

# Leveraging Intellectual Capital

**Destinations and their  
International Association Leaders**

THE SECOND EDITION



ADVISING THE WORLD'S CONVENTION AND MEETINGS INDUSTRY

01

Executive  
Summary

02

Intellectual  
Capital

03

Intellectual  
Capital Research

04

Global  
Rankings

08

Harnessing  
Ratio

10

Intellectual Capital  
Engagement

13

Destination Intellectual  
Capital Study

14

Cities to  
Watch

16

Methodology

17

About Us

# Contents

# Executive Summary

For the second year running, *GainingEdge* has researched the intellectual capital of global destinations through extensive study of international associations data available on public platforms. Our continuously updated intellectual capital research analyses international association leadership to identify, and rank, the relative strengths of meetings destinations in terms of local leaders in the governing bodies of international associations that organize meetings and conventions.

Strong and strategic cooperation with intellectual leaders allows meetings destinations leverage these leaders to attract international scientific and business conferences, and effectively promoting themselves as hubs of excellence in areas of social and economic development. Destinations with a mature convention industry usually harness their intellectual capital well, leading to growth and advancement.

Based on our research, we can provide valuable insights into:

**Destination Competitiveness** – comparing the number of its internationally active intellectual leaders against competing cities.

**Priority Business Leads** – identifying influential knowledge leaders within international associations allows engagement in ‘smart’ bidding to increase conversion rates and achieve business goals.

**Business focus** – in line with their capacities and capabilities, destinations can segment the association market and actively engage local leaders from key segments.

**Key industry sectors** – knowing who these internationally-recognized local leaders are, destinations will understand their scientific expertise and related industry sectors.

**Destination branding** – cities can adopt hubs of excellence positioning and use their intellectual leaders as promoters of their knowledge brand.

In this year’s report, among the **Top 50 Cities**, there are 13,488 members present at governing bodies of international associations which organize conventions attracting at least 500 delegates. At the top of the list are **Paris** with local leaders in 644 international boards (16 more than last year); **Tokyo** with 509 (+21); **Beijing** with 438 (+10) and **New York** with 530 (56 less than last year). The destinations that experienced the greatest increase in the influence of their local leaders on association boards compared to the previous year are: **Sydney** with its leaders active in 46 additional boards, followed by **Kuala Lumpur** and **Singapore** (with +34 each) and **Seoul** (+28).

**Intellectual Capital Engagement** is key to success for a meetings destination, so the city should explore who are the local leaders with high international reputation and how to engage them. Our **Harnessing Ratio** provides destinations a great starting point for assessing how to leverage their intellectual capital and what action should be taken to increase its use. All meetings destinations aspire to increase their conversion or bid win rate. To achieve this, destinations should undertake **‘smart’ bid strategies** and a very effective tool is to engage local leaders with a strong reputation to support their bids. If the convention bureau and the local industry have a strong and creative collaboration, they can develop **advanced marketing programs** which will be significantly improved through active engagement of their local knowledge leaders.

We expanded our research to obtaining data about the members of boards of international associations which also organize smaller meetings. This enables us to do **Intellectual Capital Segmentation** where we can filter the available intellectual capital for each city by the size of the meetings, and providing insights into the available intellectual capital in the industry sectors in which the destination is particularly interested in. Thus, destinations with fewer resources can focus on priority segments and achieve improved results.

# Intellectual Capital

## Intellectual Capital

The world has faced serious challenges that have dramatically changed the business and social environment in recent years. The global pandemic has affected economic performance in every corner of the world and after an initial phase of adjustment there is a need to speed up recovery.

However, new challenges have emerged to disrupt the global supply chains, raising questions about key sources of growth and economic development in the world. Natural and energy resources, labor availability and influence on global markets, media and social networks (and soft power), financial superiority in the existing monetary system are treated as resources in global competition. However, we generally overlook that the basis of all resources is **human and intellectual capital** and the ability of society to engage it for the benefit of the greater community.

In these turbulent times, the need to engage our intellectual capital is even more critical in order to address these global challenges. Intellectual capital is a primary value creator and the main competitive factor that destinations have at their disposal. Intellectual capital is a key component of soft power as well as a tool for global positioning to make a destination attractive for talented people to live and work.

## Destination Intellectual Capital

The most advanced destinations tend to actively engage and leverage their intellectual capital, directing the economic model towards high value-added sectors and encouraging innovation and global scientific collaboration (chiefly in the creative and high-tech digital sectors). They engage the academic community, universities and research centers to support economic development in targeted business clusters to attract investments in innovative and knowledge-intensive sectors.

The meetings industry has a crucial role in this process, by connecting science and business opportunities and promoting an overall collaborative approach - a foundation for creation of an innovative and productive environment.

Meetings destinations should focus efforts to identify their intellectual leaders, as well as to recognize their scientific and business achievements and develop their international reputation. Through strong and strategic cooperation with intellectual leaders, meetings destinations can harness these leaders to attract international scientific and business conferences, thereby promoting themselves as hubs in key areas of social and economic development. Collaboration with local intellectual leaders will provide destinations a powerful tool to advance their brand, positioning themselves as cities of knowledge, innovation and creativity.

# Intellectual Capital Research

## GainingEdge Intellectual Capital Research

Since 2020, GainingEdge has researched the intellectual capital of destinations around the globe, based on a comprehensive survey of the ICCA database and available data on websites of international associations. The main goal of our intellectual capital research is to analyze international association leadership and identify the relative strengths of meetings destinations in terms of the presence of their local leaders in the governing bodies of international associations that organize meetings and conventions.

As expected, the more advanced meetings destinations have local intellectual leaders active in the governing bodies (executive boards, committees, etc.) of more international associations. Also, as it is assumed that meetings destinations will be more business-driven, their focus will be on the most influential leaders active in international associations, although not necessarily the most cited scientists and academics will be always among them.

The key analytical information we derive is the total number of boards and committees of international associations where a particular destination has active members. As this is our second edition, we can now chart year-on-year changes in the presence of local leaders in the governing bodies of these associations.

## Key Insights

Destinations who want to strategically leverage on their intellectual capital should consider these insights:

- **Destination Competitiveness** – in terms of available intellectual capital by comparing the number of its internationally active intellectual leaders against competing destinations.
- **Priority Business Leads** – identifying influential knowledge leaders within international associations allows engagement in ‘smart’ bidding to increase conversion rates and achieve business goals.
- **Business focus** – in line with their capacities and capabilities, destinations can segment the association market and actively engage local leaders from key segments.
- **Key industry sectors** – knowing who these internationally-recognized local leaders are, destinations will understand their scientific expertise and related industry sectors.
- **Destination branding** – cities can adopt hubs of excellence positioning and use their intellectual leaders as promoters of their knowledge brand.

# Global Rankings

GainingEdge's Intellectual Capital Research was initially focused on international associations who organize large meetings with over 500 participants. To ensure comparability with the previous year, we again present the list of top 50 cities in terms of presence of their local leaders in governing bodies of international associations which organize large conventions. In addition, we compared data from 2020 and 2021 and changes in number of local leaders presented on boards of these associations as well as changes in ranking for each city.

## Top 50 Cities

Rank	CITY	# Boards with local members	# Presidents/ Chairpersons	#	Rank
		End of 2021	End of 2020	change	change
1	London	735	721	14	=
2	Paris	644	628	16	=
3	Tokyo	509	488	21	=
4	Beijing	438	428	10	+1 ↑
5	New York	430	486	-56	-1 ↓
6	Seoul	403	375	28	=
7	Sydney	382	336	46	=
8	Singapore	366	332	34	=
9	Madrid	331	324	7	=
10	Vienna	319	301	18	+1 ↑
11	Mexico City	317	301	16	+1 ↑
12	Melbourne	314	298	16	+2 ↑
13	Barcelona	313	300	13	=
14	Sao Paulo	313	289	24	+2 ↑
15	Washington	308	318	-10	-5 ↓
16	Buenos Aires	301	296	5	-1 ↓
17	Hong Kong	298	276	22	=
18	Boston	278	267	11	=
19	Amsterdam	270	254	16	+4 ↑
20	Zurich	265	255	10	+1 ↑
21	Milan	257	250	7	+4 ↑
22	Brussels	256	260	-4	-2 ↓
23	Los Angeles	254	251	3	+1 ↑
24	Berlin	252	261	-9	-5 ↓
25	Rome	248	254	-6	-3 ↓

Rank	CITY	# Boards with local members	# Presidents/ Chairpersons	#	Rank
		End of 2021	End of 2020	change	change
26	Toronto	246	224	22	=
27	Taipei	242	229	13	=
28	Kuala Lumpur	235	201	34	=
29	Santiago	231	231	0	+1 ↑
30	Stockholm	218	219	-1	-1 ↓
31	Chicago	211	214	-3	=
32	Copenhagen	210	192	18	=
33	Bogota	197	197	0	=
34	San Francisco	195	194	1	=
35	Bangkok	194	189	5	+1 ↑
36	Dublin	188	169	19	+1 ↑
37	Helsinki	187	191	-4	+2 ↑
38	Lisbon	187	189	-2	=
39	Munich	186	167	19	+2 ↑
40	New Delhi	178	169	9	-5 ↓
41	Oslo	177	179	-2	-1 ↓
42	Moscow	175	170	5	=
43	Athens	168	163	5	=
44	Montreal	167	163	4	+4 ↑
45	Prague	161	145	16	+1 ↑
46	Vancouver	151	139	12	+4 ↑
47	Geneva	149	150	-1	-2 ↓
48	Philadelphia	146	138	8	+1 ↑
49	Lima	145	139	6	-5 ↓
50	Shanghai	143	130	13	+3 ↑

## Interpreting the rankings – 2021 vs 2020

According to our latest Intellectual Capital Research all identified associations which organize large meetings have a total of over 27,000 members in their governing bodies, heralding from 351 different cities and 139 countries/territories. The first column presents the number of governing bodies (boards) of considered international associations with local members from each of the top 50 cities at the end of 2021, while the second presents this data at the end of 2020. Based on that we chart changes (year-on-year) in the number of local leaders presented on boards of these associations (third column) as well as in rankings (fourth column).

There are 13,488 members of governing bodies of all these associations from all top 50 cities, an increase of 437 compared to last year.

Looking at the whole list of the top 50 cities, we see that only Shanghai appeared as a new destination, replacing Brisbane, while all others remained the same. Furthermore, the top 10 are nearly all the same cities as in previous year with very similar rankings.

Year-on-year changes in the rankings are relatively small indicating: there are no rapid changes regarding the available intellectual capital of the destinations; and, this is a relatively stable resource that requires long-term efforts and a strategic approach.

## Interpreting the rankings – Cities

**London** again tops the list of cities with intellectual leaders represented in the largest number of governing bodies of identified international associations, with active members in 735 boards of associations, 14 more than the previous year.

Following cities at the top of the list are: **Paris** with local leaders in 644 international boards (16 more than last year); **Tokyo** with 509 (+21); **Beijing** with 438 (+10) and **New York** with 530 (56 less than last year). Due to this decrease, New York dropped to 5<sup>th</sup> place and Beijing moved past it up to 4<sup>th</sup>. Regardless of order, these five cities are key global knowledge hubs which concentrate over 10% of the total available intellectual capital, with 2,756 local leaders active.

New York experienced the biggest drop, while **Washington** and **Berlin** also had a significant decline which affected their rank. The destinations which experienced the greatest increase in the influence of their local leaders on boards compared to the previous year are: **Sydney** with its leaders active in 46 additional boards, followed by **Kuala Lumpur** and **Singapore** (with +34 more each) and **Seoul** (+28).

Although it is still early to say, this may indicate a slight increase in the influence of the leaders from the Asia-Pacific region. However, all cities listed among top 50 are important intellectual hubs at a global and even more so at a regional level.

We also present a list of the top 50 countries/territories in terms of presence of their knowledge leaders in the governing bodies of international associations which organize conventions for over 500 participants. This data is comparable to 2020 so we can follow year on year changes in the number of association boards with members from these destinations, as well as changes in ranking.

## Top 50 Countries

Rank	COUNTRY / Territory	# Boards with local members	# Boards with local members	# change	Rank change
		End of 2021	End of 2020		
1	USA	1556	1600	-44	=
2	Great Britain	1382	1344	38	=
3	Germany	1165	1130	35	=
4	France	1012	979	33	=
5	Italy	941	883	58	=
6	Australia	872	855	17	=
7	Japan	871	807	64	+1 ↑
8	Spain	843	812	31	-1 ↓
9	Canada	794	776	18	=
10	Netherlands	769	720	49	=
11	China	703	689	14	=
12	Switzerland	662	638	24	=
13	Brazil	622	593	29	=
14	India	576	546	30	=
15	Belgium	536	505	31	=
16	South Korea	521	480	41	=
17	Sweden	482	464	18	=
18	Austria	450	415	35	-1 ↓
19	Argentina	435	418	17	+1 ↑
20	Mexico	413	377	36	=
21	Singapore	366	332	34	+2 ↑
22	Portugal	348	333	15	+1 ↑
23	Denmark	346	316	30	+1 ↑
24	South Africa	342	335	7	-3 ↓
25	Chinese Taipei	309	293	16	=

Rank	COUNTRY / Territory	# Boards with local members	# Boards with local members	# change	Rank change
		End of 2021	End of 2020		
26	Hong Kong, SAR	298	276	22	+4 ↑
27	Poland	295	280	15	+1 ↑
28	Norway	290	285	5	-2 ↓
29	Malaysia	283	242	41	+6 ↑
30	Finland	282	281	1	-3 ↓
31	Greece	277	276	1	-2 ↓
32	Turkey	272	274	-2	-1 ↓
33	Chile	269	270	-1	-1 ↓
34	Colombia	261	257	4	-1 ↓
35	New Zealand	256	245	11	-1 ↓
36	Ireland	254	229	25	+1 ↑
37	Russia	242	239	3	-1 ↓
38	Thailand	226	218	8	=
39	Israel	207	197	10	=
40	Czech Republic	204	189	15	=
41	Indonesia	179	149	30	+3 ↑
42	Hungary	170	155	15	=
43	Peru	165	155	10	-2 ↓
44	Uruguay	162	151	11	-1 ↓
45	Philippines	159	137	22	=
46	Romania	144	127	17	=
47	Nigeria	128	107	21	+6 ↑
48	Kenya	121	105	16	+3 ↑
49	Croatia	117	113	4	-2 ↓
50	Egypt	115	110	5	-2 ↓



## Interpreting the rankings – 2021 vs 2020

The total number of members of governing bodies of all these associations from all top 50 countries is 22,692, which is an increase of 979 comparing to the last year.

Two new countries, both from Africa, appeared among the top 50, namely Nigeria and Kenya, replacing Slovenia and the UAE. Although at the bottom of the list, we now have three African countries among the top 50, which may indicate an increase in the number of associations and the meetings business on this continent.

In the case of countries, changes in the ranking of destinations are even smaller and rarer, despite changes in absolute numbers. Thus, almost half of the destinations have the same rank as last year, while among top 20 destinations, only two small changes in the ranking occurred - this is expected as association board mandates last several years.

### Case Study: Italian Knowledge Leaders

The Italian meetings industry recognized the fundamental role of intellectual capital and established a specific program, named **Italian Knowledge Leaders**, with the aim to create a strong partnership to promote Italy as a country of science, innovation and creativity. The program seeks to highlight knowledge and scientific achievements for the public audience and create a formalized network of Italian scientists and professionals elected to run international associations in their business areas and scientific fields.

## Interpreting the rankings – Countries

**The United States** once again tops the list of countries with local intellectual leaders in 1,556 boards and committees of international associations which organize large conferences for over 500 participants. However, the US was the only country to experience a decline (in the presence in of 44 association boards), a relatively small decrease of only 2.5% in relation to the large influence of the US within international associations.

**Great Britain** follows with its knowledge leaders active on boards of 1,382 of these international associations (an annual increase of 38) and then **Germany** with 1,165 (+35) and **France** with 1,012 (+33). These are the four most developed countries in terms of available intellectual capital with their association leaders in governing bodies of over 1,000 international associations which organize large conventions.

The largest increase was achieved by **Japan** (with a presence in additional 64 governing bodies), surpassing **Spain** and taking seventh place. **Italy** is highly ranked in 5<sup>th</sup> place globally, with a strong increase in presence in an additional 58 boards of international associations. **The Netherlands** sit at 10<sup>th</sup> place with an increase of presence in 49 boards. Asia Pacific destinations also achieved a significant growth in the presence of local leaders in boards of international associations, with **South Korea** and **Malaysia** (with 41 additional boards each), **Singapore** (with 34) and **Indonesia** (with 30).

# Harnessing Ratio

GainingEdge developed the concept of Harnessing Ratio to help meetings destinations assess how effectively they are leveraging their intellectual capital, i.e. how successfully they are engaging their local leaders to bid for association meetings and bring business to their shores. We present here the top 50 destinations by their available intellectual capital and their Harnessing Ratios.

## Top 50 cities

Rank	CITY	# Boards with local members	Intl. Meetings (500+) since 2018	Harnessing Ratio
1	London	735	126	17.1%
2	Paris	644	153	23.8%
3	Tokyo	509	82	16.1%
4	Beijing	438	100	22.8%
5	New York	430	39	9.1%
6	Seoul	403	156	38.7%
7	Sydney	382	107	28.0%
8	Singapore	366	186	50.8%
9	Madrid	331	130	39.3%
10	Vienna	319	175	54.9%
11	Mexico City	317	45	14.2%
12	Melbourne	314	118	37.6%
13	Barcelona	313	182	58.1%
14	Sao Paulo	313	34	10.9%
15	Washington	308	47	15.3%
16	Buenos Aires	301	94	31.2%
17	Hong Kong	298	79	26.5%
18	Boston	278	47	16.9%
19	Amsterdam	270	120	44.4%
20	Zurich	265	21	7.9%
21	Milan	257	95	37.0%
22	Brussels	256	64	25.0%
23	Los Angeles	254	19	7.5%
24	Berlin	252	163	64.7%
25	Rome	248	95	38.3%

Rank	CITY	# Boards with local members	Intl. Meetings (500+) since 2018	Harnessing Ratio
26	Toronto	246	87	35.4%
27	Taipei	242	111	45.9%
28	Kuala Lumpur	235	104	44.3%
29	Santiago	231	46	19.9%
30	Stockholm	218	62	28.4%
31	Chicago	211	59	28.0%
32	Copenhagen	210	132	62.9%
33	Bogota	197	27	13.7%
34	San Francisco	195	32	16.4%
35	Bangkok	194	123	63.4%
36	Dublin	188	154	81.9%
37	Helsinki	187	74	39.6%
38	Lisbon	187	153	81.8%
39	Munich	186	43	23.1%
40	New Delhi	178	41	23.0%
41	Oslo	177	42	23.7%
42	Moscow	175	18	10.3%
43	Athens	168	103	61.3%
44	Montreal	167	129	77.2%
45	Prague	161	153	95.0%
46	Vancouver	151	104	68.9%
47	Geneva	149	51	34.2%
48	Philadelphia	146	25	17.1%
49	Lima	145	47	32.4%
50	Shanghai	143	74	51.7%

## Harnessing Ratio

The Harnessing Ratio analysis is based on the assumption that cities with more leaders active on boards of international associations will engage these leaders to bring more meetings to the city. It is estimated that the average term on boards lasts for four years, so in that period, these leaders are in a position to promote their own city as a potential convention host, and also able to influence the selection of future meeting host destinations.

Thus, the first column presents the number of association boards with leaders from each city, while the second presents the number of associations meetings held in or booked for that city. This includes all association meetings with over 500 participants, which have been organized in the last four years, but also those upcoming if that decision has been already made. These include those which have been postponed due to Covid-19 or held as virtual and hybrid events.

The Harnessing Ratio is obtained by comparing these numbers, as the ratio of the number of international association meetings (organized and booked over the last four years for over 500 participants) with data on number of board members in these associations for each city. A destination can host international meetings even if it does not have active board members, or engage its association leaders. However, the aim of our analysis is to help cities quantify how effectively they are leveraging this key resource and to understand how much capital they have at their disposal. Based on its Harnessing Ratio, a city can understand the available business potential and how to activate it through smart bidding, advanced marketing programs and destination branding.

## Interpreting the city rankings

Among the top 50 cities in terms of available intellectual capital in associations that organize large meetings, **Prague** again achieved the highest Harnessing Ratio of 95%, surpassing last year's 89.7%. Prague is followed by two other European cities that also improved their results, namely **Dublin** with 81.9% and **Lisbon** with 81.8%.

Although many cities put in effort to engage their association leaders, attractive meeting destinations with proportionally fewer leaders on association boards may find it relatively easier to achieve a high Harnessing Ratio. Thus, the results of the cities from the first half of the list should be especially appreciated. Among European destinations, it is worth noting the Harnessing Ratio achieved by **Berlin** at 64.7%, followed by **Barcelona** at 58.1% and **Vienna** at 54.9%. These are top meetings cities, and these results highlight the source of their strength. A similar conclusion is reached when looking at other regions around the world, so **Bangkok** (63.4%) stands out as the Asia-Pacific destination with the highest Harnessing Ratio, while in North America it is **Montreal** (77.2%) and **Vancouver** (68.9%).

Overall, over 50% is considered a strong Harnessing Ratio while under 20% indicates there much room for improvement. However, a high Harnessing Ratio can also indicate upcoming challenges as the available intellectual capital is depleted or 'locked up' and so it is necessary to take strategic actions to renew it. Conversely, a low Harnessing Ratio can point to strong market potential the destination may have not harnessed in the previous period.

# Intellectual Capital Engagement

## Intellectual Capital Engagement

One of the main characteristics of top-class meeting cities is how they actively engage their local association leaders. If a destination wants to compete successfully, it will need to engage its local leaders to bid for international meetings. This means the city should explore who are the local leaders with high international reputation and how to engage them. Therefore, we have established this research as a continuous effort so we can provide insights into available resources to all cities which are interested in this information, and we also provide advice on how to use it.

There are two key strategic approaches for each city which arise from our Harnessing Ratio analysis:

- 1. If the destination has a relatively low Harnessing Ratio** - there is a large gap between the available intellectual capital and leveraging level so action should be taken to increase its capital use. This leveraging would include developing bidding skills and smart bidding strategies, increasing the bidding team, improving Ambassadors program or Event Support & Subvention program, etc.
- 2. If the destination has a relatively high Harnessing ratio** - the destination is doing well in the process of engaging local leaders to bring the business to the city. However, this can lead to a capital depletion, so it is important to work on constant renewal of this key resource. This renewal includes developing Association programs, Meeting Legacy and Talent Attraction programs, and activities focused on supporting leaders to expand their presence or profile at the international level.

## Intellectual Capital Segmentation

Ideally, destinations should explore and gain full insights into the available intellectual capital, obtaining information about all local leaders who are active in international associations as members of governing bodies. This research should be updated as such terms of office are not permanent and change regularly.

However, destinations often have limited internal capabilities and resources to engage a large number of knowledge leaders in the short term. Furthermore, international associations organize conferences of various sizes, and destinations may not have sufficient capacity to host all of them. Cities with large meeting capacities may not be interested in small events, while some cities are primarily interested in small and mid-size meetings.

With this in view, we expanded our research to obtain data about the members of boards of international associations which also organize smaller meetings (200-499 participants), thereby providing value to all destinations interested in improving their business.

With this data we can segment the available intellectual capital for each city by the size of the meetings, providing insights into the available intellectual capital in the segment in which they are particularly interested. This way, even destinations with fewer resources can focus on priority business segments and achieve improved results.

Here is our list of top 50 cities in terms of local intellectual leaders on boards of international associations that organize meetings for over 200 participants, as well as numbers per different segments (200-499; 500-999 and 1,000+ participants). Some cities have a relatively larger presence on the boards of associations that organize smaller meetings, so the ranking of these destinations changes somewhat with new destinations appearing (Ottawa, Warsaw, Brasilia and Budapest).

## Segmentation Top 50 Cities

Rank	CITY	# Boards with local members in associations with meetings of various sizes			
		200-499 pax	500-999 pax	1000+ pax	Total
1	London	1162	418	317	1897
2	Paris	1018	366	278	1662
3	Tokyo	825	301	208	1334
4	Beijing	718	255	183	1156
5	New York	571	244	186	1001
6	Madrid	630	190	141	961
7	Seoul	533	223	180	936
8	Berlin	682	157	95	934
9	Washington	555	171	137	863
10	Singapore	483	198	168	849
11	Vienna	480	197	122	799
12	Sydney	397	213	169	779
13	Rome	526	146	102	774
14	Hong Kong	439	170	128	737
15	Amsterdam	442	166	104	712
16	Melbourne	366	162	152	680
17	Brussel	423	147	109	679
18	Stockholm	447	141	77	665
19	Buenos Aires	362	179	122	663
20	Mexico City	345	177	140	662
21	Barcelona	322	181	132	635
22	Boston	352	128	150	630
23	Zurich	361	157	108	626
24	Copenhagen	366	135	75	576
25	Taipei	333	131	111	575

Rank	CITY	# Boards with local members in associations with meetings of various sizes			
		200-499 pax	500-999 pax	1000+ pax	Total
26	Milan	302	136	121	559
27	Sao Paulo	239	159	154	552
28	Helsinki	354	109	78	541
29	Oslo	364	109	68	541
30	Lisbon	335	107	80	522
31	Toronto	261	130	116	507
32	Santiago	274	138	93	505
33	Moscow	316	108	67	491
34	Athens	313	89	79	481
35	Los Angeles	221	144	110	475
36	Dublin	281	111	77	469
37	Kuala Lumpur	223	126	109	458
38	Munich	272	107	79	458
39	Bangkok	259	121	73	453
40	Chicago	235	121	90	446
41	Bogota	229	104	93	426
42	Ottawa	295	84	43	422
43	San Francisco	204	112	83	399
44	Prague	227	99	62	388
45	Warsaw	252	73	50	375
46	Brasilia	286	56	17	359
47	Montreal	191	85	82	358
48	New Delhi	175	93	85	353
49	Budapest	217	80	54	351
50	Shanghai	201	93	50	344

## Key Industry Sectors

The most advanced destinations involve the meetings business in the broader concept of economic development, by focusing on key industry sectors in which they have comparative advantages. The segmentation of available intellectual capital can also be done according to the scientific fields the local leaders are engaged as well as the industry sectors they are related to. Insights into the areas of expertise of local knowledge leaders can help destinations understand better which sectors are rich in intellectual capital.

Based on such analysis of the intellectual capital and insights into scientific fields in which their knowledge leaders are internationally recognized, destinations can get information about the sectors in which they have strengths. This is the initial step that cities need to take in order to develop their Intellectual Capital Strategy.

By identifying sectors that the destination wants to support and promote, convention bureaus may choose to bid for meetings of associations that can strongly contribute to the development of these sectors. In these cases, the meetings business takes a lead in the strategic implementation of the city's economic development, while the convention bureau and local industry establish long-term partnerships with public authorities, economic development institutions, chambers of commerce, etc. As such, we strongly advise destinations to undertake this analysis and get deep insights into the scientific fields and industry sectors their knowledge leaders come from.

## Priority Leads and Meeting Ambassadors

Meetings destinations have to increase their conversion rate, which means to increase the number of bid wins vs total bids submitted. In order to achieve this, destinations should undertake 'smart' bid strategies. A very effective tool is to engage local leaders with a strong reputation to support their bids. Thus, deep insights from local leaders who are members of boards of international associations (or in the positions of president, president elect, treasurer or secretary general) will significantly increase the chances to win bids in the near future.

Conducting such detailed research can help destinations and deliver priority business leads:

- Business profile of local leaders - membership in the association, business or scientific field, title, as well as contact information
- Event summary - name of the event, industry sector and size of delegates

Many destinations develop a Meeting Ambassador Program, and while these ambassadors are strong supporters, it is also necessary to activate new ones. Analyzing intellectual capital available can point out key leaders who can make Ambassador Programs more effective.

If the convention bureau and the local industry have a strong and creative collaboration, they can develop advanced marketing programs which will be significantly improved through active engagement of their local knowledge leaders.

# Destination Intellectual Capital Study

## Destination Intellectual Capital Study

The Destination Intellectual Capital Study is a product *GainingEdge* offers to convention destinations eager to improve business development and destination marketing activities. It consists of two key phases:

### I. Intellectual Capital Assessment

The study provides information about available intellectual capital and business potential of the destination, including:

- the total number of local leaders active in boards of international associations, with their profiles and areas of expertise.
- how well the destination is engaging its thought leaders (Harnessing Ratio), which may be obtained from research data for the destination, but a deeper analysis can also be undertaken to determine its position to primary competitors.

### II. Strategic Advice

The second phase of the study provides strategic advice about further actions which should be undertaken:

- If the city has relatively low harnessing ratio it should focus to improve its bidding skills. This includes deep research and development business leads, bid intelligence assistance and smart bid strategies with the aim to increase conversion ratio.
- If the city has relatively high harnessing ratio, then it should undertake actions aimed to increase presence of local leaders in international associations and business and scientific networks.

## Applications



# Cities to Watch

## Sydney

Intellectual Capital (500+) global ranking:	7 <sup>th</sup>
No of boards with local members (2021):	382
Change (2021 vs 2020):	+46
Number of conventions (500+) since 2018:	107
Harnessing Ratio (2021):	28.0%
*GE Competitive Index rank (score):	31 <sup>st</sup> (524.5)



Pixabay

Sydney ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the world with local leaders active in 382 international association boards at the end of 2021. Further, Sydney experienced the strongest growth among the top 50 cities with its leaders represented in an additional 46 association boards compared to the end of 2020.

However, with 107 international conventions hosted or booked since January 2018, Sydney has a Harnessing Ratio of 28.0% indicating solid potential to better leverage their available intellectual capital.

## New York

Intellectual Capital (500+) global ranking:	5 <sup>th</sup>
No of boards with local members (2021):	430
Change (2021 vs 2020):	-56
Number of conventions (500+) since 2018:	39
Harnessing Ratio (2021):	9.1%
*GE Competitive Index rank (score):	2 <sup>nd</sup> (695.5)



Pixabay

New York is among the top ranked cities with local leaders in 430 international association boards, placing it 5<sup>th</sup> best globally. A very low Harnessing Ratio of 9.1%, indicates enormous potential for New York to engage its leaders to bring international meetings to the city.

As the 2<sup>nd</sup> most competitive city globally (as per the GE Competitive Index), New York could pay more attention on this key resource, especially bearing in mind the large decline in presence of its leaders on boards of international associations.

## Berlin

Intellectual Capital (500+) global ranking:	24 <sup>th</sup>
No of boards with local members (2021):	252
Change (2021 vs 2020):	-9
Number of conventions (500+) since 2018:	163
Harnessing Ratio (2021):	64.7%
*GE Competitive Index rank (score):	15 <sup>th</sup> (596.1)



Pixabay

Berlin boasts local leaders active in 252 boards of international associations which organize large conventions and ranks 24<sup>th</sup> globally and 9<sup>th</sup> in Europe by available intellectual capital. The city should note it has experienced a decline in presence of its leaders in governing bodies of international associations.

However, as a top European meeting destination, Berlin achieves a very high Harnessing Ratio of 64.7%, a source of its great results and strong competitiveness.

\* Download the *GainingEdge* International Destination Competitive Index 2021 report [here](#).





## Prague

Intellectual Capital (500+) global ranking:	45 <sup>th</sup>
No of boards with local members (2021):	161
Change (2021 vs 2020):	+16
Number of conventions (500+) since 2018:	153
Harnessing Ratio (2021):	95.0%
*GE Competitive Index rank (score):	45 <sup>th</sup> (474.2)



Pixabay

Prague is once again the city with the highest Harnessing Ratio among the top 50 destinations in the world. With 153 international conventions already hosted or booked since January 2018, Prague has a Harnessing Ratio of 95.0%.

This result indicates very strong bidding skills for the city and strong collaboration among local players and knowledge leaders. The high Ratio also explains the great results the city achieves given its relatively lower competitiveness (GE Competitive Index ranking of 45) compared to leading European cities.

\* Download the *GainingEdge* International Destination Competitive Index 2021 report [here](#).



## Bangkok

Intellectual Capital (500+) global ranking:	35 <sup>th</sup>
No of boards with local members (2021):	194
Change (2021 vs 2020):	+5
Number of conventions (500+) since 2018:	123
Harnessing Ratio (2021):	63.4%
*GE Competitive Index rank (score):	6 <sup>th</sup> (642.1)



Pixabay

With local intellectual leaders active in 194 international association boards, Bangkok ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in the world, and lags behind competitors from the region by available intellectual capital.

However, Bangkok has the highest Harnessing Ratio in the region of Asia-Pacific of 63.4%. The city achieves great results showing strong commitment to conference business. There is a risk of capital depletion so action should be undertaken to prevent this as the annual increase in presence of its leaders in association boards is currently not sufficient.

## Montreal

Intellectual Capital (500+) global ranking:	44 <sup>th</sup>
No of boards with local members (2021):	167
Change (2021 vs 2020):	+ 4
Number of conventions (500+) since 2018:	129
Harnessing Ratio (2021):	77.2%
*GE Competitive Index rank (score):	29 <sup>th</sup> (532.2)



Pixabay

Montreal ranks 44<sup>th</sup> globally with 167 local intellectual leaders presented in governing bodies of international associations which organize large conventions.

With 129 large international conventions already hosted or booked since January 2018, the city has the highest Harnessing Ratio (at 77.2%) among North American destinations. This result indicates a very sophisticated local industry and strong destination competitiveness - the city is ranked as 29<sup>th</sup> most competitive globally in our latest Destination Competitive Index.

# Methodology

Since 2020, the *GainingEdge* has continually researched the Intellectual Capital of convention destinations by the analysis of international association leaderships and regularly update this data. Through our GEAR unit (*GainingEdge* Analysis & Research), we publish an annual report. The main goal of the research is to identify the relative strengths of destinations in terms of number of their local thought leaders who are active members of governing bodies of international associations.

**Subject:** International associations which organize meetings for over 200 participants (according to ICCA data)

**Volume:** over 9,500 international associations and their governing bodies (mostly executive boards)

**Source:** ICCA database and web sites of identified international associations

**Key insights:** The key findings which have been obtained for destinations around the world are:

- Total number of governing bodies of considered international associations with active presence of local leaders from each destination.
- Total number of international association meetings organized or booked in the last four years (2018-2021).

This research and data enables us to develop an analysis of relevant ratios, as well as ranking lists of top cities and top countries/territories in terms of available intellectual capital per various business segments.

The last review of the data occurred in late February 2022, so any minor changes in the period since will not change the conclusions of our research.

GEAR tracks and updates its intellectual capital database and we can support destinations who are interested to get more detailed information like profiles, business segmentations and priority leads. Our global report on Leveraging Intellectual Capital of the top 50 conference destinations is published once a year, based on the data obtained in the last quarter of the year.

# About Us

## About *GainingEdge*

*GainingEdge* is a specialist consulting firm advising primarily to the convention and meetings market since 2004. We specialize in issues related to establishing and managing convention bureaus, advice on the development and expansion of convention centers as well as the broader aspects of the international meetings industry.

Our clients include convention and visitor bureaus/destination marketing organizations, national tourism agencies and convention and exhibition center developers and operators.

### Our expertise:

- Destination Advisory
- Convention & Exhibition Centre Advisory
- In-Market Sales Representation
- Association Advisory

### ***GainingEdge* Analysis & Research (GEAR)**

*GainingEdge* Analysis & Research (GEAR) is *GainingEdge*'s internal division, formed with the aim to provide quantitative analysis on destinations competitiveness, their resources for success, as well as reporting on the global meetings industry. GEAR is involved in projects related to the analysis of destination competitiveness and development of customized Destination Competitive Index reports for clients. Another global report GEAR produces is the analysis and research of destinations intellectual capital and how well (or not) they are leveraging on this competitive advantage. It provides valuable insights cities should use to engage their local association executives who are leaders in international associations.

## About the Author

### **Milos Milovanovic**

Head of *GainingEdge* Analysis & Research Unit (GEAR)



Milos Milovanovic is a *GainingEdge* consultant, with deep expertise in the activation and development of convention bureaus as well as destination marketing in Europe and Middle East regions. He has 15 years of experience in the meetings & conventions industry and has consulted many destinations around the world. In *GainingEdge*, Milos is responsible for the development of research & analysis projects as Head of *GainingEdge* Analysis & Research Department.

Milos is author of the Destination Competitive Index, a benchmarking tool for international convention destinations, published annually since 2018. He is also author of the Leveraging Intellectual Capital global report, aimed at identifying the relative strengths of destinations in terms of the presence of their local leaders in the governing bodies of international associations.

### How can we help?

The Destination Intellectual Capital research is a tool developed with the aim to help destinations to engage their intellectual capital to bring the business as well as to brand the city as knowledge destinations. Using the Destination Intellectual Capital research, we can help destinations to:

- Identify key leaders active on boards of international associations
- Implement smart bidding strategies
- Identify key business sectors and scientific areas at the destination
- Implement or improve effective Meetings Ambassador Program
- Initiate advanced marketing and business development programs

- Destination Advisory
- Convention & Exhibition Centre Advisory
- In-Market Sales Representation
- Association Advisory



#### CONTACT US

*GainingEdge* Head Office  
MELBOURNE, Australia

T: +61 3 9502 0655  
@: info@gainingedge.com

30A Eliza Street  
Black Rock, VIC 3193  
AUSTRALIA

*GainingEdge* Analysis  
& Research

Milos Milovanovic  
Head of GEAR

T: +381 63 54 53 44  
Skype: miloshml  
@: milos@gainingedge.com

visit [www.gainingedge.com](http://www.gainingedge.com)