



More Than You Expected in Brussels

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On April 18, 2024, at The Hoxton Brussels Hotel, the International Office of the Polish Tourism Organisation (ZOPOT) in Brussels, along with the Poland Convention Bureau, organized a workshop titled "Poland. More Than You Expected" for 20 representatives of international associations, congress organizers, and leading media outlets focusing on association meetings.

The workshop, featuring Polish representation in addition to PTO, included participation from four partners from Poland. The primary factors influencing the choice of final destination for international meeting planners remain air connections, high-quality conference and congress facilities, and the attractiveness of the location. Due to the direct connections between Brussels-Warsaw and Brussels-Krakow (PLL LOT and Brussels Airlines), the organizers decided to invite convention bureaux from these cities (Warsaw Convention Bureau and Kraków Convention Bureau)), which simultaneously represent Poland most prominently in the ICCA and UIA rankings. As congresses and conferences largely do not take place without the organizational support of PCOs, the presentation was reinforced by the presence of two recommended PCOs - Mazurkas Congress Management and Poznań Congress Center PCO.

Brussels being the headquarters of many international associations, today's workshop holds significant importance, offering opportunities for building and maintaining business contacts and confirming Poland's role as a leader in Central Europe for meetings and events. In previous years, we participated in industry workshops organized in Wallonia and Flanders, but we were just one of many exhibitors at those events. Thanks to our collaboration with the Poland Convention Bureau and external partners, we were able to realize our own tailor-made event, innovative in its approach, engaging participants to share their experiences and needs in organizing conferences and congresses for their associations - said Dominika Szulc, Director of the Foreign Office of PTO in Brussels.

Brussels ranks third, after New York and Washington, as the most densely populated city by foreigners employed as experts in international associations, organizations, corporations, and EU institutions. Despite this strong representation, reaching decision-makers in these organizations is very demanding, if not difficult, due to intense competition among host cities and numerous events taking place in this market. It is for this reason that we decided to depart from the traditional meeting format and presentation styles in favor of an innovative workshop with trainers who engaged participants through various tasks. The meeting program, conducted using the Meeting Design method, included tasks, games, and the opportunity for partners to share their event management experiences through short moderated interviews -said Aneta Książek, Manager of the Poland Convention Bureau at PTO.

We are pleased that our invitation to this part of the meeting was accepted by Małgorzata Bartosik, Deputy Director General of WindEurope, who has been working for 20 years in a key organization dedicated to the development of wind energy worldwide - added Aneta Książek.

Meeting Design is a problem-solving method focused on innovation and teamwork. The success of the meeting depends on how each participant (both guest and host) behaves and interacts,



as well as the quality of the information created and shared. Meetings that only follow an emission format (one-way presentation) can push participants into a passive role, effectively disengaging them and relieving them of the role of event co-creator. They do not leave a lasting impression and therefore have little impact on decisions regarding the location of future meetings or events. In simpler terms, the classic meeting format is unable to unleash the power of interpersonal interaction.

The Meeting Design method starts with people and their needs, for whom effective solutions are created. The DT process consists of 5 stages: empathy, needs diagnosis, idea generation, prototyping, and testing. Those interested in delving into the design thinking method are referred to the book "Meetings by Default, or meetings by Design?" by Eric de Groot and Mike van der Vijver from MindMeeting, who led the "Poland. More Than You Expected" workshop in Brussels.

The event was organized by the Foreign Office of the Polish Tourism Organization in Brussels, and the Poland Convention Bureau in collaboration with [Boardroom](#), [CoCoA](#), [MindMeeting](#) and [Breeze](#). The workshop was accompanied by a campaign in the association magazine Boardroom Magazine, and the company Breeze calculated the carbon footprint of the meeting. [The programme Poland. More than you expected in Brussels.](#)

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