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## **2024 in the Krakow MICE industry**

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**We can safely call the past year a year of anniversaries - the Krakow Convention Bureau celebrated its 20th birthday, and three large conference facilities - TAURON Arena Krakow, the ICE Krakow Congress Center and the International Exhibition and Convention Center Expo Krakow - celebrated their 10th anniversary. What is worth remembering in the context of business tourism in 2024? What activities did the Krakow Convention Bureau carry out to build the city's image #TheHostCity?**

### **Publication of the report: "The Meetings Industry in Krakow 2023"**

Thanks to the data collected in 2024, we know that in 2023, 4,368 business meetings were held in Krakow, which is 66.15% more than the previous year and more than twice as many as in 2021. A significant increase occurred primarily in the category of domestic meetings. The number of international events increased by 13% compared to 2022.

In terms of the structure of meetings, stationary events dominated, only 1.1% of meetings were held in a hybrid form. The dominance of conferences and congresses typical of Krakow has continued, last year they accounted for as much as **71.2%** of events. For comparison: motivational and corporate events were organized 24.43%, and fairs and exhibitions 4.37%. Domestic meetings dominated in each of the meeting categories. Over **614.9 thousand people** took part in congresses and conferences. people, compared to 2022, the number of participants in these events increased almost threefold.

The authors of the report emphasize that the meetings industry generates income for companies, remuneration for employees and taxes for cities. Based on our own data, the economic impact of the meetings industry on the economy of Kraków in the years 2012-2023 can be estimated at **PLN 17.5 billion**. It is worth adding that according to the report "Poland Events Impact 2023 - Economic impact of the meetings industry on the Polish economy", the gross value added generated by the meetings industry exceeded PLN 22.9 billion. The estimated contribution of the meetings industry to GDP is about 1%, and the total contribution of meetings and events to the Polish economy in 2023 exceeded PLN 54.6 billion, which emphasizes the scale of the impact of this industry on the overall development of the country.

### **2024 in Krakow's conference facilities**

The 10th year of ICE Kraków's operations turned out to be a record-breaking one, both in terms of the number of events and the number of visitors. The congress centre hosted between a dozen and several dozen events each month, and the facility hosted international congresses, conferences, symposia, business meetings, corporate events, concerts, cultural events (opera, theatre and ballet

performances), as well as social meetings. Last year, ICE Kraków hosted a total of over 240 events, including 47 conferences and congresses. The most important include: Euro ELSO Congress – on extracorporeal life support, Distributed Energy Congress, ICNPR 2024 Congress – international congress of research on natural products, European Society for Vascular Surgery Annual Meeting, OT-Europe Congress – occupational therapy, 10th edition of Invest Cuffs, Digital Dragons – conference of the largest B2B events for the gaming industry in Europe, Devovx – conference of the Java programmers and users community or ABSL Summit – one of the largest business events in Central Europe. In 2024, the ICE Kraków Congress Centre was visited by over 266,000 people, which is a record in the facility's operation to date.

EXPO Kraków had an equally successful year, with over 100 events held in the last 12 months. 2024 brought important anniversaries - the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair celebrated its 30th anniversary. Over three decades, it has grown to become the largest, and currently the only, event of its kind in Poland. Another important event organized by the Fair in Kraków was the Jubilee Congress of Medical Polonia, which gathered nearly 1,000 doctors of Polish origin from all over the world. The premiere of the Gdańsk edition of the KIAF Architecture and Interior Design Fair was also a success.

Flagship events that have been part of the EXPO Kraków calendar for years, such as the International Book Fair in Kraków®, the International Hotel and Catering Equipment Fair HORECA®, the International Wine Fair ENOEXPO®, as well as events aimed at the industrial sector, such as the International Trade Fair of Bulk and Bulk Materials SYMAS®, the International Trade Fair of Maintenance, Planning and Optimization of Production MAINTENANCE, the International Trade Fair of Fasteners and Fastening Techniques FASTENER POLAND®, the International Trade Fair of Composite Materials, Technologies and Products KOMPOZYT-EXPO®, the International Cooperative Trade Fair of the Tool and Processing Industry INNOFORM®, Packaging Innovations, continue to attract a wide range of participants, both from Poland and abroad. Fan events are becoming increasingly popular and win the hearts of thousands of visitors. The BookGame Board Game Festival and Fair or TUNING SHOW EXPO are great examples of events that bring completely new energy to the EXPO space.

TAURON Arena Kraków also celebrated its 10th birthday together with the residents by organizing a series of anniversary events under the slogan "Let's meet!". The largest of them were: TAURON Arena Kraków's anniversary concert "To Kraków creates metamorphoses" and AreNa Lato - Łap Oddech Festival.

In 2024, the Main Arena stage hosted world-famous international stars such as: Nick Cave, Tool, Judas Priest, Travis Scott, Justin Timberlake, Lenny Kravitz, Kings of Leon, Hauser, Jonas Brothers,



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Powerwolf, Thirty Seconds to Mars, The Rose, Aurora, André Rieu, Lindsey Stirling, Andrea Bocelli, Matteo Bocelli and Polish artists including Daria Zawiałow, sanah, Agnieszka Chylińska, Krzysztof Zalewski, Mrozu, Oki, Taco Hemingway, Bajm.

The list of sports events includes events such as: CAVALIADA Kraków, TAURON Polish Cup in men's volleyball, XXI Hubert Jerzy Wagner Memorial, 10th Cracovia Royal Half Marathon, Freestyle Heroes and Harlem Globetrotters. And in the Small Hall, among others, the International Małopolska Children and Youth Judo Championships, European Team Championships 2024 - The Ninth Age, 33rd International Wrestling Tournament - Władysław Bajorek Memorial in wrestling, III Fitness Marathon Forma na lata SHOW.

Festivals and fairs were extremely popular, including the RYUCON Festival of Far Eastern Culture, the Wedding Fair, the Japanese Weekend, the JOBICON Job Fair, the Plant Festival and the Real Estate Fair. A total of over 400 events were held on the entire TAURON Arena Kraków facility (Main Arena, Small Hall, conference rooms and outdoor events) in 2024. The facility hosted over 800,000 people.

fot. archiwum Tauron Areny Kraków

Two years of activity have been summed up by the Fabryczna 13 Conference Center. Since December 2022, the facility has hosted 610 meetings: from small training sessions, through corporate events, corporate events, conferences and congresses, in which over 67,000 participants took part. Of the aforementioned meetings, over 100 gathered over 500 people, and 481 events were international conferences, such as the FIAT-IFTA World Funeral Industry Congress, which took place for the first time in Poland, or the international New Frontiers in Interventional Cardiology workshops - gathering guests from Europe, Japan and the USA. Fabryczna 13 has also hosted very logistically complex projects, such as the 4th Congress of Urban and Regional Policy, the 11th Polish Congress of Entrepreneurship, or the 53rd Congress of the Polish Urological Society.

## **GDS Index 2024 Report**

Krakow, the first Polish city to join the GDS Index, was ranked [72nd in the GDS-Index report](#), an increase of 8 positions year-on-year. The authors score Krakow for activities in the "Destination management" category - destination management strategy, as well as for initiatives such as the Citizens' Budget, Krakow for Equality and the City Helpers campaign. In the classification based on almost 77 criteria divided into four main categories, we received the following results:

- Environmental activities of the city - 56% (60.3% in 2023),
- Social activities of the city - 43.8% (56.6% in 2023),
- Supplier activities - 16.2% (16.2% in 2023),
- Destination management activities - 62.8% (39.2% in 2023).



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Kraków received a total score of 49.3%. Areas that require work are primarily service providers operating in the tourism sector, including hotels and agencies. The biggest challenge is the certification of entrepreneurs, facilities and the airport. Additionally, the scope of DMO management and strategy and the legacy project base need to be deepened and structured.

### **Support for MICE events**

Kraków Convention Bureau, operating within the Tourism Department of the City Hall, actively acquires events and supports organizers of congresses and conferences from various fields. Examples of events in which the KCB team was involved in the organization include: Polish Open Science Conference, Alzheimer Disease International ADI 2024, EuroELSO 2024, PolECHO Congress 2024, International Symposium on Hypnosis ISH 2024, European Safety and Reliability Conference ESREL 2024, Electrospinning Conference 2024, International Congress on Natural Products Research ICNPR, European Conference on Violence in Psychiatric Ward (ECVCP), 27th International Conference on Computing in High Energy & Nuclear Physics CHEP, European Society Vascular Surgery (ESVS), 10th European Rover Challenge, European Conference on Mental Health (ECMH), 27th International Conference on Computing in High Energy & Nuclear Physics CHEP and the Jubilee Congress of Medical Polonia.

We worked with almost 200 conference organizers, responding to over 250 inquiries.

### **Active contact with clients**

For over 10 years, the city's conference offer has been promoted at international business tourism fairs and table meetings. Organizers are looking for new destinations, well-connected airports, as well as active support in the event organization process from the Congress Bureau. In 2024, the KCB team took part in 10 events of this type, during which a total of about 250 meetings were held.

On the initiative of the Poland Convention Bureau of the Polish Tourism Organization, we also participated in the annual [UIA Round Table Europe meeting](#) and the creative "More Than You Expected" workshops in Brussels.

### **Cooperation with the industry**

At the end of the year, we finished accepting applications in the recommendation program of Professional Congress Organizers (PCO) and Incentive Travel Organizers (DMC) for the years 2025-2027. The process of verifying the submitted documents is still ongoing, however, it looks like

more local companies from Krakow and Małopolska will join the group of recommended entities.

In order to organize the basic knowledge on sustainable management in tourism, get to know current international standards, guidelines and legal regulations, as well as good practices and examples, our team and several local companies joined the training "Sustainable Tourism in Practice". The 3.5-month course covering 20 hours of live webinars, including work with experts, inspired us to create the documents "Strategy for Sustainable Business Tourism in Krakow" and "Declaration on Diversity and Equality in the Congress Industry", which was signed by representatives of the Krakow MICE industry.

Additionally, together with the Kraków Tourism Alliance, we co-organized training courses on "Sustainable tourism, changes on booking platforms and Poland's competitiveness" and "The green key to success in tourism: the impact of ecological certificates on business development and the position of cities in rankings - case studies".

### **Inspection visits, fam trips**

In September 2024, we organized a fam trip for organizers of congresses, conferences and incentive trips from Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Germany, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. They were representatives of PCO and DMC companies, met at business tourism fairs, who had not been to Krakow before.

With great pleasure and in cooperation with local suppliers, we had the opportunity to present the potential of the city and the region and inspire participants to organize events for their clients. Presenting places for organizing congresses and conferences was our priority, which is why we jointly visited key conference facilities: ICE Krakow, EXPO Krakow and TAURON Arena Krakow, Fabryczna 13 Conference Center, as well as the Cogiteon Science Center - a new place on the Krakow meeting map. The program could not miss places for special events such as the Czartoryski Museum, the Wieliczka Salt Mine, Stara Zajezdnia by DeSilva or Zinar Castle in Przegorzały.

In addition, at the end of November we co-organized a post tour for 8 hosted buyers from Europe who visited our city after the Warsaw edition of Meet The Bidder table meetings. The KCB team planned the program of the guests' stay, taking into account the conference facilities and tourist attractions of the city. The post tour included a visit to the ICE Kraków Congress Center, the Old Kraków Depot by DeSilva in Kazimierz and a city tour. Once again, Kraków surprised its guests by presenting high quality services and great cooperation.

In connection with the preparation or acquisition of congresses for future years, we co-organized over 15 visits for congress organizers, including ESMH, ESE AUTUMN MEETING 2024, EOS Dental Congress, EuDEC Medical Congress and European Conference on Embolotherapy or VI Cities Forum. Some of the visits are a direct result of talks held at trade fairs and b2b meetings.



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## **Krakow in the rankings**

According to data published in the 65th report of the Union of International Associations (UIA), 32 industry meetings of international associations were organized in Krakow in 2023. Thus, Krakow, next to Warsaw, took 42nd place in the world, which emphasizes the importance of these cities as regional MICE centers.

At the same time, 43 ICCA meetings gave the city 30th place in Europe and 47th place in the ICCA 2023 world ranking. 179 international meetings were organized throughout the country, and Poland won 17th place in the world ranking. This is the highest position of our country in the history of the annual ranking.

In the annual industry competition Meeting Star Award, organized by Kongress Magazine, the ICE Kraków Congress Center took second place out of 40 facilities in the entire Central and Eastern Europe. Kraków, on the other hand, was in the final of the competition for cities in the L meeting Destinations category – the best congress cities that can accommodate up to 2,000 participants.