

# An invitation to Rome

The ICOH mid-term meeting for the current triennium (2018–2021) was held from 11 to 13 February 2020 in Italy, against the backdrop of the rich tapestry of culture, ancient history, art, architecture and beauty that is 'Bella Roma'.

The 'Eternal City' of Rome, the capital of Italy and the Lazio region, is located along the Tevere (Tiber) River. Rome is also called 'Caput Mundi' (Capital of the World) and is the seat of the Italian government. With over four million residents, the city and environs have been a key human settlement for over two millennia, as the history of Rome spans 27 centuries. Ancient Rome was at least six times more densely populated than present-day New York City, and owning land during the era of the Roman Empire was so important that almost all Roman citizens owned at least a small plot. Founded in 753 BC, Rome is older than Italy which did not become a unified nation until September 1870. Rome became the capital city of unified Italy, taking the title from Firenze (Florence).

During its long history, the Roman civilization shifted from a monarchy to an oligarchic republic and then to the immense and all-powerful Roman Empire. During the reign of Emperor Augustus, Christ was born and, although Christians were persecuted until the 4th century, the new religion took hold and Rome became the main centre of Christianity. Even though Rome was the seat of the papacy, the city went into decline during the Middle Ages. However, the city underwent a spectacular and miraculous recovery in the mid-15th century and, for more than 200 years, was graced by the most fabulous and talented artists of the Renaissance and the Baroque periods. Finally, in 1870, Rome became the capital of the newly unified Italy.

By the early 4th century, the Romans had built a road network of 53 000 miles. Each Roman mile was about 4 800 feet and marked by a milestone, giving rise to the saying 'all roads lead to Rome'.

As of 2020, Rome is ranked as an 'alpha global city' – a primary node in the global economic network – by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network. According to the City Brands Index, Rome is considered the world's second most historically, educationally and culturally interesting and beautiful city. In 2019, Rome was the 11th most visited city in the world with over 10 million tourists, the third most visited city in the European Union, and the most popular tourist destination in Italy.



Photograph: Pixabay

*The most famous of all Roman legends is the story of Romulus and Remus, the twins who were suckled and cared for by a she-wolf. The two brothers, the mythological founders of Rome, decided to build a city but, after an argument, Romulus killed his brother and the city took his name. Today the 'Capitoline Wolf' is considered the mascot of Rome.*

Rome's Centro Storico (historical centre) is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a world heritage site, and boasts numerous beautiful and world-renowned piazzas (squares), statues, columns and obelisks, bridges, parks and landscaped gardens; modern Rome has 280 fountains and more than 900 churches (predominantly Roman Catholic). The city is also the seat of several specialised agencies of the United Nations and hosts the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, as well as the headquarters of many international institutions – cultural, scientific and business companies – and national and international banks. Rome's EUR business district is the home of many companies involved in the oil and pharmaceutical industries, and financial and insurance services. High-technology sectors (IT,



**The mid-term meeting started with the joint meeting of the ICOH officers, board members and Scientific Committee representatives (chairs or secretaries) on Monday, 11 February 2020, at the INAIL headquarters in Rome**

Photograph: Claudina Nogueira (South Africa)



**Two board meetings were held during the ICOH mid-term meeting, on 12 and 13 February 2020, at the INAIL headquarters in Rome**

Photograph: Claudina Nogueira (South Africa)



**On a Clear Day You Can See Forever – A magnificent view of the centre of ancient Rome from the terraces of the Campidoglio, on the summit of the Capitoline Hill. The half-day conference on ‘Future of Work’ was held at the Protomoteca Hall of the Campidoglio**

*Photograph: Claudina Nogueira (South Africa)*

aerospace, defence, telecommunications, energy, electronics), research, construction and commercial activities (especially banking), and the massive development of the tourism industry are dynamic and essential for Rome's economy. The presence of renowned international brands in the city has made Rome an important centre of fashion and design, and the Cinecittà Studios, established in the 1930s, have been the set of various Academy Award-winning movies over the past few decades.

Rome is a nationwide and major international centre for higher education, with numerous tertiary education institutions. It boasts a large variety of universities, academies and colleges, and has always been a prominent worldwide intellectual and educational centre, especially during Ancient Rome and the Renaissance, along with Firenze (Florence). Rome's first university, La Sapienza, established in 1303 AD, is the largest in Europe and the second largest in the world.

Vatican City (full name: The State of Vatican City) is the spiritual and governing centre of the Roman Catholic Church. It is an independent country (the smallest in the world, comprising just over 100 acres and a population of 1 000 in 2019) located within the city boundaries of Rome. Vatican City is an absolute monarchy with full legislative, judicial and executive authority residing with the pope. Vatican City is the only country to be entirely designated as a UNESCO world heritage site and attracts more tourists than anywhere else in the world – around five million each year. Gems of the Vatican City include Piazza San Pietro

(St Peter's Square), St Peter's basilica, the majestic Sistine Chapel, and the Vatican palaces and museums.

The 'Eternal City' of Rome is brimming with countless awe-inspiring treasures from the ancient world, making it a top destination for both leisure and business travellers. The Colosseum, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, is the largest amphitheatre and gladiator arena built during the Roman Empire. The Roman Forum was the hub of political and social activity of the Roman citizens; today it is a rectangular area surrounded by the ruins of several important ancient government buildings at the centre of the city, with architectural fragments and intermittent archaeological excavations. With its three majestic fountains and surrounding mansions, Piazza Navona is one of the most impressive Baroque squares in Rome. As the site of many events and fashion shows, the Spanish Steps is one of the most renowned sites of Rome; the adjacent Piazza di Spagna in one of the city's most iconic squares. The Pantheon, a masterpiece of Roman architecture, claims to be the best preserved building from ancient Rome. The Catacombs of Rome are ancient underground burial places located beneath the city, of which there are at least 40, some discovered only in recent decades. The Trevi Fountain is arguably the most beautiful and spectacular fountain in Rome with millions of people visiting it to make a wish. Nearly 700 000 Euros worth of coins are tossed into the fountain each year; the proceeds are donated to the Caritas Catholic Charity to help those in need.