



'Wide open for sustainable meetings:' ICE Krakow Congress Centre

2023-11-15

In operation for eight years, ICE Krakow has become a permanent part of the urban landscape and in the calendar of business and cultural events in Krakow. Solutions and ideas for organising meetings in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be presented by Paula Fanderowska, Vice President of Krakow5020, the facility's operator.

Join us for another interview as part of the 'Wide open for sustainable meetings' series that addresses a range of issues related to the implementation of green solutions among Krakow's tourism industry and the city's sustainable development at large.

In a series of interviews, we want to explore these solutions and showcase them as good practices. This is also important for us in the context of the [GDS-Index project](#), which scores the performance of tourism market suppliers (such as hotels, restaurants, airports, agencies, conference facilities and universities) and their improvement of the quality of services provided to tourists and locals.

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

It is worthwhile to begin with the fact that the location of the Convention Centre itself is crucial. ICE Krakow is located in the very centre of the city, a 10-15 min walk to the most important attractions of Krakow in the Old Town, Kazimierz or Podgórze, as well as numerous hotels and apartments in the vicinity of the facility.

As for specific activities, on the other hand, there are indeed quite a few. In recent years, we have implemented a number of solutions at the ICE Krakow Congress Centre that are in line with SDGs. All of them are included in the Sustainability Policy for the ICE Krakow Congress Centre, a document developed by our team in cooperation with partners in the Krakow Network. In the first months of the pandemic, in June 2020, we launched a hybrid event execution studio with our technology partner, Concept Music Art CMA. As a result, despite the constraints of the epidemiological situation, events were able to take place reaching more participants than ever before, organised in a safe and, just as importantly, environmentally friendly manner. Considering that the digitalisation of events is also one of the measures that aids carbon footprint reduction, last year a professional and ultra-modern hybrid studio was launched, which we offer to event organisers to facilitate the online participation of event participants.

In addition, at ICE Krakow we have introduced several important principles regarding the operation of the facility itself, such as maximum daylight and an energy-efficient lighting system, heating the building and water, efficient management of water and energy for heating it, and the operation of heating and air conditioning in *stand-by* mode. As a result, a constant temperature is maintained in ICE Krakow regardless of the season. Thus, during hot weather or heavy frost, there is no need to use more energy to rapidly cool or heat the indoor space. And let's not forget such obvious things as conscientious waste segregation.



Besides, the very offer of a facility that includes in the price the technical equipment necessary for the event helps reduce the carbon footprint and the amount of pollution. The facility's employment of local specialists and a team responsible for event production, as well as close cooperation with local suppliers, reduces the need for transportation and also strengthens the local market.

Krakow5020 is also participating in a programme to support electromobility in public institutions. The operator of ICE Krakow is a beneficiary of this programme, and for this reason there are electric cars in the fleet operating the facility - the number is expected to gradually increase in the coming years.

As for the supply chain, we are operating in accordance with our sustainability policy in this matter as well. I am thinking, for example, of cooperation with Masters Catering and the Food Bank. Because of this cooperation, the spare food that remains after events held at ICE Kraków and is suitable for further consumption is donated to the Food Bank, from where it is distributed to those in need. It is also worth mentioning that our caterer for the service also uses biodegradable utensils made from biopaper, bamboo, corn and apple or oat pomace.

Another important initiative is the Congress Avenue, which involves planting trees along ul. Monte Cassino during major congresses held at the facility. There are nearly 40 trees along the Congress Avenue, the species of which have been selected to absorb as much pollution from the air as possible. The project is being implemented in cooperation with the Board of Urban Greenery in Krakow.

Do you have or are you interested in having your company certified for sustainable operations?

Yes, of course, we are interested in this kind of certification and are looking into the possibility of obtaining such a document. Hopefully, we will be able to show it off soon.

Do customers expect your company to have sustainable solutions or certifications?

Clients often ask for specific sustainability solutions in terms of facility operations. They are not necessarily concerned with certificates, but just pointing out specific actions. Among other things, this is why we, as a team, have developed a Sustainability Policy for the ICE Krakow Congress Centre, which we have posted in a prominent place on the website of the [Congress Centre](#), in both Polish and English language versions. We are very proud of that.

What trends in event organisation have you observed recently?

Facts that affect our reality and change the event industry market and require a new approach and flexibility are with doubt: Covid, the war in Ukraine, inflation and rising prices for services, materials and labour. Hybrid meetings are also becoming more and more popular. Equally important are also measures that assume diversity and equal access for all.

What is new, however, is a change in the industry's customer approach - building long-term



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relationships, trust and partnership and workshop work on event organisation. There is definitely more emphasis than ever before on going green and applying the zero-waste philosophy to events.

On top of all this, there are rising costs and material availability. It may be that there will be a progressively rising tendency to rent, reuse elements (primarily scenery) and even abandon such additions.

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

I would like to mention here the Kraków NETWORK in particular. It is a structured and regular platform for cooperation and discussion among representatives of the Krakow meetings industry, where experience is shared not only by its members, but also by invited experts from all over Poland. Among the topics discussed during the quarterly meetings of Krakow NETWORK, there is no shortage related to sustainable development or zero-waste, which are an excellent inspiration for initiating further actions in the spirit of sustainable development.