



ASSOCIATION
MAGAZINE

POLAND

EVENT GUIDEBOOK - LET'S MOVE BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

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SAFETY AND
DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION

SUPPORT FROM
CONVENTION
BUREAUX

ONE COUNTRY,
MANY STORIES

A DECK
FULL OF ACES

The past year has transformed the MICE industry all over the world and the Polish event sector have instantly adapted to the new reality.

BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

Polish destinations and venues, hotels, DMCs, PCOs and convention bureaux, successfully introduced solutions to arrange top-quality events that are not only safe, but also technologically advanced. Studios have transitioned to hybrid events and more and more agencies are adjusting to the changes. The **#VirtualEvents** of the Poznań-based **MTP Group**, studios of the **ICE Kraków Congress Centre**, **International Congress Centre in Katowice** and **Lublin Conference Centre** are just some of the many great examples. In other words, COVID-19 sped up a phenomenon that is blending online and offline. This is precisely what is happening now in Poland!

If we add to this the growing importance of so-called second cities, the emphasis on smart regions, affordable prices and the in-

demand factor, we come to the conclusion that Poland is a perfect MICE destination in the post-pandemic world. The actions of local professionals aim at the same objective – to build customer relationships with a brand, a company or an association by providing thrilling experiences.

The highly demanding 2020 did not prevent Poland from hosting pivotal events, such as the **European Economic Congress** in Katowice, the **Economic Forum** in Karpacz – the country's largest online congress – the **hybrid DiverCITY 4 conference** in Wrocław, **6th the edition of the European Cybersecurity Forum**, **Ultrace 2020** in Katowice, and the **“1920. Grateful to the Heroes”** show in PGE Narodowy. Mention also to the industry meetings – the **Event Mix** conference and the hybrid 8th edition of **Meetings Week Poland**.

This new reality calls for the development of new procedures, with safety and hygiene measures likely to remain the number one issue in the years to come.

SAFETY FIRST

Studies and reports such as **“Cvent 2020 Planner Sentiment and Sourcing”** and **“The American Express Meetings & Events 2021 Global Meetings and Events Forecast”** confirm this trend. To restore demand in the MICE sector, customers need to feel safe at every stage of implemented projects.

Representatives of the Polish industry spent the lockdown working on standards and procedures for events staged in the new safety conditions. The largest conference centres implemented appropriate solutions in this area, with the majority of hotels following suit. Organisers, including DMCs and PCOs, also adopted their own set of procedures. At the beginning of the pandemic, the **Kraków Network Together** initiative launched a project group working on available options of organising events,

producing the **“Post-Pandemic Event Safety”** document. Safety issues gained prominence in Poland to the point that virtually each offer not only showcases the promoted destination, but also places emphasis on detailing its health and safety procedures.

The support shown by **Polish Tourism Organisation**, which runs the **“Have a Safe Stay in Poland”** campaign, certainly plays a crucial role in the above mentioned actions. The project encompasses two self-certification programmes: **“Hygienically Safe Venue”** aimed at hotels, and **“Safe MICE Venue”**, targeting convention centres. These two useful tools provide information about venues in accordance with the guidelines of health and safety authorities. Thanks to these efforts, the development of all types of events is now both safe and comfortable. After all, trust is the key to success in any personal and business relationship.

▼ *Sunset at Vistula River Warsaw*



Assistance given by convention bureaux has reinforced the confidence of meeting planners.

SUPPORT FROM CONVENTION BUREAUX

In the 2019 edition of “**The CVB & the Future of the Meetings Study**” compiled in cooperation with Destinations International and Miles Partnership, more than 60% of planners consider the operations of bureaux as very important to meetings industry’s development, and as many as 78.6% report regularly accessing CVB resources. In the case of Poland, the governmental **Poland Convention Bureau** has been operating for many years now, along with 10 local bureaux based in **Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Toruń, Warsaw** and **Wrocław**. The units in question act predominantly as first points of contact and objective partners, in promoting destinations for all those who wish to hold a MICE event. They boast essential knowledge on all available products must see, recommended companies, subcontractors, and venues.

Either directly or through local destinations, Poland is a member of numerous major international organisations, such as International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Union of International Associations (UIA), European Cities Marketing (ECM), Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), The Global Association of the

Exhibition Industry (UFI) and European Major Exhibition Centres Association (EMECA). Poland Convention Bureau is a founding member of the **Strategic Alliance of the National Convention Bureaux of Europe**, which focuses on working out joint standards for the European industry and on strengthening Europe’s position as a leading destination for international business events.

The national convention bureau continues its efforts to make it easier for planners to operate in this new reality. Thanks to cooperation with its local counterparts, key initiatives were launched to offer additional support for the industry. In this context, the “**Hygienically Safe Venue**” project expanded with the “**Safe MICE Venue**” self-certification, needs to be mentioned again along with the “**Poland Online Site Inspection**” extensive online catalogue of venues available for meetings and events. The latter publication offers select information about Poland more than 500 venues (conference and congress centres, hotels, restaurants, unique venues) and highlights proposals of incentive programmes and multimedia materials, including interactive city maps and virtual tours. Another key feature of “Poland Online Site Inspection”



involves contact data of local convention bureaux and recommended PCOs and ITCs (Incentive Travel Companies). In these pandemic times, characterised by restrictions and dynamically changing regulations, they gain prominence as a source of crucial knowledge and know-how. In addition, their expertise is far superior to anything that can be found online, making it possible to flawlessly select partners for their customers. They continuously monitor everything going on in certain cities and regions.

It is precisely the transparent cooperation between all partners involved in securing and then organising events, that distinguishes the Polish MICE Industry. By speaking with one voice, Poland as a destination efficiently builds its competitive advantage. After all, operational synergy has always been a crucial component.



ONE COUNTRY, MANY STORIES

Poland is a large and diverse country abounding in cultural and natural assets, as shown by the 23 national parks. It gathers both major and relatively unexplored cities that nonetheless, feature **solid event infrastructure** and great **active tourism options**. The events they host will definitely be remembered by delegates for a long time.

Studies carried out by ICCA and other institutions point to a growing interest in the so-called second cities, which also works in Poland's favour. This term refers to smaller destinations, less known than the main global cities, but which still boast an intriguing offer and first-rate infrastructure. As a result of several factors, the pandemic highlighted this trend. Such destinations are recognised as **safer** and to have a more **compact location** in terms of infrastructure. Unlike top destinations, secondary cities do not struggle with an excessive number of events, which makes their calendars much more **flexible and affordable**. Last but not least, in this day and age the novelty factor is actually much more significant than one might expect. Due to the hybrid turnaround, planners are looking for **untapped destinations** to encourage physical attendance. Poland certainly has what it takes in this department. The country's promotion is centred on top players, but also spotlights less obvious choices.

Let's meet them all!





KRAKÓW

A place that effortlessly fuses medieval pomp and pageantry with modern-day...

Kraków is celebrated as a city of culture, art, historical monuments, as well as business. The capital of the Małopolska region is capable of hosting even the most spectacular events, and achieving a world-class level of organisation. Just in recent years, it has hosted seminal events, such as **UNESCO's 41st session of the World Heritage Committee** and the **15th World Congress of the Organization of World Heritage Cities**, as well as a wide range of medical congresses. Great hotels and conference centres such as **ICE Kraków**, **Expo Kraków** or **Tauron Arena**, and high-potential copartners, including top-notch renowned universities, research and development centres, continue to attract customers to this city of congresses and innovative initiatives. The **Kraków Network** initiative is an unmatched platform for sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices among a strong group of businesses

representing various sectors of the meetings industry. A clear example of the involvement of members of mentioned business group in the promotion of Krakow worldwide is the **KRAKÓW NETWORK Protocol** announced in March 2021. The document inspired by the ICCA's "Kaohsiung Protocol", which is not only a set of good practices and recommendations adapted to the new post-pandemic reality regarding such issues as: joint risk management, innovative business models, engagement and value for participants, digitisation and promotion of hybrid events, but also an introduction to common strategy for the years 2021-2023. Moreover, Kraków is a great starting point for a trip to the world-famous **"Wieliczka" Salt Mine**, which each year hosts about 300 underground events, Poland's highest **Tatra Mountains**, and many other spectacular natural landscapes.



A rising MICE destination in Central Europe, this Wonderwoman put down her shield and sword, dynamically merged into the ever-changing meetings industry...

WARSAW

The vibrant capital, **Warsaw**, country's business centre and the headquarters for numerous global companies. It is also recognised as the number one Polish destination for business trips. The **Varso Tower**, European Union's tallest building and the new seat of the Museum of Modern Art, will soon join its portfolio. Warsaw offers a wide selection of historical monuments, museums and places connected with its oft-tumultuous history. Add to this a splendid hotel base, conference and trade show

infrastructure (**Expo XXI Warszawa**, **Ptak Warsaw Expo**, **Global Expo**), an extensive range of one-of-a-kind venues (**Kubicki Arcades** at the **Royal Castle**, **Copernicus Science Centre**, **Polish Vodka Museum**), and you get is the total package. Warsaw is simply inseparable from the **Vistula River** that played a pivotal role in the city's growth, offering today countless highlights to its residents and tourists. Near the capital, one will find the green land of **Kampinos Forest**, a superb match for everyone wishing to literally take a deep breath of fresh air and relax amidst soothing nature sounds.



GDAŃSK

An important seaport that has become the cradle of the “Solidarity” movement...

Trójmiasto (Tricity) also deserves to be mentioned with **Gdańsk** at the top of the list. ‘Cradle of the solidarity movement’ that started Poland’s democratic transformation, the city is a thriving academic, business and commercial centre with its old town attractions that will delight all visitors, notably **Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, **Artus Court**, **Golden Gate**, and **Neptune’s Fountain**. When in Gdańsk, be sure to visit the **Museum of the Second World War**, the **European Solidarity Centre** and the **Shakespeare Theatre**. Moreover, each of the above-mentioned venues is recommended as stage for MICE events. Gdańsk neighbours the trendy resorts of **Sopot** and **Gdynia**, the latter known as “city of the sea and dreams”, having led the ranking of the happiest cities in Poland several times. When staying in Trójmiasto you can easily visit the nearby **Malbork Castle**, the world’s largest and meticulously preserved Gothic castle, and the **Hel Peninsula**, with fabulous hideaways, spots for leisure-time activities and lively resorts.



WROCLAW

Wrocław is a fascinating historical city that is also a **business hub** with a thriving academic community. Its history and setting render it open to most diverse cultures. An absolute must-see, the **Wrocław Market Square** features not only a **Late Gothic town hall**, but also numerous cafes, pubs and restaurants. When visiting the city, be sure to tour its oldest area, the **Ostrów Tumski island** surrounded by branches of the Odra. UNESCO World Heritage site, the **Centennial Hall** complex is a top-grade setting for meetings and events composed by a mixed-use event centre, featuring the **Multimedia Fountain** and surrounded by a pergola. On the other side of the street, the **Africarium** offers a truly unique dining

A venerable city comprising 12 islands, 130 bridges and verdant riverside parks. The beautifully preserved Cathedral Island is a treat for lovers of Gothic architecture.

experience with its tables set in an underwater tunnel filled with 3 million litres of water and inhabited by 30 fish species. The **Hydropolis Water Knowledge Centre** – a great choice for eco-friendly projects and green events – has no peers in the whole Europe. The offer is complemented by venues in the region included on the European Route of Castles and Palaces, such as the **Topacz Castle**, the **Automotive Museum**, a golf driving range and kayaks.



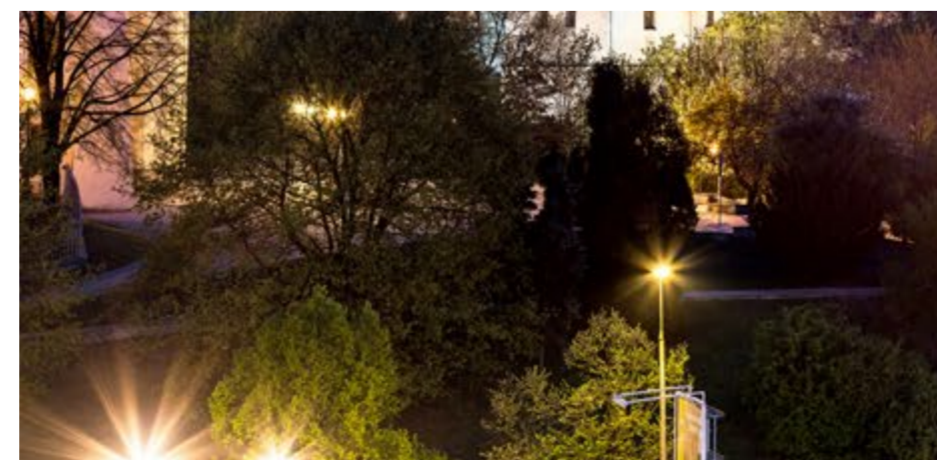
A combination of international delegates attending its numerous trade fairs and the city's huge student population has created a distinctive vibe in the Wielkopolska's capital.

POZNAŃ

Halfway between Warsaw and Berlin you will find one of Poland's oldest cities – **Poznań**, recognised as the cradle of Polish statehood and notable by its compact character. The **Old Town Market Square**, in its very centre, is a good starting point for learning more about the local culture and its quintessential products, such as the celebrated St. Martin's croissants in the **Poznań Croissant Museum**. In addition, the city holds a great selection of indispensable MICE infrastructure – hotels, office buildings, and superb trade show and conference facilities. The credit goes to **Poznań International Fair**, the largest organiser of this type of events in the whole Central and Eastern Europe. The complex includes the advanced **Poznań Congress Center** available for congresses, exhibitions and shows, with capacity for tens of thousands of participants. The airport is less than 7 km from the city centre (15 minutes by car) and the main accommodations are all within walking distance.



▲ *Poznań's Old Town Square*



▼ *Nightfall at Lublin Old Town*



LUBLIN

A hidden gem in southern Poland, Lublin is the region's largest city, with a thriving cultural and academic scene.

The list of superb event destinations highlighted by historical monuments and offering a world-class experience, is not complete without **Lublin**. The city is also an important part of Poland's Jewish past. For centuries it was recognised as a leading centre of Jewish scholarship, giving rise to its nickname, the 'Jewish Oxford'. Known as a hub of inspirations, it is also an ideal meeting point for numerous events and festivals where tradition and modernity intertwine at every step.

Lublin Conference Centre and the **Centre for the Meeting of Culture** are among the flagship venues hosting a great number of congresses, conferences and exhibitions. Be sure also to explore other parts of the Lublin region, including **Roztocze**, a perfect active leisure getaway, and the romantic town of **Kazimierz Dolny**.

BYDGOSZCZ & TORUŃ



With an offer spanning from peaceful downtowns to dedicated cultural, conference and trade show venues (i.a. **Opera Nova**, **Bydgoszcz Trade Fair and Exhibition Centre**, **Cultural and Congress Centre Jordanki** in Toruń), the cities of **Bydgoszcz** and **Toruń** are both highly recommended for memorable events.

Toruń, where visitors can revel unrestricted in its wealth of historic buildings and city defences, all of which were mercifully left untouched in World War II. The entire town is listed as a **Unesco World Heritage** site for being an unusually and well-preserved example of a medieval European trading and administrative centre.

Bydgoszcz (/BID-goshtch/), the city is a part of Bydgoszcz – Toruń metropolitan area, seated in northern Poland. Known as the ‘Little Berlin’, it is famous for the rich architectural styles, displaying timeless neo-gothic, neo-baroque, neoclassicist, modernist and Art Nouveau styles. Well-equipped hotels and F&B businesses are guaranteed to meet the expectations of the most demanding guests, and the proximity of the two cities makes it possible to develop combined programmes that also contemplate relaxing getaways in nature.

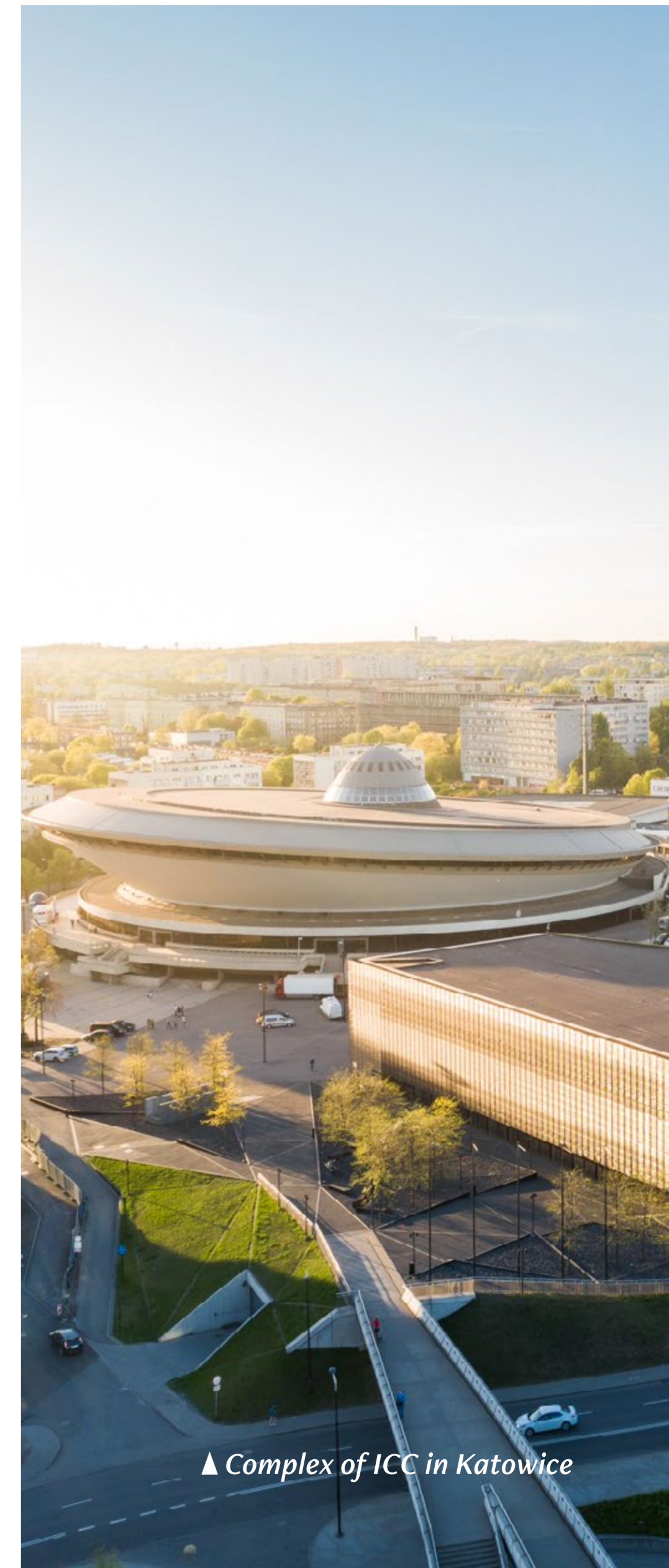


ŁÓDŹ & KATOWICE

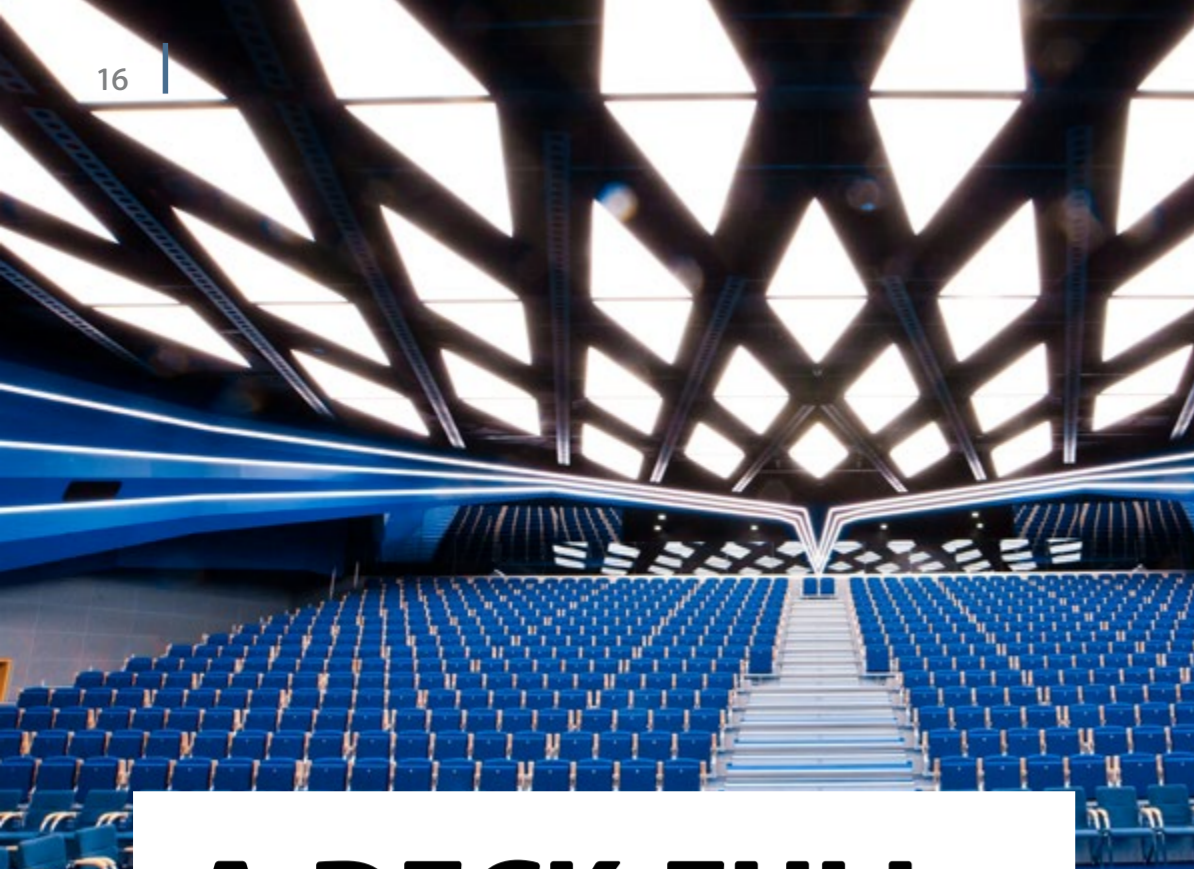
The post-industrial cities of **Łódź** and **Katowice** are also part of the roadmap for business travellers. Both destinations placed a high note on **modern services** and feature **high-class hotels** and **conference and cultural venues**.

The New Centre of Łódź, combining business, culture and transportation, deserves to be mentioned due to the city’s very first power plant (EC1), a historical complex of former factories – **Monopolis and Manufaktura**. The opening of **Orientalium**, designed as part of the **Łódź Zoological Garden**, is scheduled for the second half of 2021. Additionally Łódź also is highly recommended for a themed walk dedicated to **Polish filmmakers**, commonly dubbed as the ‘HollyŁódź’.

Among the standouts of **Katowice**, mention is due to the **Culture Zone** with the iconic **Spodek**, a modern concert hall of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, the **International Congress Centre** and the **Silesian Museum** seated in a former coalmine. When staying in Śląsk (Silesia), the **Industrial Monuments Route** is an absolute must-see, with special emphasis on the **Guido Mine**.



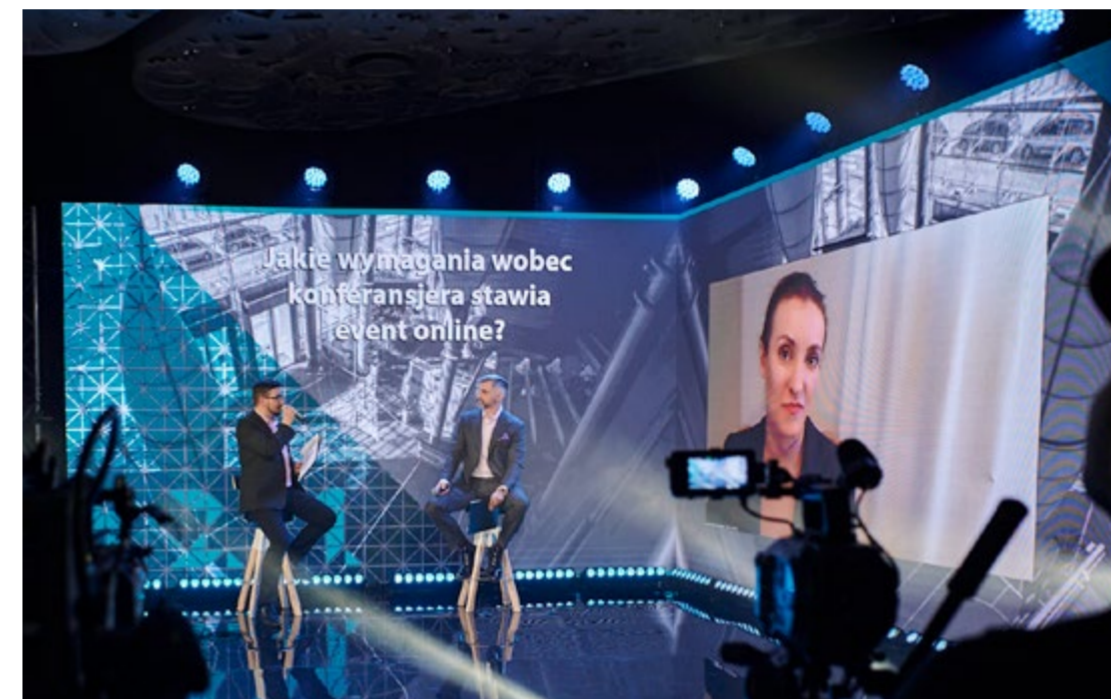
▲ Complex of ICC in Katowice



A DECK FULL OF ACES

These are precisely the sort of places meeting planners are now looking for. As stated by the “Incentive Travel Industry Index 2020”, nature, open-air spaces and less crowded destinations are now in vogue. Poland’s **central location** (about 2 hours’ flight from most European airports) and the outstanding ratio between **price and quality of services** (according to data from Eurostat and Numbeo) deserve to be highlighted, in addition to the country’s security from an epidemic point of view, low crime and terrorist threat rates, and lack of natural disasters. In other words, this is the right time to bring your MICE event to Poland!

Let us also not forget about the world-famous **Polish hospitality** and delicious regional cooking influenced by Old Polish traditions and the impact of Belarusian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Tatar and Jewish cuisines. Just as important is the advanced **hotel accommodation** (more than 43,000 beds rated from 3 to 5 stars), numerous **conference and exhibition centres**, the so-called **unique venues** (manor houses, castles,



palaces, post-industrial buildings, villas) and DMCs and agencies prepared to provide professional services for business meetings. Meeting planners are also supported by the country’s flag carrier, **LOT Polish Airlines**, which introduced special deals for business travellers, such as fare discounts and flexible booking management.

SMART SPECIALISATIONS

Changing priorities impacting the choice of destinations, are also related to the growing importance of the so-called smart specialisations. Planners are increasingly interested in regions, whose economic and scientific specialisations are connected with the industry in which a given company or association operates. It is all about the

added value, namely access to knowledge, technology, specialists, and greater chances of securing new members or local speakers.

For some years now, Poland made its offer more attractive by recognising the relevance of the smart specialisations in which it has capitalised its promotion. Poland Convention Bureau compiled a detailed map of specialisations broken down into the country’s voivodeships: **healthcare, automotive industry, information and communications technology, energy industry** (also of the low-carbon kind), **bio-based economy, transport industry, construction, electrical engineering, agrifood** and **chemical sectors** – these are only some examples on the long list of industries and areas that Polish regions

are specialising in. The jury of the **Polish Congress Ambassadors Programme** each year recognises eminent figures of Polish science, economy and culture that are actively engaged in international organisations and promote awareness of Poland’s assets. Their knowledge and experience act as an invaluable support for all customers.

HIGH SCORES

The pivotal role played by the meetings industry in Poland is best reflected by figures. According to the 2020 edition of the “Poland Events Impact” report, the MICE sector generates approximately **1.5% of the national GDP**, creating more than **220,000 jobs** and making **an economic contribution of about 35 billion PLN (7.6 billion euros)**. Considerably growing figures are also recorded in listings presented by the Polish Convention Bureau. Needless to say, the pandemic period is the one unfortunate exception.

The data discussed above is ratified by international sources. Over the years, Poland has maintained its strong position in the two most important rankings of destinations, hosting a great number of conferences and association congresses - the latest reports compiled by ICCA and UIA, ranked Poland 19th and 24th, respectively, up 3 spots in the latter case. While Warsaw and Kraków naturally dominate the event rankings, mention is also due to other players, such as Poznań, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Katowice, Łódź, Lublin, and even Zakopane – the unofficial winter capital of Poland – and Białowieża, set in the heart of the magnificent **Białowieża Forest**. This is the best proof of confidence that organisers of major and often logistically challenging events, place in the entire country.



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