

'Wide open for sustainable meetings': EXPO Krakow

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The multifunctional International Exhibition and Convention Center EXPO Krakow has the capacity to host a variety of events. Since 2014, it has been a venue for organizing now highly renowned events, such as the Book Fair in Krakow, the KRAKDENT and the HORECA Fair, the LNE Congress and fair trade LNE or the TATTOOFEST Tattoo Festival. For a centre offering one of the largest exhibition spaces in Poland, operating in accordance with the principles of sustainable development is simply a necessity! Katarzyna Marciszyn, Head of the Sales and Rental Department, will tell us what solutions and ideas EXPO Krakow is implementing.

What sustainability-oriented measures have you implemented or will you be implementing by the end of 2023?

Targi w Krakowie Sp. z o.o., which is the owner and operator of the International Exhibition and Convention Center EXPO Krakow, has been addressing the issue of sustainability since the very beginning, when the Center was opened. Nonetheless, we believe that well-thought-out solutions and an experienced team are what we need to really give back to the community.

In 2014, we financed the construction of an exhibition and congress facility. The investment has revitalized this area, and was the first step towards restoring the former industrial district of Czyżyny in Krakow. The facility is managed through the Building Management System (BMS). It coordinates and optimizes the operation of all equipment at EXPO Krakow. At the design stage of the building, we paid particular attention to the need to use modern technologies and materials of the highest thermal insulation class. Our detailed analyses (conducted in close cooperation with the district heating company MPEC) allowed us to introduce an automatic heating EKO mode. By controlling dampers of the heating devices, we can significantly reduce consumption of technological heat. 90% of EXPO Krakow's space has access to daylight, enabling savings to be made on artificial lighting.

EXPO Krakow also uses the Digital Addressable Lighting Interface (DALI). This digital lighting control system allows us to fully manage even individual luminaries. We can use DALI to create any lighting model tailored to the customers' needs and arrangement, while at the same time not switching on any unnecessary devices.

We use new types of stands during the trade fairs we organize – either reusable ones or those which produce almost zero waste.

What policy does EXPO apply to its employees or partners?

The goal of our HR policy is to maintain high standards of equal treatment and equal opportunities – regardless of gender, age, skin color, origin, religion or degree of disability. We hire solely based on skills and qualifications of potential employees. We pay attention to our employees' development and access to education and knowledge to improve their skills.

We take advantage of short holiday breaks, when things are a little quieter in our industry, to relax and build positive relationships within the company. This year, employees of the Krakow Center can attend yoga classes, ceramics workshops, or go to the sports activity area and a chill room full of board games and puzzles. We are gathering our strength for what autumn has

in store for us.

We are a responsible company, and throughout the year we undertake a number of support activities. One example is an auction of unique chess pieces created by Łukasz Wiciarz – one of the most respected Polish makers of collector chess pieces – autographed by Jan Krzysztof Duda, chess grandmaster, during the first BookGame Fair. The amount raised at the final auction at the event was PLN 7,000, and it was given to orphaned children from Ukraine who either reside in Poland or remain in their country. The Team Krakow Foundation used the funds to purchase necessities such as food, school and medical supplies, hygiene items and clothing.

Another example was the 11th DENTOPOMOC charity event held during the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair in Krakow. Exhibitors donated oral hygiene products and accessories to foster children and families from the Lesser Poland region. When war broke out in Ukraine in February 2022, the organizers of KRAKDENT® set themselves the goal of helping Ukrainians. Nineteen companies became involved in this year's KRAKDENT® Fair. Thanks to the exhibitors, thousands of toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, dental floss and disposable cups were collected and donated.

It needs to be stressed that charity campaigns carried out by the Krakow Center are not only impactful on beneficiaries, but also on employees. Participation in the campaigns does not only teach empathy; it also helps to build strong relationships between people.

Let's not forget that creating and organizing events at EXPO Krakow means that business relationships can be forged between contractors from all over Poland and also the rest of Europe.

The city of Krakow is only 300 km away from important industrial centers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The drive from Krakow to Ostrava takes only two hours, and to Košice just over one hour. Add another 300 km, and you reach the neighboring countries to the south and east, and Austria, Hungary and Romania as well. What does this mean in practice? As there is a widespread tendency to shorten supply chains, this is a huge growth opportunity for local businesses. Due to restrictions on international transportation, companies are inclined to seek business in neighboring countries.

We certainly realize that our environment is also created by the local market – producers and entrepreneurs. We try to use our operations to try to build relations with companies from Krakow and Lesser Poland. Many years of cooperation with numerous partners make us certain that we play a part in the good condition of the tourist industry in our region.

We support local industry by using the services of subcontractors from the region, for instance catering companies, assembly companies, and transportation companies. We encourage our customers to choose hotels near EXPO Krakow to neutralize their carbon footprint. We are consistent in choosing alternatives to printed advertising materials. We focus on cooperation within the wider region (with Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary).

We choose public transport during business trips, to help reduce our carbon footprint. We encourage others to use bicycles and public transportation – both employees and participants

in our events. The EXPO Krakow car park has a suitable number of bicycle stands, and we keep adding new ones.

Combining business with leisure is one of the key messages of the strategy pursued by the Krakow Center. Bleisure travel can definitely be considered when creating a sustainable business model in the MICE industry. The owner of EXPO Krakow is introducing this type of solution at its own events. One example is the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair, where exhibitors and visitors can use DENTOSPOTS, i.e., recommended locations on the restaurant and cultural map of Krakow, and are given discounts on admission or on à la carte dishes. More and more people enjoy what cities have to offer after hours when traveling on business. Some even choose to extend their stay. In terms of sustainability, it is important to encourage longer rather than frequent stays.

Does your organization have or are you interested in obtaining certification for sustainable operations?

Certainly. More and more of our customers, especially those from abroad, inquire to find out how we take care of the environment and what actions we take as a company. Holding an international certificate makes our efforts credible in the eyes of potential partners.

Do customers expect your enterprise to apply sustainable solutions or have certificates?

Sustainability in the MICE industry is no longer a trend – it is a necessity. We all, together with our customers, expect specific solutions. Our subcontractors – to the best of their ability – are reinventing their companies in the spirit of sustainability. No longer relying on printed materials, using reusable fittings and scenery, reusable crockery in catering, printing on reusable materials – these are just some of the adopted solutions. We realize that certification is important because it verifies and confirms the measures implemented. Nonetheless, what is even more important is the belief that sustainability really makes sense.

What trends in organizing meetings have you observed recently?

One of the trends we have now is the creation of individual, unique experiences. This is exactly why customers choose EXPO Krakow. Creating positive experiences is key for us. We approach everyone individually, first learning about needs and then meeting expectations. We also rely on technology, indispensable in the case of modern events. I have no doubt that we are still in for many surprises in this area, and certainly the near future will also bring many debates on the impact of artificial intelligence on the meetings industry. In recent years, the MICE industry, which suffered greatly due to the pandemic, has changed dramatically. Flexibility, inclusivity, openness to change – these are the key words for successful events.

Where do you look for knowledge and inspiration for organizing sustainable meetings?

We obtain information during networking meetings, training courses and trade fairs, which we regularly attend. We pay attention to what is happening at other events in Poland and abroad.



**Magiczny
Kraków**

We listen to the industry, partners and customers. We belong to a number of associations where we work together to develop new solutions in this field.