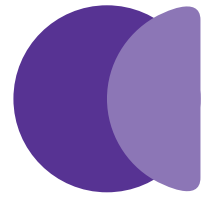




State Tourism Agency  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan



azerbaijan  
TOURISM BOARD

# Azerbaijan

## *Business Events Strategy*

### 2024-2026

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## Introduction

With its modern infrastructure, state-of-the-art meeting facilities, variety of accommodation options, remarkable venues, high-profile heritage sites, and authentic cultural experiences, Azerbaijan has all the necessary elements to increase its competitiveness in the global meetings industry and establish itself as a compelling business events destination.

The Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB) Business Events Unit has been established to bring together public and private entities to promote Azerbaijan as a premium event destination and to develop the country's business events industry.

Two key achievements to date include the creation of the Business Events Industry Alliance (BEIA) as a mechanism to attract association and corporate business events to Azerbaijan, and the country's entry into the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

## Role of ATB Business Events Unit

The role of the ATB Business Events unit is to:

- Promote Azerbaijan as a premium business events destination through B2B exhibitions, workshops, forums, familiarisation (FAM) trips, and site inspections.
- Provide leadership in the marketing of Azerbaijan and the generation of business events sales.
- Identify potential events to be hosted in Azerbaijan.
- Generate leads and connect these leads with industry professionals.
- Partner with national and international business events industry professionals.
- Serve as the focal point for industry activities.
- Provide services that enhance the quality of the delegates' experiences.
- Offer specialised services to improve the effectiveness and profitability of the industry.
- Coordinate the research, collection, and dissemination of relevant information.

## Business Events Sector

ATB has been a member of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) since 2019. According to the latest ICCA report, Azerbaijan is ranked 89th based on the number of association events held annually.

Azerbaijan strives to highlight its global potential by hosting prominent events, notably **the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change:**

### In Solidarity for a Green World

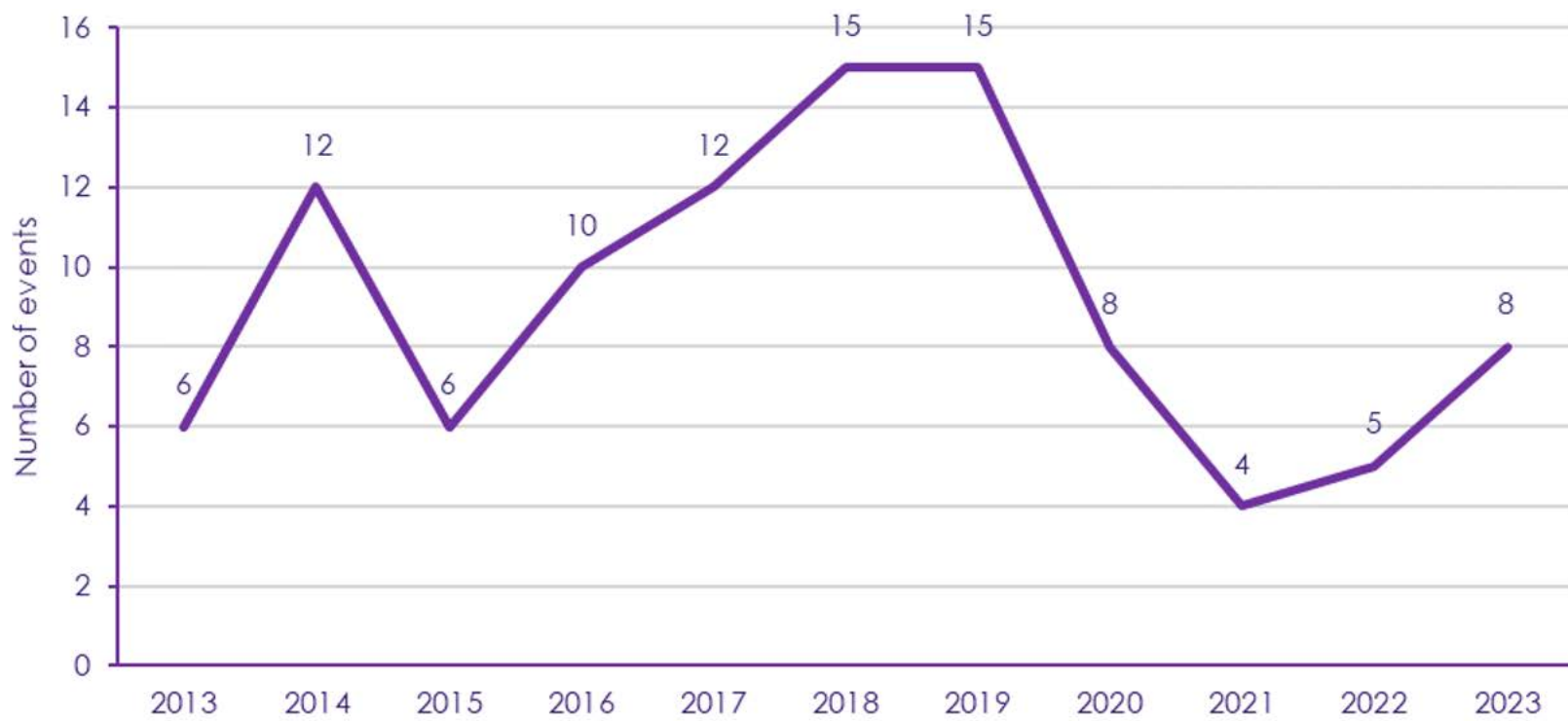
#### **COP29: Building a Climate-Resilient Future in Baku**

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) is set to take place in November 2024, with Azerbaijan presiding over the event. Baku, known for its vibrant cultural heritage and successful track record of hosting international events, will welcome global leaders, climate experts, and activists to the Baku Stadium for this crucial gathering.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is an annual event organised by UN Climate Change, with the presidency rotating among the five recognised UN regions. This structure ensures a diverse and inclusive approach to tackling climate change, leveraging the unique strengths and perspectives of each region.

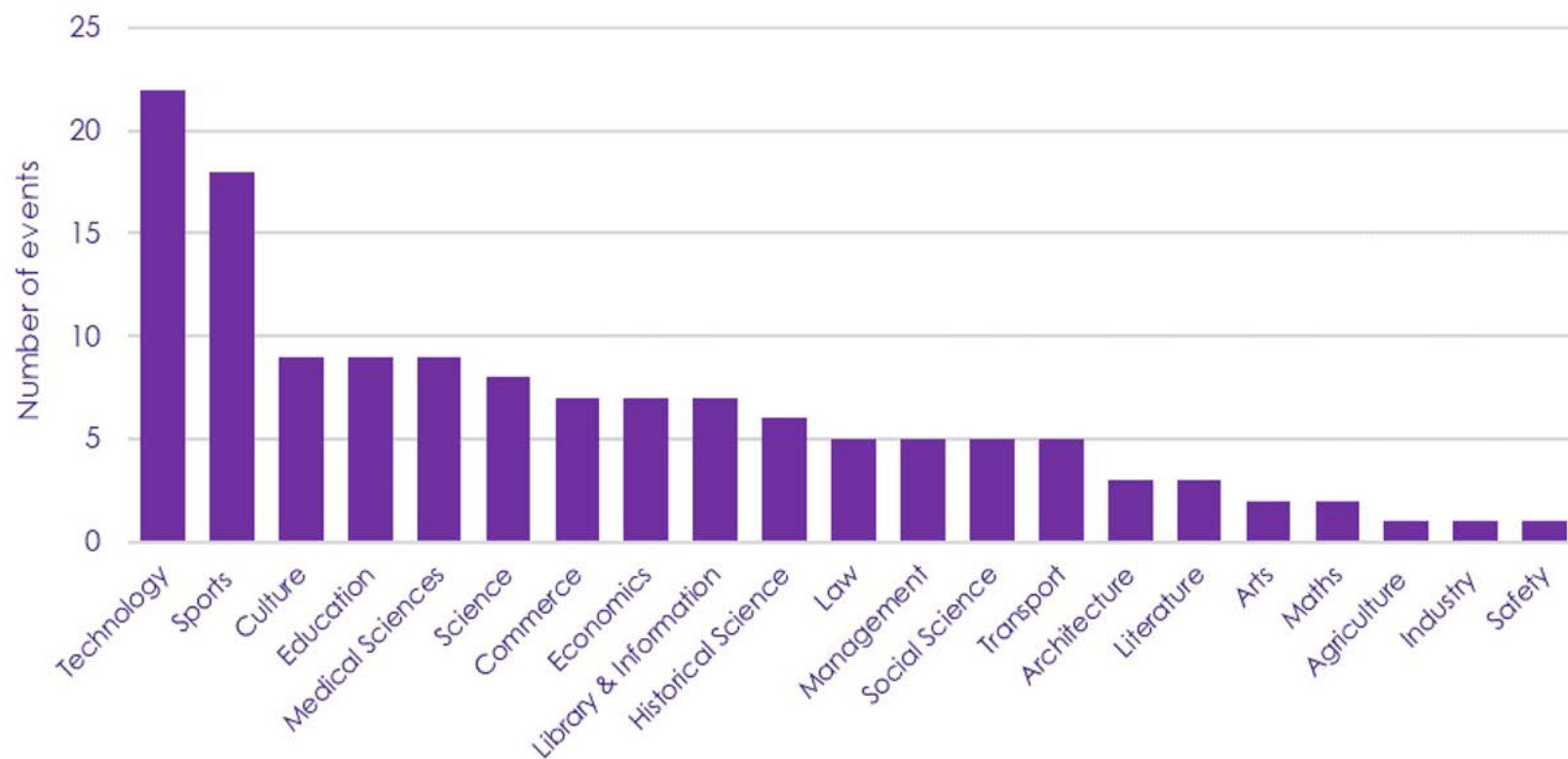
Over the past ten years, Azerbaijan has hosted a total of 135 association events, representing an overall average of nine association events per year. In the two years before the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan reached a peak of 15 association events per year, though the pandemic caused a significant decline in the number of association events held in the country. Since then, the sector has been on a positive path to recovery, with year-on-year increases. The number of association events recorded in 2023 was around 53 percent of the peaks observed in 2018–2019.

**Figure 1. International associations' meetings held in Azerbaijan**



Between 2013 and 2023, the greatest number of association events in Azerbaijan were related to the technology sector (22 events, 16.3 percent), followed by the sports sector (18 events, 13.3 percent), the culture sector (9 events, 6.7 percent), and the education sector (9 events, 6.7 percent).

**Figure 2. Fields of association meetings in Azerbaijan in 2013-2023**



## Business Events Resources

- **Enabling Organisations**

Azerbaijan has much of the necessary organisational infrastructure required for a successful and competitive business events industry, including national tourism authorities such as the State Tourism Agency (STA) and the ATB, as well as industry associations like the Association of Travel Agencies of Azerbaijan (ATAA), the Azerbaijan Hotel Association (AHA), and the Azerbaijan Tour Guide Association (ATGA).

- **Accommodation**

Accommodation plays a pivotal role in the success of business events in Azerbaijan, offering attendees comfort and convenience amidst the country's diverse cultural backdrop. The strategic selection of accommodations is essential for ensuring a seamless experience for participants, reflecting a commitment to high standards of hospitality while showcasing Azerbaijan's unique cultural heritage.

In Baku and the Absheron Peninsula, there are a total of 349 accommodation units comprising 14,950 rooms, featuring world-known international hotel brands such as the Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, JW Marriott, Fairmont, Hilton, InterContinental, Hyatt Regency, Marriott, Holiday Inn, Courtyard by Marriott, and Radisson.

Among these accommodation options, there are numerous MICE-oriented properties with excellent meeting facilities, including meeting and conference rooms, as well as the major ballrooms with seating capacities of up to 1,300.

- **Venues**

Venues are a fundamental element in the orchestration of successful business events, providing the essential infrastructure and ambiance necessary for productive engagements. In Azerbaijan, the selection of suitable venues is particularly significant, given the country's rich cultural heritage and rapidly developing infrastructure. The strategic choice of venues not only enhances the logistical aspects of an event but also enriches the overall experience for attendees.

Over the last decade, various state-of-the-art venues with the capacity to host large, medium, and small-scale events have been constructed, including the largest multifunctional venue in the Caucasus region, the Baku Convention Centre, which can accommodate up to 3,500 guests, and the architectural masterpiece, the Heydar Aliyev Centre, with its main auditorium seating 1,000 guests.

- **DMCs Specialising in MICE**

Destination Management Companies (DMCs) specialising in MICE play an indispensable role in the planning and execution of business events. In Azerbaijan, the expertise of these DMCs is particularly valuable, given the country's growing status as a premier destination for international business gatherings. Currently, approximately 20 agencies professionally operate as DMCs, focusing on providing MICE services for the destination's target markets.

- **Restaurants and Catering**

The quality and variety of restaurants and catering services are critical to the success of business events, significantly enhancing the overall guest experience. In Azerbaijan, renowned for its rich culinary heritage and diverse gastronomic offerings, selecting the right food and beverage (F&B) partners is essential. This not only ensures that participants of business events enjoy high-quality meals but also provides an opportunity to showcase the unique flavours of Azerbaijani cuisine. Restaurants and catering companies operating in Azerbaijan offer a wide range of national and international cuisine, addressing dietary preferences and requirements, including halal, vegan, vegetarian, kosher, and specialty cuisines.

- **Transportation**

Facilitating smooth and timely logistics of delegates between accommodation, venues, and other event locations is one of the crucial factors in the organisation of business events. Ensuring reliable, comfortable, and accessible transportation options is essential for enhancing the overall guest experience and optimising event logistics.

- **Business Event Products**

Business events products and services ensure that events are not only well-organised but also memorable, engaging, and impactful for all participants. By offering tailored solutions that cater to the unique needs and goals of each event, businesses in this sector contribute to enhancing the overall event experience, ensuring successful outcomes and lasting impressions.

## Strategic Framework

The overall goal for business events, both corporate and association, in Azerbaijan will be achieved by realising the following objectives:

- Increase the profile of Azerbaijan as an attractive destination for holding business events.
- Attract and increase the number of both international and local business events in Azerbaijan, including in its regional areas.
- Foster the development of sustainable, high-quality attractions that engage business events in Azerbaijan.
- Deliver new incentive and corporate products based on the demands of the target markets and local stakeholders.
- Connect investors, suppliers, and other relevant industry institutions.

## Association Events

The selection of association events to attract to Azerbaijan is based on an assessment of key criteria relating to the event, local representatives, and local associations:

### Association events

- Local representative in Azerbaijan
- Potential availability of the association on a rotation
- Potential event capacity of 1,000 - 1,500 delegates

### Local representatives

- Strong connection with government institutions
- Good standing in association
- Outstanding and forceful personality
- Clear vision of the government's role

### Local associations

- Past experience holding relevant events
- Awareness and capacity of bidding process
- The local association should be supported by the relevant institution, evidenced by an official letter

Of the main fields of associations, ATB has prioritised attracting business events from:

- Medicine and pharmacy
- Oil and gas
- Alternative energy
- Education
- Agriculture, farming, and rural economy
- Information, technology, and digital economy
- Space industry

## Corporate Events

A corporate event is a gathering sponsored by a company for its employees, business partners, customers, and/or prospective clients. These events can be for larger audiences, such as conventions or for smaller events like conferences, meetings, or corporate parties.

The source markets for corporate events that are currently targeted by ATB are:

- Russia and CIS countries
- India
- Türkiye
- Middle East
- Pakistan
- Israel
- Europe
- China

The main development tools used by ATB for the corporate segment are B2B meetings and workshops, exhibitions, sales missions, and promotional and networking events.

- **B2B Events and Workshops**

Participation in B2B workshops and meetings provides the opportunity to arrange meetings with professional corporate representatives, make personal contacts, build relationships with key decision makers, discuss potential cooperation, connect local industry partners with the international corporate sector, and maximise exposure by participating in sponsorship opportunities.

B2B events that ATB has participated in over recent years include MILT India, MALT UAE, KBLT Saudi Arabia, and the M&I Forum.

- **Exhibitions**

Participation in international exhibitions enhances the image of Azerbaijan as a destination for business events and provides an opportunity to invite local business events industry partners as co-exhibitors. Two of the most significant international business event platforms are IMEX Frankfurt exhibition and IBTM World Barcelona.

- **Sales Missions**

Sales missions involve the ATB travelling to target corporate markets with local industry partners to meet key corporate clients.

- **Roadshows**

The organisation of roadshows in Tier 1 target markets, covering both leisure and MICE tourism segments. The attraction and registration of local industry partners (hotels and DMCs) focused on leisure and MICE services in appropriate markets to such roadshows. With the support of international vendors, particularly the representative offices of ATB, international partners (70% leisure-related tour operators/travel agencies and 30% MICE and event focused tour operators/agencies) are invited by our international vendor.

- **Promotional and Networking Events**

Promotional and networking events within exhibitions and trade shows provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships between international and local business event industry partners. These events offer an excellent platform for destination presentations.

- **Incentives**

Incentive tours are rewards that companies/organisations offer to their staff, team members, sales teams, partners, and even customers in the form of travel. The main goal of these incentives is to show the company's appreciation for its staff's stellar performance and loyalty, as well as boost employees' morale. Incentive tours can take different forms, but they basically involve corporate outings, such as all-inclusive trips meant to encourage team building activities, corporate dinners for celebrations, anniversaries, appreciation, and corporate retreats for a unique experience that heals the mind, body, and soul, as well as other recreational activities.