

On the rise: conferences and meetings in Austria

- Knowhow in Austria: In 2016, 1.5 million participants met in the country, the total number of events amounted to just below 20,000 – a new all-time high;
- International events recorded increases in absolute numbers (+12.7%), in participants (+4.2%) as well as in overnight stays (+5.3%);
- Half of the events were corporate meetings; conferences and seminars accounted for a quarter each.

The Austrian Convention Bureau (ACB) and Österreich Werbung (ÖW; Austrian National Tourist Office) have published the results of the Meeting Industry Report Austria (mira) for the eighth year running. In 2016, the Austrian meeting industry accounted for a total volume of 19,338 events with more than 1.5 million participants. This corresponded to a 6.4% increase in events and 4.8% more participants. Increases were recorded for the conference and the corporate meeting sectors. Smaller events are the trend; the average number of participants per event has decreased over the past years, the most recent figure was 79 participants. On the other hand, the average duration of events increased over the previous year to 2.23 days. Overall, the meeting industry generated almost 3.3 million overnight stays in 2016, a growth of 5.5%. As in the previous years, the main share was accounted for by conferences, generating 72.8%. Meeting-related overnight stays accounted for 2.3% of the total tourism-related overnight stays. In the capital cities (including Vienna), this share was particularly high (10.6%).

Austria attracts international events

In 2016, international events accounted for 22.2% of the annual business. They generated more than one third of participants and three quarters of the overnight stays. When compared to the previous year's figures, international events recorded increases in absolute numbers (+12.7%), participants (+4.2%) and overnight stays (+5.3%). On average, 137 participants were welcomed at international meetings, their average duration increased from 2.77 to 3.6 days. While guests participating in national events only stayed in the region of the venue for one night, those participating in international ones stayed for four. Conferences had a particularly high international share: every third such event was international. For corporate meetings the international share amounted to 28%, a 17.9% increase over the previous year.

Conferences

In the previous year a total of 4,681 conferences were held in Austria. This corresponds to a 24.2% share of the total number of events. Over 2015, the number of conferences increased by 8.2%, the number of participants increased by 3% to a total figure of 823.329 and the number of overnight stays by as much as 4.2% to 2,399,352. With a share of almost 73%, conferences remained the most significant Austrian meeting industry's contributors to the number of overnight stays. The average duration of a conference, on the other hand, has remained stable over the past years and amounted to approximately two days.

Participants in international conferences generated four times as many overnight stays

Compared to the previous year's figures, national as well as international conferences increased in absolute numbers, the number of participants and the number of overnight stays. In all, 3,155 national (+10.1%) and 1,526 international (+4.3%) conferences were held across Austria. National conferences had an average duration of just over one and a half days; international conferences were longer, averaging more than three days. Participants in international conferences generated four times as many overnight stays as did those in national conferences. What is more, international conferences on average attracted more than twice as many participants. On average, international conferences had 272 participants, national ones 129.

Top conference months: Autumn before spring

Again, most conferences took place in the course of two specific seasons: 28.9% (1,351) of all conferences were held in spring (March, April and May) and 36.7% (1,716) in autumn (September, October and November). One particular point of interest: the four conference months with the highest numbers of participants (October, September, April and November) helped balance out the three weakest months in tourism (November, April and October). September once again remained the favourite month for international conferences with 225 events and a total of 63,670 participants. A trend has developed for the midsummer season: since the first recordings in 2009, July and August have always attracted more than half of the number of international conferences.

Economy & politics recorded a high, accounting for about one third of all conferences – humanities caught up in the ranking of topics

In the ranking of topics, economy & politics, human medicine and humanities made up the first three places. A total of 71.3% of all conferences were related to one of these topics. With 1,592 events, economy & politics reached a new all-time high and accounted for one third of all conferences. Humanities had the highest growth rate (+26.3%), making ground on human medicine. International conferences were dominated by formal & natural sciences and IT & communication; more than 50% of all events in the respective categories were international.

Strongest segment: small and medium-sized conferences

With shares of 95.4% of events and 56.1% of participants, small and medium-sized conferences with 10 to 500 participants remained the dominant market segment of the Austrian meeting industry. Most of them were national. When it comes to international conferences, large-scale conferences with more than 2,000 participants accounted for the highest percentage share (63.6%). This segment accounted for only 33 events (0.7%); however, it brought together more than 190,000 participants (23%).

Palaces & museums performed strongly – universities & educational institutions number one for international events

In 2016, conference and meeting hotels came in first place again as regards the number of events (1,855; +4.2%). Hotels saw the largest number of events (39.6%). However, centres for conferences, trade fairs and events welcomed the largest share of participants (46%).

Universities & educational institutions had the highest international shares; both the number of events as well as the number of participants exceeded 50%. With an increase of 66.4%, palaces & museums clearly had the largest increase over the previous year. This category was particularly favoured by international organisers; it had the second-largest share of international conferences.

Corporate meetings

For the second time in a row, corporate meetings were the big winners among the events held in Austria. A total of 9,826 corporate meetings were organised. For the first time since the beginning of reporting on the three categories of conferences, corporate meetings and seminars, they accounted for more than half of all events. The total number of participants in corporate meetings amounted to almost half a million. This resulted in an increase of 15.9% in participants over the previous year, generating 813,554 overnight stays (+10.1%). This was double the increase when compared to the overall result for overnight stays (+5.5%).

Large national share

Compared to 2015, the number of national (+14.4%) as well as international (+17.9%) corporate meetings grew considerably. 71.8% of the annual business was accounted for by national corporate meetings, i.e. 7,051 events in absolute numbers. An average of 46 participants stayed in the respective region for one night each. An average meeting lasted for two days. International meetings lasted for more than three and a half days, thereby creating a higher average of overnight stays. In addition, international meetings were attended by 17 more participants on average.

Corporate meetings mainly hosted in hotels

86.1% of the corporate meeting business, i.e. 6,081 events, was generated in conference and meeting hotels. For the second year in a row, universities & educational institutions saw the largest increase (+198.3%), for the first time hosting more than 150 meetings. Palaces & museums also had increases in the number of corporate meetings (+53.8%). It is remarkable for these locations that the number of participants rose from 3,970 in 2015 to 10,099 in the following year (+154.4%).

Seminars

In 2016 4,831 seminars were organised all over Austria, amounting to exactly 25% of the total number of events. The number of seminars shrunk by 9.3% as compared to the previous year; the number of participants declined by 9.8%, the average number of participants remaining at 43. The average duration increased slightly (+3%) to more than 2 days per seminar thus generating a small growth in overnight stays (+0.3%). Most frequent topics for seminars were also economy & politics (40.1%) followed by human medicine and humanities. Locations also showed similarities with conferences and corporate meetings: most events took place in hotels (52.7%), palaces & museums boomed (+168.8%).

Meeting industry in the provinces

Provinces gained once more

In 2016, the number of events in the provinces (not counting Vienna) increased once more (+12.8%). In all, 64.5% (12,469) of all events were held there, an increase of 1,412 events over 2015. All three event categories grew: in the previous year, 3,361 conferences (+14.5%), 7,062 corporate meetings (+13.4%) and 2,046 seminars (+8%) were recorded.

Vienna remained conference stronghold

With 35.5% of all events, 45.1% of all participants and 52.1% of the total number of overnight stays, Vienna secured its first place among all provinces. The federal capital recorded the largest shares in all three event categories (28.2% of conferences, 28.1% of corporate meetings and 57.6% of seminars).

Salzburg consolidated number two position, Lower Austria cracked 2,000 events

With another increase of 672 events (+22.4%) Salzburg consolidated its number two position in the ranking of provinces. Salzburg's share in the Austrian meeting industry amounted to 19% of events, 14.4% of participants and 13.1% of overnight stays. Lower Austria came third in the number of events, after Vienna and Salzburg. The largest Austrian province by area exceeded the number of 2,000 events for the first time (2,057). Styria was third as to the number of participants and Tyrol as to overnight stays.

When analysing the number of participants more closely, the results were as follows: for conferences, the highest share was found for Vienna (48.4%), followed by Styria (10.6%) and Salzburg (10%). For corporate meetings, Vienna came first (33.9%) followed by Salzburg (24.1%) and Lower Austria (10.9%). The largest numbers of seminar participants were accounted for by Vienna (59.3%), Upper Austria (9.9%) and Salzburg (8.2%). As compared to the previous year's figures, corporate meetings generated an increase of approximately 50,000 participants in the federal provinces (not counting Vienna). Corporate meetings were the strongest segment in terms of participants in Lower Austria (54.7%) and Salzburg (52.9%), a trend contrary to the rest of Austria where more than half of the participants were generated by conferences.

In particular, there were many international events in Tyrol, Vorarlberg and Vienna. Of the total number of events, the highest percentage share was found in Vorarlberg (40%), followed by Vienna (35.1%) and Tyrol (30.5%).

Capital cities presented 4% increase

In 2016, 11,786 events were held in the capital cities (including Vienna), a 4% increase over the previous year. In line with the overall results for Austria, conferences (+3%) and corporate meetings (+21%) increased in numbers, seminars declined by 12.5%. In 2016, more than one third of all events in the provinces (39.4%) took place in the capital cities (not including Vienna), which hosted almost half of all participants visiting the provinces (49.2%). The number of overnight stays in the provincial capitals (not including Vienna) was 644,473, amounting to a 40.8% share of all overnight stays generated in the provinces. Linz and Salzburg saw more than

fifty percent of the total number of events held in the provincial capitals (not including Vienna). Linz, Salzburg and Graz accounted for more than 50% of the respective overnight stays.

Green Meetings & Events

In 2010, the Austrian eco-label UZ 62 “Green Meetings and Events” guideline was created and has since established itself as a recognised and credible label for sustainable events. In the previous year, 65 licensees were registered in all of Austria. Since 2010, a total of 843 Green Meetings and 182 Green Events with almost 840,000 participants have taken place. In 2016, 224 meetings and 55 events were certified, the respective number of participants amounted to about 110,000.

Sixteen 2016 facts

1. Austria saw a total of 19,338 events with almost 1.5 million participants.
2. Conferences generated 2,399,352 overnight stays corresponding to a share of 72.8% of the total number of overnight stays.
3. International events lasted for an average of three and a half days and welcomed on average 137 participants.
4. November was the top conference month in 2016.
5. In July and August, the midsummer months, more than half of the conferences were international.
6. Formal & natural sciences as well as IT & communication are the most popular for international conferences.
7. Small and medium-sized conferences dominated with a 95.4% market share.
8. For conferences, palaces & museums had the greatest increase (+66.4%) in 2016 over the previous year.
9. Universities and educational institutions were the only locations with a higher share of international conferences than national conferences.
10. In 2016, more than half of all events held in Austria were corporate meetings (50.8%).
11. 71.8% of all corporate meetings were national.
12. Almost two thirds of all events took place in the provinces (not including Vienna).
13. In all of Austria (not including Vienna), the number of conferences increased by 14.5%, that of corporate meetings by 13.4% and that of seminars by 8%.
14. With a figure of 35.5% Vienna remained top in the conference and meeting industry.
15. Lower Austria exceeded the number of 2,000 registered events for the first time.
16. 224 Green Meetings were held in Austria.

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Please find pictures and other information here:

<http://www.acb.at/Start/TagungStart/Statistik/mira>

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Definitions

The World Tourism Organisation defines “meetings” as follows:

- Minimum number of participants: 10
- Minimum duration: 4 hours or 1/2 day
- Paid meeting room, catering, etc.

Conferences

Conferences and meeting are “events lasting one or more days, bringing together predominantly non-locals for a professional exchange of information“. The event aims at passing on topical expert knowledge and networking on a professional and a social level.

The following categories are listed under this specific heading:

- Academic conference, expert meeting
- Working session
- Forum
- General assembly
- Closed session
- Colloquium
- Board meeting of an association
- Symposium
- International seminar

Corporate meetings

Corporate meetings are business-related meetings with at least 10 participants. The participants are part of the same company, the same group of companies, of joint ventures or customer/supplier relations.

Seminars

Seminars have the character of intense training and further education for an expert audience who have to attend non-stop. Typically, seminars have a limited number of participants and a shorter duration.

International seminars fulfil the criteria of conferences and meetings.

Overnight calculation formulae

Key figures: TN = participants; X = days

National event, 2 days or longer: $(X \times 0.5)TN$

National event, one-day: $X = 0$

International events: $(X+1)TN$

Sources:

Schreiber, Michael-Thaddäus (2002):

Kongress- und Tagungsmanagement, 2nd edition, Munich

Definitions of the Austrian National Tourist Office/abcn