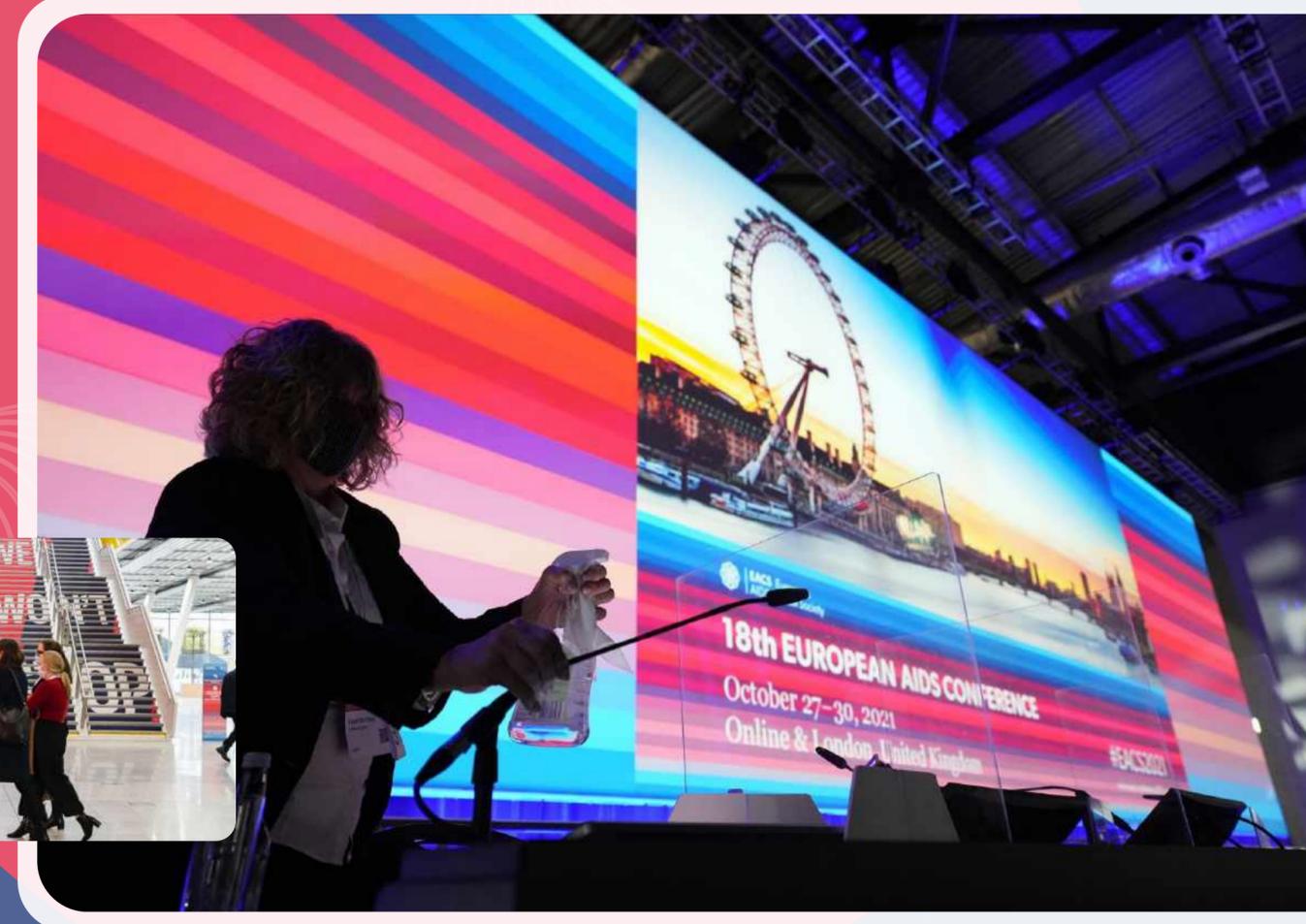




# One of Europe's First Medical Events to Return Post-pandemic in a Hybrid Format with OPADE



# Challenges

Planning and executing an in-person event during a pandemic is a challenge any way you frame it. Hosting the European AIDS Conference in London in the wake of Brexit uncertainty added elements of apprehension. Would the sponsors and exhibitors attend? Will travel be allowed with the Delta variant ramping up across Europe? Would there be enough people at the venue to make the ExCeL London feel full? Could they provide a strong feeling of community so beloved in past EACS events?

Before the pandemic, the European AIDS Clinical Society had developed its 2021 version as a hybrid event. The plans always included webcasting of all rooms, no printed programme, ePosters, and a media library accessible long after the event. They did not foresee so many offsite moderators and speakers, and a majority of participants joined online. On top of these changes, staff instability became a problem. Everything from the technicians in the rooms to suppliers was experiencing staffing problems as individuals were getting sick and unable to work.

Bringing together more than 3,000 people face-to-face was not feasible in the pandemic. The feeling of community is essential to the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS) and hard to portray while keeping a 1.5-meter distance from others. Add the prospect of holding an event in a super-spreader country or effectively reaching people through a screen.

These situations posed quite a challenge for the event's planning when considered together – a state-of-the-art digital platform was needed to deliver this hybrid congress.



# Solution

Pandemic planning was top-of-mind for the organisers. With the UK government having little or no pandemic restrictions at the time, the organisation decided to have more stringent COVID-19 rules than the surrounding city and venue. They asked participants to maintain a 1.5-meter distance from each other, wear masks, and entrance to the venue required visitors to have proof of double vaccination or negative lateral flow test.

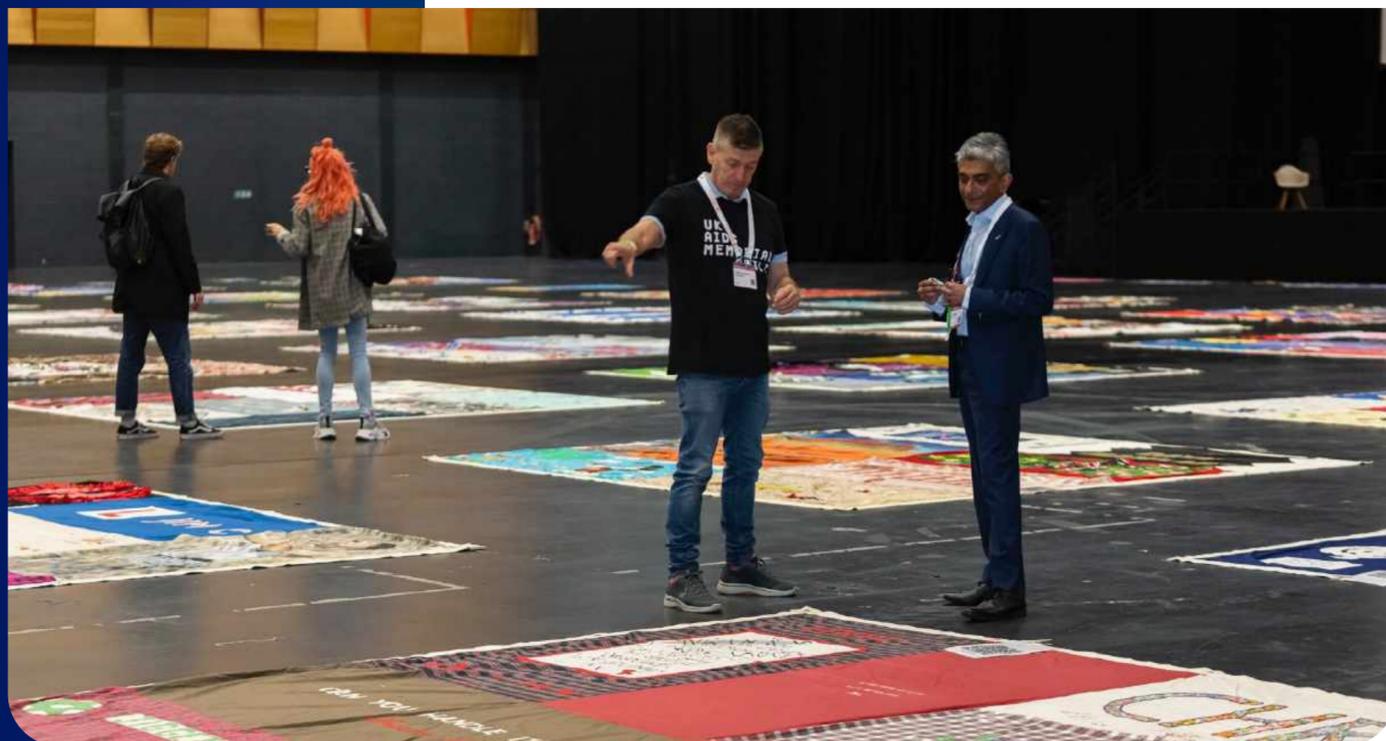
Registration fees were flexible to satisfy the participants' anxiety, with a registration fee switch made possible between online and onsite. The speakers had similar flexibility. They could decide whether they wanted to attend in person or online until very close to the time of the event.

**Double coverage was the word of the day.** This hybrid event had two planning heads: a conference manager and A virtual event manager. The plan called for two chairpersons onsite for every session to monitor the online conference situation and oversee participants in the room. Both onsite and online audiences had content curated especially for them and delivered through OPADE.





**Communication is key.** We included a dedicated travel page on the event website. Updates on this dedicated travel page included all testing requirements, travel regulations and restrictions. Email blasts with integrated media and segmented messages explained the intention to have the event both in London and online. The utilisation of social media assured prospective participants that the science would be strong and the sense of community would continue to be a significant part of the event. Inclusion of invitation videos from Key Opinion Leaders filtered down to social media explaining the situation on the ground and the expectations from each participant, whether onsite or online.



**Two is one, and one is none.** Backups for every aspect of the event existed, including content and presentations. Pre-recordings were made for over 80% of the speeches. We had duplications of onsite IT, electricity structure, and even backups for our staff. There were three layers of recording backup – in the platform, through the presentation management system and on the webcasting services. The event's organisation required the use of an exhaustive timeline detailing every element, whether it was onsite or online. OPADE provided the security and flexibility needed. It is user-friendly, everything is accessible within three clicks, and the media player has excellent stability.

# Result

The event was a complete success! Our stewardship of the event met the high expectations of both the client and the participants. We were able to maintain the quality of the content and the expected profit for the client. Participation of the EACS community was excellent, both in-person and online. The utilisation of social media was even higher than in previous versions. There was plenty of positive feedback from the exhibitors and sponsors with well-attended industry-sponsored sessions.

Excel London's International Convention Centre was an excellent location for a hybrid conference. The infrastructure met and sometimes exceeded our needs admirably. The quality of the network, the excellent latency, and extensive backups on everything were exceeded only by the quality of the staff, which was a crucial component in the event's success.

OPADE and the European AIDS Clinical Society consider this event a triumph over many obstacles. Both organisations gained experience and confidence while putting together this demanding event. After the worst of the pandemic, excellent teams primed and ready to perform gave this EACS 2021 their all, and it showed.

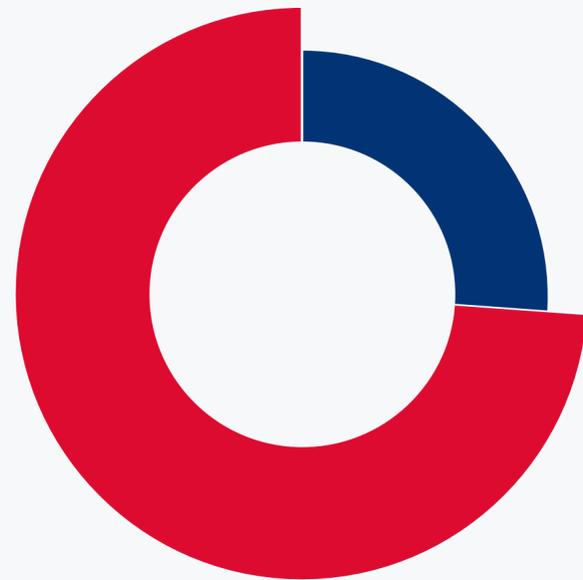


*The OPADE Platform performed very well -  
the technical support was brilliant.*

— *Dr Sanjay Bhagani*  
EACS President

# Stability was provided by OPADE

## PARTICIPANTS



● 2,211 online ● 783 onsite

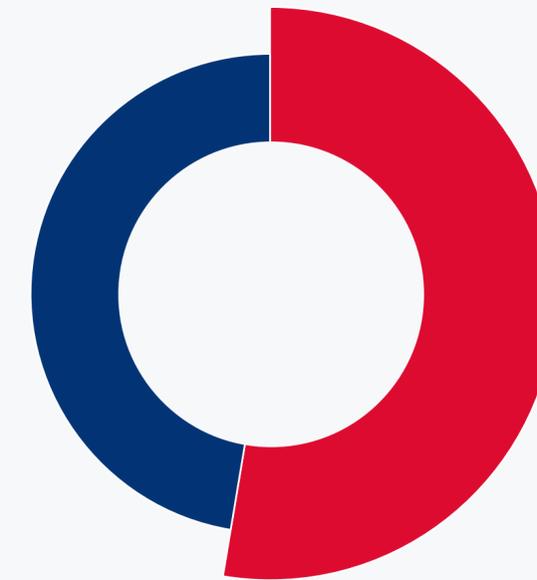
## SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS



● 125 onsite ● 116 online

## SPONSORS

Relative stability with in-person events



● 10 Sponsored Sessions  
● 9 Sponsors



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