

Support programs for event organizers

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During the Kraków Network 2.0 meeting, the available forms of support dedicated to the organization of conferences and congresses were presented, with particular emphasis on opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and tools supporting Kraków's development as a host destination for prestigious international events.

On 30 March 2026, a meeting was held at Wesola Immersive as part of the Kraków Network 2.0 initiative, whose objective is to build lasting cooperation between academia, public administration, and the meetings and business events industry. The event brought together representatives of higher education institutions, research organizations, local government authorities, and the MICE sector, creating a platform for the exchange of experience, knowledge, and best practices related to the organization of international scientific conferences.

A shared strategy for Kraków

The meeting was organized by the Kraków Convention Bureau, operating within the Tourism Department of the Kraków City Office. The Kraków Network 2.0 initiative aims to integrate stakeholders involved in the development of the meetings industry and to build a strong cooperation network that will increase the number of prestigious scientific and business events held in the capital of Małopolska.

Participants were welcomed by Dr. Bogna Halska-Pionka, the Mayor's Plenipotentiary for Cooperation with the Academic Community, and Natalia Kulec-Greń, Director of the Tourism Department. Their speeches highlighted the importance of cross-sector cooperation in strengthening Kraków's position as one of the leading conference centers in Central and Eastern Europe.

Dr. Halska-Pionka emphasized that a key priority is integrating and organizing available information and tools to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders. This is intended to reduce fragmentation and improve access to information for students, researchers, academics, and external partners. She also noted the need to develop support mechanisms such as think tanks and expert groups to enhance the quality and international dimension of events. Scientific conferences should become an integral part of research projects—as platforms for knowledge exchange, presenting results, and building international partnerships. These directions align with Kraków's long-term strategy of building its brand as a metropolis of innovation and knowledge capable of attracting talent, investors, and partners from around the world.

International conferences as a driver for science and the economy

A central point of the program was a discussion on increasing the number of international conferences organized by universities and research institutions. This issue goes far beyond event organization itself. International congresses and conferences support the internationalization of Polish science, foster research collaboration, knowledge transfer, and the global visibility of academic

institutions.

At the same time, they generate measurable economic benefits for the city, contributing to the development of services, hospitality, gastronomy, and transport sectors.

Participants learned about available financial and organizational support instruments. The “Science Vectors” program was presented by Agnieszka Wierzbicka from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Practical aspects of organizing scientific events were discussed by Dr. Katarzyna Janik-Domagała from the Kraków Convention Bureau.

KCB activities include comprehensive support for organizers at every stage—from identifying and acquiring events, preparing bids, organizing site inspections, to assisting with implementation and promotion. The bureau also helps select partners, recommends local suppliers, and supports promotional activities targeting participants and decision-makers.

Experts on effective ways to attract events

Valuable industry insights were provided by representatives of key institutions involved in developing the meetings market, including:

- Aneta Książek – Director of the Poland Convention Bureau at the Polish Tourism Organisation
- Anna Jędrocha – Vice President of the Conferences and Congresses in Poland Association
- Szymon Melerski – MICE Manager at LOT Polish Airlines
- Jakub Rosły – Head of the Łódź Convention Bureau

Experts emphasized that success in acquiring international conferences no longer depends solely on infrastructure or destination attractiveness. Increasingly important are professional promotion, institutional support, accessibility, and the engagement of academic communities, which often act as initiators and ambassadors of events.

The Poland Convention Bureau (PCB POT) develops a comprehensive support system for the meetings industry, combining promotional activities with operational support in acquiring international events. Its initiatives include, among others, funding travel costs for key stakeholders during the bidding process and promotional programs that support events showcasing Poland internationally.

PCB POT also promotes inclusivity through initiatives such as the Low Sensory Show Room (LSSR)—mobile quiet zones designed to support participants sensitive to sensory stimuli and improve overall event experience.

The Polish Congress Ambassadors Programme (AKP), operating since 1998, supports the promotion of Poland as a destination for scientific and business events by engaging representatives of science, business, and sports. The program provides networking opportunities, logistical and promotional support, and fosters the development of modern event standards aligned with sustainability and innovation principles.

LOT Polish Airlines presented the “LOT International Events” program, which supports global



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conferences by offering preferential travel conditions and logistical assistance, enhancing accessibility and attendance.

The city of Łódź showcased its “Łódź Meeting Fund” program, offering financial support for events meeting defined criteria, including sustainability standards, attendance thresholds, and economic impact requirements.

These initiatives reflect a broader trend of strengthening the internationalization of science and the economy by providing practical tools to attract foreign participants and increase event prestige.

Organizational challenges and best practices

A panel discussion addressed the challenges faced by scientific conference organizers. Participants included representatives from the National Science Centre, industry associations, event companies, and the Jagiellonian University.

Key topics included funding acquisition, cooperation between academia and the MICE sector, and the role of professional congress organizers in expanding international reach. Participants stressed that successful conference organization requires an interdisciplinary approach combining scientific, logistical, marketing, and communication competencies.

Increasing importance is also being placed on sustainability, digitalization, and creating engaging experiences for participants from around the world.

Networking that leads to real projects

An important part of the meeting was networking, allowing participants to build relationships across sectors. Attendees could meet professional congress organizers (PCOs), destination management companies (DMCs), and representatives of conference and exhibition venues.

Such connections often form the basis for future cooperation, joint projects, and successful bids for international events, strengthening Kraków’s position on the global meetings market.

Wesoła Immersive - a new space for future events

The meeting took place at Wesoła Immersive, a venue showcasing a modern approach to event organization. Located in the revitalized Wesoła district, it combines technology, art, and immersive experiences, meeting the evolving expectations of organizers and participants.

After the official program, participants had the opportunity to explore the venue and discover its potential for hosting conferences, congresses, and cultural events—another example of investments enhancing Kraków’s competitiveness in the international events market.