Caroline Cardona



Global Congress & Events Leader

Association & International Events | Strategic Operations

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Nyon, Switzerland | Swiss Permit B

French & Colombian Citizenship

Profile

International congress and events leader with 18+ years of experience delivering major global congresses, exhibitions and high-level meetings for international associations and organizations. Proven track record managing complex event portfolios, budgets of up to CHF 50 million, multidisciplinary teams and international stakeholder relationships.

Experienced in congress strategy, association governance, host destination partnerships, exhibition development, procurement and operational excellence. Combines strategic vision with hands-on leadership, delivering measurable results including increased participation, financial performance and sustainable event management practices.

Trilingual in English, French and Spanish, with extensive experience working across multicultural environments and international networks.

Core Expertise

Global Congress & Event Strategy | Association & Governance Meetings | Host Destination Partnerships | International Stakeholder Relations | Congress Operations | Exhibition & Sponsorship Management | Team Leadership | Budget & Financial Management | Procurement & Contract Negotiations | Event Governance & Sustainability

Tools: MS Project | Asana | Trello | Microsoft Teams | SharePoint | Cvent | Microsoft Dynamics CRM | CiviCRM
Languages: French (Native) | Spanish (Native) | English (Fluent)

Professional Experience

GLOBAL CONVENINGS & EVENTS MANAGER

International Union for Conservation of Nature | *Gland, Switzerland | Dec 2022 - Jan 2026*

Led the governance, planning and delivery of major international events and exhibitions, overseeing cross-functional teams, operational processes, budgets and global stakeholder engagement to ensure consistent execution and measurable performance.

- Directed end-to-end delivery of international flagship events and exhibitions, overseeing planning, technical production, logistics, registration, suppliers and onsite operations.
- Led a permanent team of nine professionals and an extended operational workforce of 45+, providing strategic direction, mentoring and coordination across multiple functional workstreams.
- Led host destination engagement and negotiations with government authorities, convention stakeholders and institutional partners, contributing to host agreements and the strategic planning of major international congresses.
- Developed the exhibition commercial framework, including sales brochures, pricing structures and exhibitor packages, before recruiting and overseeing a dedicated Exhibition Manager responsible for operational delivery.
- Developed and standardised event management processes across international teams, strengthening operational governance, collaboration and consistent delivery standards.
- Implemented in-house registration systems integrated with CRM, improving participant data management, operational efficiency and organisational control over event data.
- Redesigned the Congress financial model, transitioning from in-kind contributions to cash-based funding to strengthen supplier management, procurement oversight and cost control.
- Managed event budgets of up to CHF 50 million, including procurement, RFPs, contract negotiations, financial reporting and performance monitoring.
- Oversaw event marketing, participant engagement and performance reporting processes, including targeted email campaigns, CRM-based monitoring and operational KPIs.

Key Achievements

- Delivered a CHF 3M+ net financial surplus against an initial break-even objective, contributing directly to IUCN's financial reserves.
- Delivered the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025 in Abu Dhabi, welcoming over 10,000 participants and achieving a 20% increase in attendance compared with the previous edition.
- Oversaw the successful implementation of an ISO 20121-certified event management framework, ensuring management guidance and approval throughout the certification process.

SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER

International AIDS Society (IAS) | *Geneva, Switzerland | Nov 2021 - Nov 2022*

- Led end-to-end planning and delivery of international pre-conferences for AIDS 2022, coordinating programme requirements, suppliers, communications and operational execution.
- Designed and implemented registration processes for international pre-conferences, coordinating participant management, registration platforms and data integration.
- Managed the implementation of digital event platforms, overseeing functional requirements, supplier selection, system configuration, testing and operational delivery.
- Collaborated with cross-functional teams, external organisers and technology providers to ensure consistent participant experiences and timely project delivery.

FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR

VicaGroup SAS / Tika Travel | *Medellín, Colombia | Apr 2016 – Sept 2021*

- Founded and managed a business combining sustainable tourism and international event management consultancy, overseeing commercial development, partnerships and operational delivery.
- Developed and commercialised 10+ sustainable travel experiences, managing product development, pricing, sales, supplier relationships and customer experience.
- Established international distribution partnerships with European travel agencies, coordinating local suppliers and operational resources.
- Delivered international event management consultancy assignments for IAS and The Union, including full exhibition management for The Union, exhibitor relations, exhibition operations, partner activations and supplier coordination.
- Coordinated 60+ industry-sponsored sessions, managed 16 international pre-conferences and supervised onsite staffing operations involving 250+ personnel.

OPERATIONS MANAGER (CONSULTANCY)

Society for AIDS in Africa | *Remote | Sept 2015 - Dec 2017*

- Directed end-to-end operational planning and delivery of ICASA 2015 and 2017, two major international congresses.
- Led a 17-member team across budgeting, procurement, supplier negotiations, exhibitions, audiovisual production and participant services.
- Coordinated international stakeholders, managed operational risks and ensured execution excellence under demanding timelines.

CONGRESS & EXHIBITION MANAGER

International AIDS Society | *Geneva, Switzerland | 2007 – 2015*

- Progressed from Logistics Assistant to Department Manager, overseeing the operational delivery of major international scientific congresses and exhibitions with up to 26,000 participants.
- Managed end-to-end congress and exhibition operations, including logistics, technical production, supplier coordination, registration and onsite execution.
- Led cross-functional teams and external agencies, ensuring consistent operational standards and effective stakeholder coordination.
- Oversaw departmental budgets exceeding USD 10 million, including procurement, RFPs, contract negotiations and financial reporting.

Education

- **MA** International Cooperation & Multilingual Communication (*Graduated with Honours) - Stendhal University | Grenoble, France – 2009*
- **BA** Spanish and Latin American Studies - *Marc Bloch University | Strasbourg, France – 2006*
- Designing And Planning Certificate of Completio**n** - *NGO Management School | Geneva, Switzerland – 2011*
- **BA** Psychology – In Progress | UniDistance Suisse