'Wide open for sustainable meetings': Fabryczna 13

2023-11-15

Fabryczna City is an example of successful restoration in which historical heritage meets modern times, thus creating an all-encompassing space in harmony with sustainability principles.

In the 'Wide open for sustainable meetings' series, the Director of the Fabryczna Conference Centre, Sara Lamik, and the General Manager of the Mercure Krakow Fabryczna City Hotel, Joanna Chwastek-Pluta, talk about how the facility will be engaged in the future of sustainability. What makes the restoration of this area special is Grade A office buildings, flats and restored historic buildings created on an area of 6.5 hectares. At its heart, you will find the **Fabryczna 13 center**, which stands out thanks to the varied assortment on offer.

What sustainability-oriented measures have you implemented or will you be implementing by the end of 2023?

Sara Lamik: Even when designing and carrying out the restoration of the buildings, the investor (the INTER-BUD Group) planned several sustainable solutions. We installed PV panels on our roofs to generate electricity from a renewable source, significantly reducing the consumption from the grid. All of the solar electricity is consumed for the facility's needs. We also facilitate energy efficiency through energy recovery systems in the air-handling units and kitchen hoods, and a BMS building automation system to monitor and manage the installations. The building is equipped with a rainwater collection system which can be used to water the greenery or flush toilets once the water is treated.

The Conference Center has further environmentally friendly solutions. We use air handling units with electrostatic filters, used instead of pocket filters. The unit works by ionizing air particles, which results in:
- reduced energy demand for fan motors,

- increased energy efficiency of the air handling unit,

- no need to dispose of any consumables, while classic filters are contaminated with bacteria or viruses.

We have grease and oil separators to purify wastewater from the catering area of the facility and rainwater from the car park .

Our conference rooms are equipped with a VRV system, thanks to which some indoor units can cool and others heat the premises.

The Fabryczna Conference Center is located underground, which gives us an advantage in that we can largely limit the use of air conditioning to cool the premises. The rooms do not heat up naturally and ventilation is sufficient to cool them.

These solutions, combined with the good practices and standards we follow, form an integral part of our sustainability strategy, which we always keep up to date.

One of the priorities of the Fabryczna Conference Center is to organize events while at the same time respecting the environment. We make sure to carefully sort waste and do not overproduce food. We rely on local products to reduce our carbon footprint. It is important for us to agree on the details that significantly help to plan in advance for the needs and resources for each event. The water available in our buffets and during coffee breaks is served in special dispensers (non-carbonated) and glass bottles (carbonated), straight from Krakow's waterworks.

Fabryczna 13 serves as an example of how to harmoniously restore a facility to combine state-of-the-art technological solutions with the unique history of the place, thus creating a sustainable space that benefits both the local community and business customers.

Joanna Chwastek - Pluta: Our hotel was opened in 2021, and since that very moment we have been consistently implementing PLANET 21 – the Accor network's sustainability strategy. As a program, Planet 21 determines ambitious goals for the Accor network, built around the four strategic axes: action among employees, involving customers, joint innovation with partners, and actions with local communities, and the two key challenges of food and buildings.

Mercure hotels are always socially responsible, therefore as Mercure Krakow Fabryczna City we primarily implement the Accor network's commitment explained in the Group's *Charter of Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility*.

Mercure Krakow Fabryczna City is currently working to fulfil its social commitment to the Accor network to eliminate disposable plastic products. At the hotel, we no longer use plastic cosmetic accessories, as we replaced them with cosmetics from dispensers. The entire Fabryczna 13 opted for glass, cardboard and biodegradable bottles, cups, straws and packaging instead of plastic ones. We also joined the ‘Discover Local’ program, which promotes the local spirit and supports local suppliers. We share our knowledge of environmental initiatives with our guests and encourage them to actively support our activities.

The hotel also happily participates In social initiatives. On 24 April, 2023, our employees and other Krakow hoteliers participated in the ‘Hotelier's day of cleaning Krakow.’ This event is organized to celebrate International Earth Day. Together, they collected more than thirty 120-liter bags of waste.

Does your organization have or are you interested in obtaining certification for sustainable operations?

Sara Lamik: We have not yet obtained a sustainability certificate, but our actions are aimed at meeting such standards. We are considering obtaining relevant certifications to confirm our commitment to environment protection and sustainability.

Joanna Chwastek - Pluta: MERCURE Krakow Fabryczna City Hotel is proud to have been awarded high GOLD status under the PLANET 21 program, which shows our commitment to sustainability. We are now also in the process of certification for the global 'Green Key' program. This step is important for us, as it confirms our efforts in environmental protection and social responsibility.

Do customers expect your enterprise to apply sustainable solutions or have certificates?

Sara Lamik: Yes, customers more and more often expect companies to undertake such initiatives. Sustainability is becoming increasingly important, both for our customers and for our company. This is why we take measures to adapt our product/service range to meet these expectations. I believe that in terms of the growing need to protect the environment and pursue sustainability, projects similar to Fabryczna City and Fabryczna 13 can serve as an important source of inspiration and an example of practical solutions that drive positive change both locally and globally.

Joanna Chwastek - Pluta: We are finding that more and more of our customers are interested in sustainable solutions. They perceive certification as an important indicator of whether we take specific steps towards environmental protection. The green changes we have implemented are appreciated and allow us to meet the expectations of our guests. As the Mercure Krakow Fabryczna City hotel, we want to raise guest awareness to encourage them to support our eco-programs at the hotel. To this end, we install signs in their rooms and in online apps. Our day-to-day operations are conducted so that we can increase their sensitivity to issues concerning the planet. We encourage them to stop using disposable towels, and instead opt for multiple use or change their bedding every three days. In return, they receive loyalty points and help to save water and electricity, thus supporting the actions we take to benefit our planet.

What trends in organizing meetings have you observed recently?

Sara Lamik: We have observed increased interest in sustainable events. Customers are looking more often for venues which on one hand have excellent conference facilities, but are also committed to the environment and sustainability. The conference industry is observing a rapid increase in interest in hybrid events which combine online and offline meetings. This is why CKF_13 has the technology to make this happen smoothly. Another observable trend is that customers are more aware in terms of planning the event set-up. Bearing in mind the problem with overproduction of disposable products, which are just thrown away after the event, customers more often decide to use different solutions, such as decorating a room with light. We are also working on buffet decorations using natural, live flowers to limit plastic decorations.

Joanna Chwastek - Pluta: Our customers, especially large corporations, inquire increasingly frequently about and insert questions regarding social responsibility and actions towards sustainability in their cooperation agreements. In our actions, we want to consider global needs, as this is something we wholeheartedly support and implement in our operations through the principles of social responsibility and sustainability. Raising awareness and sensitivity to environmental issues is now a key element of management.

Where do you look for knowledge and inspiration for organizing sustainable meetings?

Sara Lamik: We find knowledge and inspiration in plenty of places. We follow sustainability trends, attend conferences and training on this topic, and share knowledge with other companies in the industry. Our purpose is to continue to improve our sustainable practices.

Joanna Chwastek - Pluta: At the hotel, employees take part in a number of training programs pertaining to awareness of sustainability and social responsibility . Employees learn about the issue of protecting minors against sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, and tolerance of racial and sexual differences, but also receive training on what is needed to protect the environment and the planet's resources.

The facility houses the Fabryczna CKF_13 Conference Center and the Mercure Krakow Fabryczna City Hotel, but also an arcade filled with a variety of dining concepts – restaurants, a coffee shop, an outdoor bar and an elegant cocktail bar, as well as a boutique gym with a full-size swimming pool, sauna room, and salt cave. It is also the location of the unique Vodka Factory Museum, which has a collection of showpieces brought together during the restoration, as evidence of the history of this exceptional venue. 13 Fabryczna Street was brought to life through the restoration of the former 1930s Polmos State Vodka Factory,