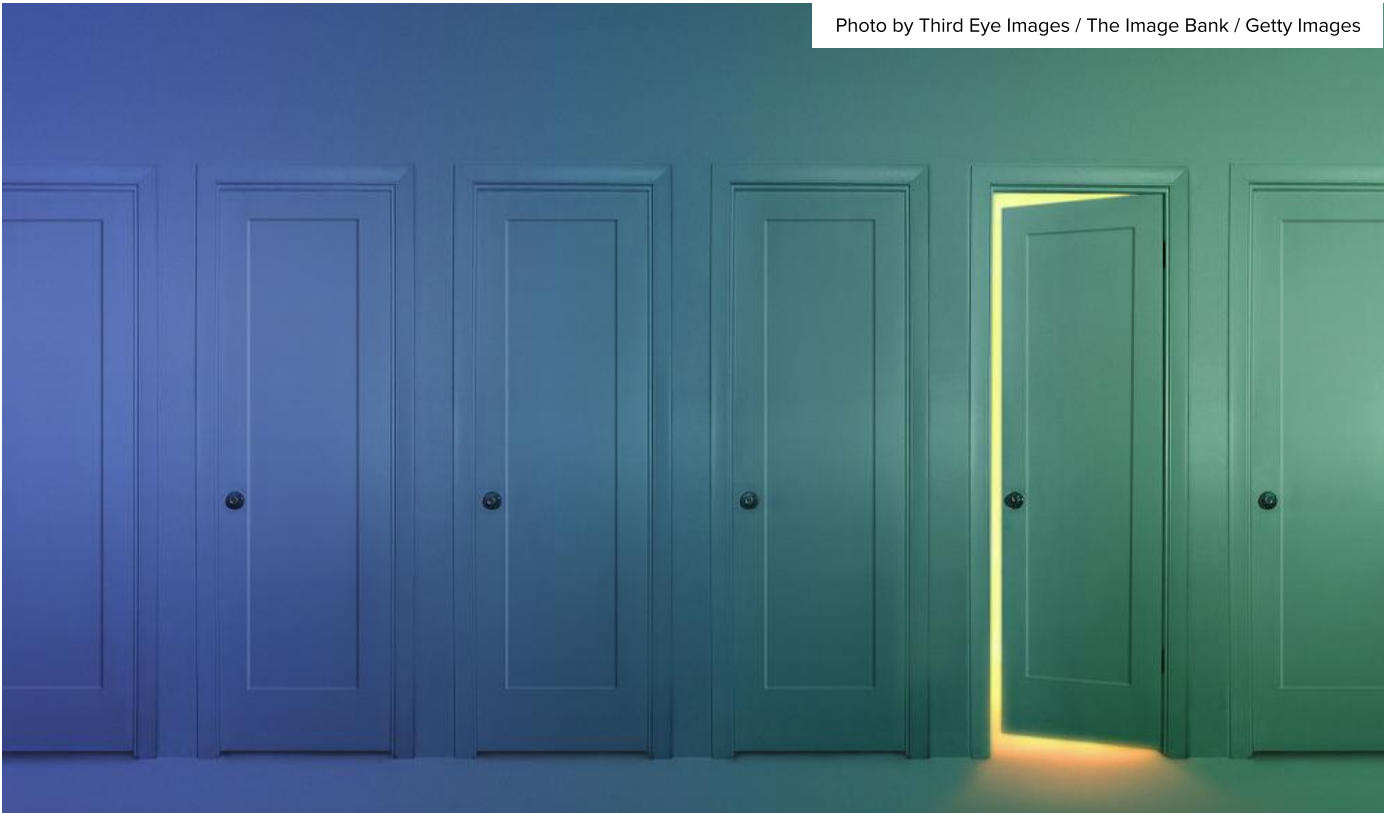


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Event Industry Opens Up in England, Europe

Event pros in England and Germany are watching as business comes back, but are wary of how attendees will react.

Lisa Hurley | Jul 21, 2020

While much of the U.S. event industry remains mired in the COVID crisis, the story is different across the pond.

Business events and conferences can get rolling in England starting Oct. 1, provided infection rates don't rise, the government announced last week. Soon,

officials will work with organizers and venues to launch pilot events to determine how to conduct indoor events safely.

Germany has been permitting events since June. In Berlin specifically, events of up to 500 can take place starting Aug. 1, with counts rising to as many as 750 on Sept. 1 and up to 1,000 on Oct 1.

Governments in both countries stress the need for event organizers to follow strict safety guidelines. Find the English guidelines [here](#). Find the Berlin guidelines [here](#).

GRATEFUL FOR GOOD NEWS The event industry welcomes the good news.

“We are so grateful that live events on a smaller scale have been possible again in Germany since June,” says Christian Seidenstuecker, CEO of Bremen-based JOKE Event group and president of ILEA Europe. “We are currently experiencing the transition to a new normality in live communication, in which new and familiar event formats are mixed,” he adds. “The more practical experience participants and event organizers gain with event security in the COVID-19 context, the more will be possible--another milestone will certainly be quick tests at events, which we are currently helping to develop for a pilot project called ‘Back To Live.’ Based on the gained knowledge and experiences, we will implement further live events for business customers this autumn.”

“Our VOK DAMS Berlin Office is looking forward to welcoming the world,” says Colja Dams, head of international event producer VOK DAMS . With operations dotted around the globe, he sees the event world slowly waking up. “After China opened up again for events in June, European countries are following in July 2020, and VOK DAMS North America is already working on events scheduled in the U.S. from late October 2020.”

TIME FOR CAUTION But event professionals are proceeding with caution.

“The fact is that nobody wants to be the first ‘super spreader,’ therefore, nobody is making any major moves so far,” notes consultant Matthias Kindler, The Kindler Co. , Munich. “‘Everything’ needs to be digital, but companies are slowly learning what works in cyberspace and what does not. We will see a co-existence of analog

events and digital ones in the future--which might be step towards better events that deliver.”

The event community in England is cautious as well.

“The British event industry welcomed the news that small events can start to take place soon but are admittedly nervous as to what this will actually mean in practice in view of the restrictions of social-distancing rules,” notes Anita Watson, head of Incredible Artists in North Yorkshire. “We have found that some of the small, high-end European events have started to come back in for this autumn, which is encouraging, whilst the British market appears to be taking longer to decide when best to re-open. The question appears to be more, ‘Will delegates and audiences feel safe to attend?’”

Event pros must cope with skittish clients.

STRESSFUL SITUATION London-based wedding planner Siobhan Craven-Robins saw all her 2020 weddings postponed till next year, while other planners in her market are seeing a mixed reaction. “Some [couples] have scaled down in order to be able to have their wedding now, some are marrying but planning a reception next year, and many are still postponing or even cancelling as they still want to the wedding they were planning or have tired of the waiting and speculation,” she explains. “It has been a stressful time for industry and clients alike. I know some vendors are receiving new enquiries for next year, but they are slow as most couples are waiting to see what further developments there are.”

Jon Noonan, group sales director of big English rental company Thorns Group , is hoping for the best.

“We are delighted that the government has made its announcement last week, albeit later than anticipated, that business events can start again from 1st October,” he says. “It is with slight trepidation that we start to plan the autumn season, with the impending second wave--it is with cautious optimism that we proceed. Fingers crossed 2020 isn't a total write-off!”

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