



Symposium Cracoviense: an ESG-oriented Krakow company - an interview with Anna Jędrocha

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As part of the “Wide open for sustainable meetings” series, we are pleased to host PCO for the first time. Anna Jędrocha, the company’s CEO, will talk about implemented ESG measures, the management of Symposium, and the ambitious goals set in response to market demand and changing realities in the MICE industry after the pandemic.

What measures in line with the Sustainable Development Goals are or will be implemented at your company by the end of 2023?

Symposium Cracoviense has developed a sustainability strategy this year and set itself goals, the implementation of which will be monitored and reported. We are a signatory to the “Net Zero Carbon Events” initiative, which commits us to reducing and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions of the congresses and events we organize, aiming for carbon-neutral events by 2030. This year we ran a pilot project to measure the carbon footprint of the international congress of the 26th European Conference on Artificial Intelligence (ECAI). During its preparation and implementation, we implemented sustainable practices in both our operations and our suppliers, but the event’s carbon footprint remained significant. In order to reduce it, we will pay an offset equal to 15% of the total emissions.

As for the operation of Symposium Cracoviense, we provide safe and fair working conditions for our employees and associates, and have introduced

Do you have or are you interested in obtaining a certification for your company regarding sustainable operations?

We are not certified, but we have already begun preparations to undergo certification. We are a beneficiary of the ETSM2030 project, financed by the European Union, which supports small and medium-sized tourism enterprises in acquiring sustainability certification and knowledge, and creates an interactive network of SMEs working for eco-development. We have passed the evaluation stage, and in the first half of 2024, our employees will receive training in the areas of sustainability, digital innovation and data management.

Do customers expect your company to provide sustainable solutions / be certified?

More and more congress and business event organisers are focusing on sustainable practices, and it is becoming an expectation that their suppliers provide sustainable solutions and hold the appropriate certifications. The reasons for that vary, the most common being concern for the image of the company or organisation, regulatory requirements or participant expectations. It is important for congress organisers to work with suppliers that adhere to sustainability principles, as this can affect their image and reputation. The new EU CSRD introduces sustainability-related regulations that require large companies, but also indirectly all entities in their supply chain, to monitor and report on



social, environmental and business sustainability. Also, congress attendees themselves increasingly expect events to be more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Therefore, we want and must strive to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. This is also a competitive advantage for us, as with sustainable practices we can attract more customers and participants. We regularly monitor trends and expectations in the convention industry to adapt our services and offerings to the changing needs of our customers.

What trends in event organisation have you observed recently?

In recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, we have observed notable trends related to sustainable meetings. Companies and event organisers are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental and social impact of their activities, and are developing sustainability strategies during their projects. So-called green meeting venues can serve as an example – organisers are increasingly choosing locations that are environmentally friendly. Hotels and convention centres are developing green initiatives, such as energy-efficient systems, renewable energy sources, reducing water consumption and promoting recycling. In Scandinavia, convention facilities go a step further: if greenhouse gas emissions cannot be reduced to zero for the event, they additionally offer offsets for the remaining emissions. After the pandemic, the environmental awareness of event participants also increased significantly, including, for example, reducing plastic consumption, providing low-emission transportation for participants, and minimising waste through recycling and composting, with mobile apps and online platforms helping manage events in a sustainable way. There is a growing trend in event catering services to offer environmentally conscious and healthy food options. In practice, this can include local, seasonal produce, plant-based menus and minimising food waste. A few years ago, meals with meat accounted for around 80 percent of the lunch buffet offer at conferences, and only 20 percent was plant-based; now those proportions are closer to half and half. These trends confirm that sustainable practices are becoming the norm, and expectations for sustainable events are continuing to rise.

Where do you get your knowledge and inspiration on the topic of organising sustainable meetings?

Our company is a member of the ICCA International Congress & Convention Association, an organisation that provides us with a wealth of information on sustainable events and inspires us to implement sustainable practices. There are many reports and case studies on the association's website that we can learn from, and attending ICCA congresses and regional meetings gives us the opportunity to meet experts and participate in inspiring sessions dedicated to sustainable events.