

PRESS RELEASE

The ICCA publishes the ranking of the best international congress cities

Barcelona reaches number one on the global congress podium

- **The city has risen two positions in the international ranking by ICCA and becomes the leading global congress organisation city**
- **Turisme de Barcelona, through the Barcelona Convention Bureau, promotes business tourism, with a record economic effect of 1,851 million**
- **Joan Gaspart:** *“Barcelona has outdone itself in a rather difficult year. Congratulations to everyone who has made this possible, to the companies and particularly to the Convention Bureau”*
- **The Barcelona Convention Bureau programme has generated 41% of participants and 34% of the economic impact of congresses**

Barcelona, 9 May 2018. Barcelona has today received the good news that it leads the global business tourism ranking from the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). This means the destination has moved up two positions on the global business tourism podium and is now the international city with the largest number of meetings organised in 2017.

As a result of the **2,134** meetings held in 2017 the city moved up the classification, going from third to first position. When preparing this ranking, the ICCA includes only international congresses with at least 50 delegates, which rotate between three countries, so excluding the Mobile World Congress and the UEG Gastroenterology Conference.

Barcelona is in the lead with 195, 7.7% more than last year. It is followed by **Paris** (190), **Vienna** (190) and **Berlin** (185). The second Spanish city on the ranking is **Madrid** (153), in seventh place behind London and Singapore.

The last time Barcelona was at the top this ranking was in 2004, when it was the only destination that had remained in the top five of the ICCA ranking since 2001.

Rank	City	# Meetings
1	Barcelona	195
2	Paris	190
	Vienna	190
4	Berlin	185
5	London	177
6	Singapore	160
7	Madrid	153
8	Prague	151
9	Lisbon	149
10	Seoul	142
11	Buenos Aires	131
12	Budapest	128
13	Hong Kong	119
14	Dublin	117
15	Copenhagen	115
16	Amsterdam	112
17	Bangkok	110
18	Tokyo	101
19	Stockholm	97
20	Montreal, QC	96
	Rome	96

Last year (corresponding to 2016) Barcelona held third place with 181 events, while Paris was in first place with 196 and Vienna second with 186.

The president of **Turisme de Barcelona, Joan Gaspart**, was delighted with the news and stated "*Barcelona has outdone itself in a rather difficult year*". He particularly wanted to congratulate the work of the Convention Bureau, by Turisme de Barcelona, which has achieved great things this year and for the years to come.

The city councillor for Tourism, Trade and Markets and executive vice-president of Turisme de Barcelona, **Agustí Colom**, highlighted the strength of the city's tourism sector, its attractiveness and the ability to maintain this attractiveness to capture professional events. He praised the excellent work by the BCB and Barcelona's municipal government, which has intensified its promotional activity and contact with conference organisers since the last quarter of 2017. Colom considered this move up the rankings to be excellent news and reiterated that "Barcelona is outdoing itself and contradicting those who tried to destroy its reputation with alarmist and unfounded predictions", and finished off with "fortunately hard work is offsetting this, and Barcelona is again outdoing itself in the tourism sector which is one of those with highest and most direct returns in the economic and talent ecosystem of the city".

The director of the BCB, **Christoph Tessmar**, congratulated the whole team who are working very hard to make new proposals and praised the "*strength*" of the city and the entrepreneurship of its people offering "*the best facilities and services to make business tourism an economic activity which benefits the whole city*".

In 2017 the number of congresses rose 10.5% (561) and conventions 6.2% (1,573). The number of delegates meanwhile rose 14.2%, reaching a total of 674,890 delegates. The number of delegates attending congresses rose 55.1% while for conventions the increase was 21.1%.

The Barcelona Convention Bureau is the organisation responsible for promoting Barcelona as a conference destination and in this sense maintains contacts and presents proposals to attract congresses to Barcelona.

Decentralisation and Deseasonalisation

One of the most notable contributions made by business tourism is its contribution to deseasonalising and decentralising activity since the agreement signed last year with Barcelona Provincial Council which allowed the merger of the two conventions (Barcelona and Province). In 2017 over 20% of the total MICE meetings (congresses, conventions and incentives) were held outside the city in the Province of Barcelona.

During the year 1,558 meetings were held (73%) with 584,587 delegates (87%) in Barcelona city, while the rest of the Province hosted 456 meetings (21%) and 63,395 delegates (9%).

Record Economic Impact

The economic impact of the activity of congresses beat all records with a total of €1,851m, 21.2% higher than the previous year. In terms of markets, Europe leads the number of meetings held with 678 (43.7%), followed by Spain with 618 (39.7%), America with 178 (11.5%), Asia with 73 (4.7%), Oceania with four (0.3%) and Africa with two meetings held (0.1%).

Turisme de Barcelona, through the *BCB*, has this year conducted various promotional initiatives mainly in the markets of North America, France, United Kingdom, South-East Asia, Benelux, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The *BCB* has also been undertaking a growing number of sales activities in India, Sri Lanka, Shanghai and Hong Kong, among others.

In terms of the number of sales contacts made, Asia is in first place with a total of 654 contacts made, followed by Europe with 618, America with 353 and Spain in last place with 158 contacts made.

2018-2020

For 2018 various congresses have been confirmed such as Gastech and ISPOR Europe, in addition to many others. For 2019 the numbers have been exceeded with four new congresses, including osteopathy and the EHAP. Several congresses have already been negotiated for 2020, such as an education conference and the International Blood Transfusion Congress.

For further information:

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