

Krakow Business Tourism in 2020 and beyond

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Year 2020 has been especially difficult for MICE sector in Krakow. Venues were fully booked and when COVID-19 pandemic started this sector had to face extreme challenges adopting a new approach and operating in the “management in crisis” mode in the new reality.

Congresses and Exhibitions

When pandemic restrictions came into effect “Historical Cities 3.00” Conference organized by Kraków Convention Bureau (KCB) has just started. KCB managed to modify its programme in the way enabling the important and fruitful international discussions, involving eminent experts who traveled to our City at that time. It was possible only thanks to prompt reaction, great flexibility and determination of all those engaged in the project.

Later, because of the severe restrictions imposed, many events had to be cancelled but a significant number were postponed for 2021/2022 (that was especially the case of most important, big events). Taking ICE Krakow Congress Center as an example it is fair to say that about 40% of the conferences were cancelled, 30% were organized in hybrid mode or online. To name only two, 24th International Congress of the Polish Cardiac Society, scheduled as hybrid, had to switch to online mode just a few days before its opening session. 20 000 participants from 44 countries took part in that event which had been accessible for 43 days to accommodate all previously planned panels and sessions. The hybrid Open Eyes Economy Summit attracted 3000 participants from 27 countries. It helped us to realize the scale of hybrid congresses potential.

It needs to be underlined that Krakow has already been chosen to host such events like EEACI Hybrid Congress in 2021 and the Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation in 2023.

Exhibition sector, as we can see looking at the example of Krakow EXPO, was not able to organize many of the planned events, but in the periods when less strict regulations were in force it managed to realize part of the previously scheduled events including the innovative ANTICOVID EXPO presenting sanitary-epidemiological solutions. Responding to clients' needs Krakow EXPO organized also a series of thematic webinars for among others: *composites* industry, packaging industry, HORECA and publishing industry.

Strong brand

Kraków is highly recognized by the international meeting industry thanks to the organization of various significant congresses. Kraków Convention Bureau (KCB) intensified communication and promotion of our city's strengths and potential being Krakow' driving force, leading to creating new jobs, attracting investors and organizers of important international events. Together with its partners the City of Kraków builds the reputation and brand of The Host City using, among others, the social media (Facebook and Instagram - @KrakowConventionCenter) and communicating about R&D, business and technology, culture and heritage in Krakow. Our City is presents itself as a very attractive partner for potential event organizers offering them significant intellectual potential and a variety of specializations.

Also partnerships at the local level are of high importance for the city. In close cooperation with them a special, flexible offer has been prepared to ensure the competitiveness of Kraków. New promotional films, photos and other multimedia content is available on our city's Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn profiles.

Those efforts will be even more effective thanks to the new "Destination Małopolska" programme to be realized by Municipality of Kraków together with the Self-government of the Małopolska Province and Polish Tourism Organization in 2021 and 2022. The aim of this project is to regain the leading "pre-pandemic" position of Kraków and Małopolska region through the tailor made promotional and information campaign. Kraków Convention Bureau is responsible for targeting MICE sector. Meticulous preparations will take place throughout the year 2021 and the campaign will start in 2022.

Areas of focus for Krakow tourism in the future

Municipal Department of Tourism analyzes and tracks all new trends and challenges emerging in the tourism sector and is preparing a document outlining the Krakow tourism strategy, every few years. The outburst of COVID-19 pandemic coincided in time with the designing of such new document. Therefore, "Sustainable Tourism Policy in Krakow for the years 2021-2028" does not contain the usual very detailed information on the specific actions, aims and financing but it takes new approach outlining nine recommended areas of focus for our city: "tailor made" tourism market in Krakow, urban tourism hypertrophy and balanced sharing economy, meeting industry (an important one from the city budget point of view), tourism reputation and identity management, tourism marketing communication, night-time economy management, culture and creative industry, managing conflicts between stakeholders and new technologies in tourism.

Sustainable tourism policy brings to our attention the necessity of balancing the needs of all the stakeholders in the tourism market, self-government administration, citizens and business owners. Rational use of the city's resources and potential, respecting its traditions, culture and unique atmosphere is crucial for the harmonious and optimal development of tourism.