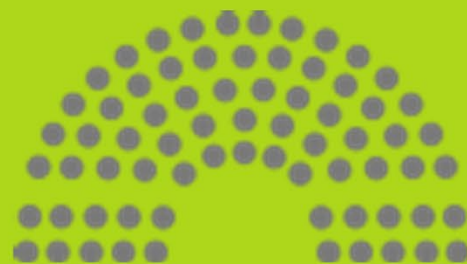


Annual Meeting



HOST CITY INFORMATION & REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

By associations for associations – advancing association leadership and management

Who We Are

AC Forum is a not-for-profit association and the only peer-to-peer organisation established exclusively for and by self-managed associations, all of which host conferences with over 1,000 participants.

Members are associations aiming for excellence in association and conference management. Member organisations and their activities must be self-managed and the association must be supranational. AC Forum supports a community working for the benefit of professionals and the sectors they represent and serve.

Everything we do is guided by our values – integrity, inclusivity, community, collaboration, accountability.

Our Mission: To be the pre-eminent platform for international associations, supporting a dynamic community and inspiring innovation and excellence in leadership and impact

Our Vision: Associations as driving forces of societal progress, envisioning and crafting a progressive future

Our Strategic Objectives

- Deliver valuable meaningful education
- Advance excellence in association leadership
- Facilitate thought leadership, advocacy, and influence for impact
- Build a sustainable inclusive organisation

Our Goals and Purposes

Deliver valuable, meaningful education, utilising expertise from among our members and from external experts.

Lead the way for associations driving innovation and excellence in leadership for impact

Provide members with a variety of opportunities to network and exchange experiences in environments that are confidential, trusting and free from commercial influence

Serve as a platform for communication and networking amongst association staff in relation to association management and related activities

Enable the exchange of information between members

Increase the level of professionalism, in-house knowledge, and expertise available within associations and for association staff in association management

Contribute and work towards better organised associations

Our Core Topics

- Advocacy, impact, legacy, policy
- Association governance
- Communications & marketing
- Education & content (non-event)
- Event management
- Finance & HR
- IT & technology
- Leadership & association management
- Membership & engagement
- Publishing
- Sponsorship & fundraising

What We Do

Provide a safe space for our members to share knowledge, challenges, successes, and failures

Facilitate networking and connection building between members

Deliver valuable, meaningful education for members

Develop resources to advance excellence in association leadership

Demonstrate thought leadership and influence for impact with external stakeholders and partners

Collaborate with third parties on activities, projects, and issues of interest and benefit to our members

Letter from the Board of AC Forum

Dear Friends,

Our Annual Meeting is held over 2½ days in January each year. The Annual Meeting focuses on developments in association management and congress organisation. Sessions explore contemporary topics and are enhanced by members' case studies sharing experiences, accomplishments, and novel endeavours. The education programme is complemented by occasions for networking and building connections, along with opportunities to experience the best of the host city.

The Annual Meeting is hosted by a different European city each year. It is an opportunity for host cities to (re-)introduce themselves to our member associations and share innovations and new developments with them. What better way to demonstrate what your city has to offer than by hosting the Annual Meeting and having the chance for members to experience the city, its infrastructure, and its facilities for meetings and events? The Annual Meeting brings major associations to a city for an extended visit, allowing them to come into contact with the host community in a very intimate and engaging manner.

We have a long history of excellent cooperation with our host cities, and fostering a mutually satisfactory relationship is important, so we encourage participants to interact with our hosts at the appropriate times throughout the meeting.

We invite you to apply to host one of our upcoming Annual Meetings!

With warm regards,

AC Forum Board

Ben Hainsworth (EASL), President

Oliver Wykes (WindEurope), President-Elect

Monica Fontana (ERA), Secretary General

Wendy Holloway (ISUOG), Treasurer

Gwydion Lyn (EORTC), Member

Nouredine M'ghari (EAACI), Member

Devi Mey (ESOT), Member

Finola Quinn, Association Manager

Why host the AC Forum Annual Meeting?

Introduction to the Annual Meeting

In January each year, AC Forum holds its Annual Meeting, a 2½-day conference which focuses on developments in association management and congress organisation. Contemporary topics and debates are supplemented with case studies to share experiences and innovations. External experts may be invited to contribute on specialist topics. A showcase for a carefully curated selection of exhibitors is an integral part of the event. The General Assembly (governance meeting) is usually scheduled during the Annual Meeting.

The Annual Meeting is hosted by a different European city each year. The preferred host city for an Annual Meeting is selected from the bids received by the AC Forum Board during the autumn and presented to the General Assembly meeting of the January prior.

Benefits of Hosting

Hosting the AC Forum Annual Meeting provides a unique opportunity for a destination to showcase the city to associations and their events decision-makers. It demonstrates the depth of commitment by the city to associations, the importance the city places on association events, and the value events represent to the city for tourism and the economy.

The selection of a destination is a mark of AC Forum's endorsement of the city. Hosting the event is an indicator of how your brand is trusted and valued. When a strong partner like AC Forum trusts your city for such an important event, it carries great weight with both its members and to the wider events industry.

A host city has an unparalleled opportunity to acquaint the many member associations with the city and to share innovations and new developments. Participants get an insider's understanding of the city and its event infrastructure. They have the chance to have the lived experience of an event in the city – the best promotional tool there is. Put simply, cities that present themselves well for a well-organised and engaging Annual Meeting are very likely to get future meeting bookings as a result of hosting the event.

Hosting the AC Forum Annual Meeting is a big commitment but also an excellent opportunity. The host city can maximise the occasion to capture the interest and imagination of decision-makers in leading associations. The exposure presents real value for money – the impact from hosting the AC Forum Annual Meeting outweighs other promotional activities that have significantly less direct effect.

Create a buzz around your city and build tangible connections!

Previous Annual Meetings

The first AC Forum Annual Meeting was held in 2001 and since then it has taken place in cities across Europe. Several cities have hosted the Annual Meeting more than once – a testament to the benefits of hosting.

2026	Gothenburg	2016	Copenhagen	2008	Amsterdam
2025	Glasgow	2015	Barcelona	2007	Berlin
2024	Hamburg	2014	Munich	2006	Barcelona
2023	Rotterdam	2013	Istanbul	2005	Monaco
2020	Helsinki	2012	Dublin	2004	Madrid
2019	Vienna	2011	Valencia	2003	Dublin
2018	Paris	2010	London	2002	Vienna
2017	Frankfurt	2009	Vienna	2001	Sophia Antipolis

Hosting the Annual Meeting

The requirements for hosting the Annual Meeting are outlined below. Applications are invited from any European city that fulfils these criteria, be it a capital city, a well-established conference hub, or a city making strides in building up its conference credentials. Holding the Annual Meeting in different cities and types of destinations allows AC Forum members to gain a better understanding of the breadth, diversity, and quality of European destinations. AC Forum welcomes all applications fitting its requirements and especially appreciates innovative approaches.

The Annual Meeting will take place on the following dates over the coming years:

- 21-23 January 2027
- 20-22 January 2028
- 18-20 January 2029

Host City Application Criteria

The city should have adequate facilities to host large international congresses (min. 1,000 participants).

The Convention Bureau/city/venue/suppliers should provide the following services and arrangements for the Annual Meeting. Participants will make their own arrangements for travel to and from the host city.

1. Meeting Facilities / Venue(s)

The **Board meeting** on Thursday morning may take place at the hotel, if it is within a short walking distance of the venue.

It is preferred that sessions take place at the same **venue** throughout the event. If there is more than one suitable venue in the city, tours of other venues can be scheduled into the event programme. It may exceptionally be considered to use two venues, if the city can put forward an acceptable case for this.

There must be adequate **signage** within the venue(s) and on session rooms.

A visit of the venue for participants can be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.

Day		Event	Requirement
Thursday	Morning	Impact Initiative	Session room, cabaret style, c. 50 pax
	Late morning/lunch	Board meeting	Meeting room, U-shape, 10 pax
	Afternoon	CEO Discussion Forum	Session room, cabaret style, c. 50 pax
		Campfires	4 Campfires in parallel, informal seating in a circle, c. 20-30 pax each and far enough apart that there is no carry over of noise between them
	Late afternoon	General Assembly	Session room, classroom or theatre, c. 130 pax
Friday	All day	Sessions	Plenary room, cabaret style, c. 170 pax + Session room, cabaret style, c. 100 pax
		Campfires	4 Campfires in parallel, informal seating in a circle, c. 20-30 pax each and far enough apart that there is no carry over of noise between them
		Exhibition	12 x 6m ² open spaces (no shell scheme) in the coffee break area
Saturday	Morning	Sessions	Plenary room, cabaret style, c. 170 pax + Session room, cabaret style, c. 100 pax
		Exhibition	12 x 6m ² open spaces (no shell scheme) in the coffee break area

2. AV & IT

All AV and IT required for the presentation of the event should be provided at the venue(s).

WiFi must be available throughout the venue(s) and must be adequate for browsing, polls, etc.

The facility for **livestreaming** of, or **remote attendance** of, the General Assembly must be provided.

Sessions should be **recorded** for AC Forum. Recordings will be made available to all AC Forum members, which will further show off the venue and AV and other facilities.

The AV supplier may take the opportunity to showcase its proficiency and innovative solutions. AV set-up must have the approval of AC Forum.

Event	Requirement
Board meeting	Projection facilities, WiFi
General Assembly	Projection facilities, presentation laptop, sound system & microphones, WiFi Livestreaming / remote attendance, voting
Sessions	Projection facilities, presentation laptop, sound system & microphones, WiFi Recording of sessions (not livestreaming)

3. Catering

All catering at the venue(s) during the days of the meeting should be provided.

Water dispensers should be available throughout the venue(s).

The catering supplier may utilise the lunch(es) to present its services with imagination and flair. Catering menus and plans must have the approval of AC Forum

Day	Time	Event	Requirement
Thursday	Late morning/ lunch	Board meeting	Continuous coffee break, 8 pax + Lunch, 8 pax
	Late afternoon	General Assembly	Welcome coffee, 100 pax
Friday	Throughout day	Coffee breaks	Coffee, tea, water, snacks, 200 pax
	Lunchtime	Lunch	Buffet or table service, seated, 200 pax
Saturday	Throughout morning	Coffee breaks	Coffee, tea, water, snacks, 200 pax
	Lunchtime	Lunch	Buffet or table service, seated, 200 pax

4. Accommodation

It is preferred that all delegates stay at one hotel, but accommodation spread over 2-3 hotels in very close proximity to each other will be considered.

Accommodation should be provided for participants for 2 nights as standard (Thursday & Friday); Board members may be covered for an additional night on Wednesday.

Day	Group	Requirement
Tuesday	Association Manager	1 room
Wednesday	Board	Up to 8 rooms
Thursday	All participants	Approximately 200 rooms
Friday	All participants	Approximately 200 rooms

If participants wish to stay **extra nights**, or if **member organisations wish to bring additional staff**, they must cover the extra accommodation cost. A favourable room rate is required for participants paying the hotel directly.

5. Transportation

The host city must **manage movement of the group** about the city.

The host city must **manage airport transfer** logistics, if no public transport from the airport to the city / hotel(s) / venue(s) is available.

The provision of **public transport tickets** to delegates is preferred if there is an efficient and well-functioning public transport system within in the city. Otherwise, private coach transfers should be arranged.

6. Networking and Social Events

The networking events are an ideal occasion for the city to introduce the representatives of the member associations to the highlights of the city.

The **dinner on Thursday** is a private event for AC Forum members only and is a more casual affair. Entertainment is not required.

The **formal gala dinner on Friday** often takes place at a city or municipal building, such as a museum or city hall, and representatives of the city, venue, suppliers, etc. mingle with AC Forum members. It is usual for the mayor or other city dignitary to give a speech and some typical entertainment to be provided.

Day	Time	Event	Requirement
Thursday	20.00-22.00	Networking Event	Business casual, buffet, free seating, c.170 pax
Friday	19.30-22.30	Gala Dinner	Business formal, table service, set seating plan

7. Sustainability

It is essential that the host city, venue(s), and other partners involved in delivering the Annual Meeting have a commitment to **sustainable development**. Details must be provided with the application.

8. Local Impact Initiative

AC Forum is enthusiastic to deliver a local impact initiative in each host city. The host city is expected to commit to **partner with AC Forum on the concept and delivery**.

9. Contribution to the Annual Meeting Programme

The host city may be asked for recommendations of **local inspirational speakers** to contribute to the programme.

10. Funding

The host city must disclose the **source(s) of funding** for hosting the Annual Meeting, e.g. city, convention bureau partners, etc. Co-sponsorship by a national convention bureau is not excluded.

11. Board Meeting & Site Inspection

The city should host a **Board meeting** (2 days, 1-2 nights) for 8 people during the year prior to the Annual Meeting.

The city should host a **site inspection** for 2 people during the year prior to the Annual Meeting

Branding & Promotion

The AC Forum brand guidelines must be respected.

AC Forum reserves the right to review social media and other representations of the AC Forum Annual Meeting used by the host city and its partners.

Typical Agenda

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
09.00-09.15			Welcome	Plenary Session
09.15-09.30			Opening Session	
09.30-09.45				Coffee break & Exhibition
09.45-10.00		Local Impact Initiative	Coffee break & Exhibition	Parallel Sessions
10.00-10.15			Plenary Session	Campfires
10.15-10.30			Coffee break & Exhibition	Coffee break & Exhibition
10.30-10.45			Parallel Sessions	Parallel Sessions
10.45-11.00			Coffee break & Exhibition	Campfires
11.00-11.15			Parallel Sessions	Coffee break & Exhibition
11.15-11.30			Coffee break & Exhibition	Parallel Sessions
11.30-11.45			Parallel Sessions	Campfires
11.45-12.00			Coffee break & Exhibition	Coffee break & Exhibition
12.00-12.15		Board Meeting (incl lunch)	Parallel Sessions	Closing Session
12.15-12.30			Coffee break & Exhibition	
12.30-12.45			Parallel Sessions	Lunch
12.45-13.00			Coffee break & Exhibition	
13.00-13.15			Lunch 13.15-14.15	
13.15-13.30			Parallel Sessions	
13.30-13.45			Campfires	
13.45-14.00		Introduction Session	Coffee break & Exhibition	
14.00-14.15			Parallel Sessions	
14.15-14.30			Campfires	
14.30-14.45			Coffee break & Exhibition	
14.45-15.00			Parallel Sessions	
15.00-15.15			Campfires	
15.15-15.30			Coffee break & Exhibition	
15.30-15.45			Parallel Sessions	
15.45-16.00			Campfires	
16.00-16.15			Coffee break & Exhibition	
16.15-16.30			Plenary Session	
16.30-16.45				
16.45-17.00				
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19.30-19.45				
19.45-20.00				
20.00-20.15				
...				
21.45-22.00				

Attendance

Up to five staff members from each AC Forum member organisation, and up to two staff members from each association applying for membership that year, are covered by the host city for up to 2 nights' accommodation, catering during the Annual Meeting hours, and social events.

Not all member organisations will bring the full entitlement of staff. The numbers of delegates that were covered by the host city at the last three Annual Meetings were 165, 129, and 136.

It is expected that attendance at the next Annual Meeting will be in the region of 200 staff from AC Forum member organisations.

AC Forum Members 2025



Host City Bid Process & Timeline

Once the RFP is circulated and the call for applications is opened, prospective destinations are encouraged to get in contact with the AC Forum Association Manager to discuss the requirements and their candidature.

An application letter accompanied by a detailed proposal outlining the prospective host city's offer, and covering the essential elements outlined in the RFP, must be submitted by the Convention Bureau, or similar institution of the potential host city, to the AC Forum Association Manager before the deadline.

All candidates will be treated equally.

Timeline

Early summer	RFP circulated and call for applications open
1 October	Application submission deadline
Up to end November	AC Forum Board reviews applications and has further communication with applicant destinations as required
December	AC Forum Board selects the host city Applicants are notified confidentially of the outcome of the selection process
January	Board announces the host city to the General Assembly
January/February	MoU sent to successful destination

Obligations of the host city candidate

No promotion of the proposal of any kind is permitted during the submission and review stage.

Prior to the host city selection, candidates shall not reveal their proposal, in whole or in part, to anyone other than the AC Forum office and Board.

While AC Forum is mindful of cultural variations in business practices, candidates are required to refrain from giving any gifts, hospitality or value in kind to any AC Forum staff or Board member. Whether intentional or not, such gifts may be perceived as directly influencing the selection process.

Obligations of AC Forum Board and staff members

No AC Forum Board member, or member of AC Forum staff or the evaluation team may solicit or accept any gift, hospitality or value in kind from any host city candidate (directly or indirectly) that could be seen as affecting the person's impartiality with regard to the selection process.

Deadline & Contact

The deadline for application is **1 October 2025**. Late applications will not be accepted for consideration.

Prospective destinations should contact only the AC Forum Association Manager, Finola Quinn (secretariat@acforum.net), about the application to host the Annual Meeting. Attempts to contact members of the Board, AC Forum members, or any other person to discuss the application will not be entertained.

