

Together We Can! The 61st ICCA Congress is behind us

2022-11-21

Nine hundred delegates from 80 countries, over 100 speakers and 30 keynote sessions - this is how the ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) world-class event, which was hosted at ICE Kraków on 6-9 November, can be summed up in a nutshell.

Although the war across our border raised many doubts about security and attendance, the organisers managed to convince a record number of delegates from all over the world to arrive in Kraków. Decisions to attend the event were often made at the last minute, and the registration for the Congress was open until the very start, which was a huge logistical challenge.

This year's edition adopted three main areas as the thematic framework: DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), sustainability, and legacy. On the first day of the Congress, Marta Gomez from Viparis, the operator of 12 conference facilities in and around Paris, was elected the association's new president.

The sessions touched on topics related to the post-pandemic future of the meetings industry and the severe challenges planners currently face. Workshops and parallel sessions provided the opportunity to explore specific thematic areas tailored to the delegates' interests.

It was impossible to escape the topic of the war in Ukraine during the event - in either the opening sessions or the conversations backstage. Kraków and its people involved in the relief effort received numerous thanks. On the other hand, the participation of delegates at the Congress was a strong expression of solidarity with the Kraków and European meetings industry that is struggling with the effects of the war. It is not without significance that the Kraków Congress was the first live meeting after a three-year break, with highly positive energy accompanying it.

In addition to the substantive programme, an important part of the Congress was the proposed CSR activities. Delegates could choose, among other things, to jointly clean up the Lebanon quarry area or help the Ukrainian community. In cooperation with the local initiative Team Kraków for Ukraine, participants sorted clothes needed for the coming winter. Another group prepared 200 litres of soup as part of the Soup for Ukraine campaign. Those in need almost immediately collected the jars. The last group took part in a Polish handicraft workshop and donated cards and gifts made to residents of the **Ludwik and Anna Helcel Nursing Home**.

The delegates also supported the Secondary Education Hostel No. 2 in Nowa Huta, which is home to 150 students from Ukraine. Plenty of Christmas gifts were collected for children and young people, including mugs and thermal bottles, baseball caps, sweets and cosmetics.

During registration, the Congress participants made voluntary donations to the Polish Humanitarian Action, and a charity run was also organised on the Vistula boulevards: the ICCA association offered EUR 2,500 in total by donating for each person who completed it.

These activities prove that international events are not specialists' hermetic deliberations but are part of the fabric of the city and its inhabitants. Kraków promotes thinking about congresses



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in terms of 'heritage'. We believe that they are not an episode in the city's life but have the potential to impact the local community positively.

It is worth noting that most of the Congress participants were visiting Kraków for the first time. Seventy members of international associations and many representatives of PCOs and DMCs looking for locations for their events attended the function. They had the opportunity to get to know the city as well as see first-hand that the Congress infrastructure and technical facilities are of the highest level, while the professional organisation of the event is both the best recommendation and a prime reason to return to Kraków.