



Switzerland.

Market situation France.

Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau (SCIB).

MySwitzerland.com/meetings



1 MARKET SITUATION AND OUTLOOK.

1.1 Economic situation

After a GDP drop of 8.2% in 2020, France finished the year 2021 with surprising GDP growth of 7% – higher than expected (source: Insee “Point de conjuncture 7/2/2022”). This very good news was somewhat dampened by new difficulties, starting with the fifth wave due to the variant Omicron, which again affected the economy. Extremely high energy prices and an inflation rate of 2.8% also posed problems.

Nevertheless, economists are very optimistic that the situation will improve by spring. The only sectors still in crisis or at least in difficulty are tourism, hospitality and events. Some other sectors are being affected by the global shortage of raw materials, such as the automotive and manufacturing industries.

An important factor that always influences the economic situation in France is household consumption. As explained in the previous version of this Market Situation, many households gained additional purchasing power thanks to state financial support during the crisis. Much of this money went into their savings accounts. Some of it was invested in real estate and some of it was spent on fashion, travel and furniture, helping to increase GDP in 2021. Given the explosion of energy prices (petrol, gas and electricity) at the end of 2021, households are worried about their drop in purchasing power, which has been worsened by inflation.

The unemployment rate decreased in 2021 and will continue to do so. It was expected to be around 7.8% by the end of the year (which is close to pre-pandemic rates) and should further decrease. Some sectors are struggling to fill their vacancies, and the new “apprenticeship” contracts introduced in 2018 also help to lower youth unemployment in particular.

(Source: Insee)

1.2 Meetings industry – state and trends

The state of the meetings industry in France has evolved tremendously since summer 2021. The government put pressure on its population to get vaccinated by introducing a “COVID certificate”, which is needed for access to facilities such as cinemas, theatres, sports activities, restaurants and long-distance trains. The certificate also allowed in-person events to take place again.

Demand therefore exploded from June when the first restrictions were lifted. Companies organised small events, mainly in France, to re-unite their teams and re-create team spirit or to bring their board of directors together. However, some bigger events and some events abroad took place between September and November, including some congresses, and agencies were kept busy organising rescheduled events.



Unfortunately, when the fifth wave (Omicron) hit Europe at the end of November, events were again put on hold by a lot of companies. We were able to host some meetings and incentive events for French clients in December and January, but those were exceptions. It seems that many organisers are still eager to go back to physical meetings as soon as the health situation improves, even though hybrid formats will probably also remain and even develop.

We have observed a large number of changes within the event agencies in France. Some small agencies have ceased their activity, and many event professionals have left the meetings industry. Today, agencies are hiring again (to be able to answer incoming RFPs) – but they are struggling to find new employees.

Some of the bigger agencies have merged to be able to offer a 360° experience and to survive on the global market.

1.2.1 Trends

As already mentioned, **digitalisation in the event industry** is more topical than ever. The true value of face-to-face meetings became clear after many months of meetings on Zoom and other platforms, especially for strategic meetings and brainstorming. But of course, it must not be forgotten that online meetings prevent unnecessary journeys and can accommodate a much larger audience. So it seems the future will see a demand both for small live meetings for fewer than 50 people who do not have to travel too far and for new hybrid formats for larger meetings. In any case, we recommend that **venues update and increase their use of technology**, including high-speed internet, secure Wi-Fi and in-house broadcasting studios.

CSR and sustainability are other topics that are gaining in importance

Green Événements, which is pushing the meetings industry towards CSR, has initiated the creation of ISO Certification 20121.

LÉVÉNEMENT, the French association of event agencies, has decided that all its members should have ISO 20121 certification as soon as possible. It seems that environmental awareness is highest among younger employees (aged 20–35), who want to be more responsible and sustainable. They do not want to see events creating so much waste (food waste, mats, print material, etc.) and are looking for ways to reduce and recycle wherever possible. We are all responsible for the health of Planet Earth.

France has the biggest number of ISO 20121 certified suppliers and events and will increase its number in the upcoming months. The French government has been involved in this process as well.

We highly recommend that all players in the Swiss meetings industry wishing to show their commitment towards CSR take a look at this label and also communicate their efforts (whatever they are) in sustainability more clearly and proactively.

2 RFP SITUATION IN FRANCE.

From 21 June, meetings within Europe were possible again, and we started to receive some requests for winter 2021/22 and last-minute meetings in September–October 2021. The last-minute meetings took place, whereas the ones for winter were mostly cancelled or postponed as the fifth wave came along.

Unfortunately, a lot of companies still have travel policies which do not allow their employees to leave domestic territory or, worse, to travel at all for the moment. But we remain optimistic that this will evolve positively in 2022.

The first encouraging signs have come since mid-January, with RFPs picking up. Our advantage is the proximity to France with easy access by high-speed TGV train. Our weakness is the strong Swiss franc, which makes us a lot more expensive than the euro countries.

3 TARGETS.

- We are maintaining our strong market presence and our quality approach towards buyers (agencies, companies and venue finders) in the meetings sector in France, even in these difficult times with few RFPs; we want to stay in buyers' minds and make them consider Switzerland when travel and live events are allowed again.
- The inbound marketing strategy we have developed over the past years through content production (blog) and our presence on social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Slideshare, etc.) will help us achieve our targets. We generate awareness for Switzerland by appealing to people's emotions.
- We will focus on venues for smaller groups (>50/100 people) and on sustainability and target companies (especially executive assistants) in border regions.
- We will also focus on the association market by evaluating association meeting leads.
- Ongoing updates of our client database.
- Presence online and offline through Key Media Management (KMM) and participation in meeting industry associations.

4 CURRENT DATABASE SITUATION.

Kind	Contacts
Agencies	1,653
Companies	1,074
Association	151
Media	21



5 DETAILED MARKETING ACTIVITIES.

Further details of past, present and future marketing activities can be found on www.stnet.ch, which users can access with their personal username and password.