

'Wide open for sustainable meetings': TAURON Arena Krakow

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Małgorzata Marcińska, President of the Management Board of Arena Krakow S.A., joins us for an interview, in which she talks about the solutions implemented at the venue in line with the sustainability goals, outlines how the management policy of TAURON Arena Krakow has changed over the course of nearly 10 years, and shares insights about the projects the largest sports and entertainment hall in Poland is involved in.

What measures in line with the sustainability goals have been, or will be, implemented by the end of 2023 at TAURON Arena Krakow?

TAURON Arena Krakow is the largest indoor arena in Poland, and one of the largest in Europe. Over the course of nearly ten years of its existence, the policy of managing this infrastructure has changed, taking into account the requirements of modern management and global trends in sustainability. What steps have we taken so far? Most importantly, we are aware of the changing environment and challenges faced by managers of large entertainment and conference facilities. Sustainability is, after all, about changing the way we behave, and this awareness determines decisive steps in both office spaces and the supply chain.

As part of advanced waste management, the rubbish disposed of by event attendees, as well as employees who have separate rubbish bins available on a daily basis, is segregated. We have implemented a number of solutions to reduce the consumption of energy and natural resources at the venue, such as: the use of taps with water flow limiters, tap filters and aerators, the installation of central paper and towel dispensers in the restrooms, and a system of detectors and timers to reduce energy consumption in the entire venue. We recently replaced the source of light in lamp fixtures with LED sources, and we have made investments to optimise the operating costs of the arena, including a smart lighting control system in the sports locker rooms, corridors and parking lots, as well as modernisation of independent air conditioning in the sports locker rooms (by installing and integrating a system of fan coil units, reworking the air conditioning along with the offices, level C and conference rooms).

By the end of 2023, a photovoltaic system will be installed on the arena's steel structure bordering with the reinforced concrete structure for installations 1 and 2, with a total electrical output of approx. 300 kWp. That's enough power to call our new installation a power plant, or a solar farm, which will significantly reduce CO2 emissions.

What is Arena Krakow S.A.'s policy towards employees or contractors?

In the current debate of sustainability, a lot of attention is paid primarily to the issues of climate change and excessive carbon emissions. We often forget about environmental issues other than climate-related issues, including the protection of biodiversity or the economical management of water resources. Social issues are no less important: corporate governance or investments in human capital development. Today, prioritising sustainability starts right at the top of the organisation. The strategy of the future seems to be sustainable organisations according to the ESG method (environment, society and governance). TAURON Arena Krakow, as a member of the European Arenas Association bringing together representatives of the largest arenas in Europe, has the opportunity to exchange know-how and participate in creating global trends related to the sustainability of largescale venues. The Association (EAA) has adopted the AGF



Guidelines for the sustainability of arenas, which outline the goals and tasks facing us - facility managers, both in the short- and long-term perspective.

In order to meet sustainability goals, we require the involvement of our entire team of employees, as well as external partners. We are in the long and arduous process of daily sustainability efforts to move towards overall profitability improvement across the value chain. It is important to talk about sustainability and explain what it involves. In environmental terms, we do this during the Great Ecology Lesson - an outdoor event that we organise in cooperation with the City of Krakow and entities specialising in this field (municipal companies, universities or third sector entities). During this year's edition, we talked about sustainable transportation in the city; water conservation, climate change or organic waste. We teach through experiments, lectures and fun, gaining knowledge that we can apply to our daily activities.

One of the tasks placed on arena managers, but also event organisers, is to minimise the negative environmental impact (carbon footprint) of travel and events. Demonstrating the positive impact of the event on the local community and all stakeholders involved is also becoming popular. Environmental awareness will soon no longer be a "pleasure," but a necessity and duty for each one of us.

The process of changing the supply chain is time-consuming and risky, but not impossible. We started with ourselves. At TAURON Arena Krakow and Arena Garden, Meta sp. z o.o., which is responsible for catering services, uses biodegradable plates and packaging for food (including hot dogs, mini pizzas, baguettes). Takeaway meals are served in recycled packaging, and cups for serving beverages are made of recycled plastic. Ahead of each of the events held at TAURON Arena Krakow, we remind participants of how well the venue is connected to the remaining parts of the city, encouraging them to use public transport, thus reducing the "carbon footprint" of our guests who, arriving separately by car, leave a significantly higher carbon footprint. TAURON Arena Krakow is close to both tram and bus stops, bicycle racks are available at the stairs leading to the facility, and there are designated parking spaces for electric scooters. In cooperation with Zarząd Transportu Publicznego (Public Transport Authority) Thanks to cooperation with Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacyjne S.A, fleets of buses are available after events, transporting residents and visitors to various areas of the city.

Are you or do you plan to have your company certified for sustainable operations?

Already for several years TAURON Arena Krakow has been applying a policy called Ekoarena, under which we have implemented a number of sustainability initiatives - the highest standards of management and supervision are applied both externally, i.e. in social and environmental activities, and internally, supported by the ISO 9001 Quality Management System Certificate granted to us every year. Arena Krakow S.A. employees are trained to improve their performance. We undertake various types of cooperation with event organisers, facility managers or cities, serving not only networking, but also the exchange of good practices and the development of joint strategic sustainability programmes. As I mentioned before, we are members of the European Arenas Association (EAA) and, since March 2023, we are also stakeholders in the MINEV (Waste MINimization in Big EVents) international project, which aims



to explore the possibilities of cities and implement measures to prevent/minimise waste generation during events. Identification of good practices will take place for different types of events, including closed/open, sports, business, cultural, and scientific events by sharing experiences and making efforts to implement useful solutions.

The project partners are: Málaga (leader), Krakow, Bologna, Klaipeda, the Central Macedonia Region (Greece) and the ACR+ organisation (Belgium), and the project is scheduled to be completed by February 2027.

Do customers expect your company to provide sustainable solutions / be certified?

Environmental and social responsibility in business are currently hot topics influencing the event industry. Sustainability will naturally remain a key challenge, with the “environment” being perceived in social, cultural or business aspects. Pro-environmental solutions and enhanced participants’ creativity in this area have been observed for years across the globe. This awareness is also the case in Poland, and we - venue managers - are motivated by global trends, as we are keen to “stay in the loop” of large events: concert tours, congresses, sports events, etc. There are times when teams require specific, environmentally-friendly efforts from their stakeholders - including venue operators. We have not yet failed to comply with such requirements.

What event organisation trends have you observed recently?

Event organisers are increasingly going green: examining their carbon footprint, replacing plastic with biodegradable materials, focusing on recycling and upcycling. We are observing consumer demand for sustainable products and businesses.

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

Our biggest source of inspiration are the events we organise at TAURON Arena Krakow in cooperation with our partners. We listen to and learn from experts, and work together for sustainable meetings. The Great Lesson in Ecology (WLE), inaugurated seven years ago and co-organised with the City of Krakow and institutions working to improve the climate, can serve as an example here. This is a flagship project, which other cities in Poland are already copying. There is much for us to boast about, as this cyclical outdoor event is increasingly popular among Krakow residents. More than 3,000 people visited us this year, breaking the stereotype of boring lessons. Together with us, both children and adults gain knowledge, participate in experiments, and work creatively using ecological materials. We teach through fun and in a friendly atmosphere, although the topics are by no means trivial. During our event, companies from the City of Krakow and other public and private entities, including Krakow universities and NGOs, present their pro-environmental activities for the benefit of Krakow residents. The event includes educational interactive stands, workshops aimed at specific age groups, concerts, competitions and a series of scientific lectures. To encourage the youngest participants to visit as many of the stands as possible, we use a simple stamp passport system. Visitors receive a stamp pad at the entrance. At the stands our youngest guests then have to perform a task or listen to a lecture, in return for which they receive a stamp. Having collected a sufficient number of stamps, they can exchange the completed “passport” for seedlings, lettuce or



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culinary herbs. This form of reward attracts more visitors and motivates them to actively engage in the event.

In addition to organising our own events, we participate in meetings of the Krakow Network group, touching on issues of sustainable tourism and the MICE market, as well as in international projects, such as MINEV, which I have already mentioned. We are committed to ensuring growth of the awareness of sustainability in our team. The opportunity to confront other cities, organisers or managers of venues gives us a broad perspective of exchanging experiences and modelling solutions that have become successful in other cities, especially in Europe.