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Centralization and regional breakthroughs

Ilya Zubkov, Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, highlighted the mechanics of how congress and exhibition activities are transforming the landscape of business tourism and accentuated the role of the system of chambers of commerce and industry in managing interregional business interaction.

- Could major public events be considered as a driver of business travelers' interest?

Yes, and this is confirmed by statistics. According to Rosstat, the volume of domestic business tourism in Russia in 2024 went up and reached 21.7 million trips. These data were made public by representatives of the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia at the forum "Cities of Russia" in Yekaterinburg at the end of 2025.

At the same time, it is important to note that the structure of business trips almost completely coincides with the Rating of the Regional Events Potential compiled by a member of Committee on Exhibition, Fair and Congress Activities of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - R&C Exhibition Research Center (VNIC).

Moscow, the Moscow Region, St. Petersburg, Krasnodar Territory and the Sverdlovsk Region remain champions in this area.

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These are precisely the regions where a rich forum and exhibition agenda has been elaborated and put into practice and proper infrastructure for holding major events has been provided. Business tourism is not formed spontaneously, but as a result of the region's systematic efforts on this track. Large-scale exhibitions and forums serve as points of attraction for business audiences, ensuring a stable flow of participants and increasing economic activity on the whole.

At the same time, we are also recording a new challenge: the cost of participation in events is upsurging, and this is especially burdensome for small and medium-sized businesses. In this regard, one of the priority tasks is to preserve and maintain the flow of business tourists from the SME segment as the industry’s key audience.

- How does the system of chambers of commerce and industry attract a business tourist to the regions?

The system of chambers of commerce and industry works with business tourism as a controlled process, where the key tools are the formation of business delegations, business missions and the development of an event agenda.

Regional chambers organize targeted business missions - both domestically and abroad, with a program of negotiations, visits to enterprises and contact exchanges. In fact, this is a flow of business tourists focused on a specific economic result - contracts and cooperation.

The second key tool is to conduct major own events. The experience of the Republic of Tatarstan is indicative, where the International Forum of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is held within the framework of KazanForum. At the end of 2025, more than 250 representatives from 18 countries and 55 regions of our country participated in the forum. It is important that we are talking not only about the event itself, but also about an integrated model: delegations come with a specific business agenda, participate in negotiations, visit enterprises and exhibition sites. As a result, a steady international flow of interested business tourists to the territory of the republic is being formed.

The third direction is the systematic work of regional chambers with an event agenda. Colleagues form a regular calendar that ensures the constant movement of business audiences between regions.

This is made possible by the scale of our system. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry unites more than 57 thousand companies, of which about 70% are small and medium-sized businesses interested in representing themselves on the market. The system also includes more than 270 associations of entrepreneurs and commercial organizations at the federal level and over 850 business associations in the regions.

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At the same time, we also have a significant expert base. More than 110 chambers of commerce and industry are directly involved in congress and exhibition activities, and the total number of events for 2021-2025 amounted to about 6 thousand, of which 3.6 thousand are exhibitions and forums organized with the participation of the chambers.

These data allow me to talk about the CCI system as an extensive infrastructure for the formation of business flows to the regions: chambers of commerce and industry are not just participants, but, one might say, operators of interregional business tourism.

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- How actively are the regions developing infrastructure to attract business events?

In recent years, we have really seen an active development of infrastructure. According to industry analysis, for 2024 in Russia there were 59 specialized congress and exhibition centers with a total area of more than 1 million square meters. m. At the same time, the largest facilities are concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

A number of new projects are being implemented. Only in the coming years is it planned to commission additional capacities in Moscow, as well as projects in Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk and other cities.

At the same time, the position of the CCI of the Russian Federation is that the development of infrastructure should be based not only on quantitative growth, but also on the real loading of sites. Today, the key issue is the provision of pavilions with exhibitions and business events.

We see that with the existing volume of space of 1 million square meters it is critical to synchronize the commissioning of new facilities with federal business tourism statistics and regional event calendars. Only in the presence of a regular interesting event agenda, the infrastructure begins to work as a full-fledged driver of business tourism and the regional economy. Otherwise, there is a risk of underutilization of infrastructure and a decrease in the economic efficiency of projects.

Priority is a balanced development model, not just building new centers for the sake of statistics.

- What particular government and corporate support measures contribute to the development of business tourism and exhibition activities?

One of the most popular mechanisms is implemented through the Russian Export Center, which provides subsidies for the participation of Russian companies in foreign exhibitions and business missions.

REC compensates, as a rule, basic costs - rental of exhibition space and registration fee. This is an important, but rather narrow tool, focused primarily on supporting export activity through participation in foreign events.

The position of CCI of the Russian Federation is the need to expand support measures for the participation of companies in key exhibitions and forums within the country. It is domestic events that today are becoming an entry point for enterprises, especially regional ones, in systemic business activity, form cooperation chains and prepare companies for entering foreign

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markets.

In this regard, we consider it expedient to preserve and replicate subsidy mechanisms similar to REC tools on the national circuit. This will increase the availability of participation for small and medium-sized businesses, increase the load on regional infrastructure and ensure a more even development of business tourism in the country.

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