a positive contribution to the environment, due to minimal new construction and to accompanying local development strategies. The objective is to reduce transportation and promote Paris as a “15-minute-city”.

He sees the legacy plan of Paris 2024 as fully in line with the OECD Recommendation. In his view, the Games can offer a positive perspective, can contribute to local economic development and becoming catalysts for positive change beyond the event itself. They can serve as an inspiration to all major events and leading by example, as many other Games have shown.

More information

Download the Toolkit and apply it in your work!

oe.cd/GE-Toolkit



For more information about the Global Events work stream, please contact:
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About the OECD Local Employment and Economic Development (LEED) Programme

LEED's mission is to build vibrant communities with more and better quality jobs for all. Since 1982, the Programme has been supporting national and local governments through tailored reviews and capacity building activities, as well as research and good practice reports on innovative approaches to local development. LEED is part of the OECD's Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities.

For more information, visit our website: www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/

CONTACT

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