

World heritage marathon in Krakow

2017-07-21

This year's session of the Committee was held in the ICE Kraków Congress Centre from the 2nd to the 12th of July. Poland has become a member of the Committee for the second time in its history; however, for the first time, Poland had the honour to host a session of the World Heritage Committee, the leading executive body of the Convention of the UNESCO - the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

Meetings of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee are ranked among the most prestigious international annual events. They are also very complicated in terms of logistics. Representatives of 21 Party States elected from among 193 signatory states of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) are in charge of the implementation of the Convention, allocate the financial support from the World Heritage Fund, and make decisions on entering the sites on the World Heritage List.

The historic part of Krakow including the Old Town, the Wawel Hill, the Kazimierz district along with Stradom, was entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List already in 1978 among the first 12 heritage sites.

CHALLENGES

ICE Krakow has already hosted events organised by major world organisations and institutions. UEFA, ABSL, and various international associations have trusted Krakow and the team of the Congress Centre, but the 41st Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee was the longest and the most logistically complex meeting that have ever been held in ICE Kraków.

The preparations for the event continued for 7 months, including 2 official visits of UNESCO representatives and over 20 study visits by the organiser, subcontractors and coordinators of various works. The Krakow Festival Office, the operator ICE Kraków, seconded 7 staff members from various units and departments (legal, technical support, sales, project and production departments). Dedicated staff was available nonstop, offering its experience, knowledge of the facility and legal environment.

METAMORPHOSIS OF SPACE

Every space in ICE Kraków was re-arranged specially for the purpose of the event:

- The Auditorium Hall in the half-vineyard system was adapted to serve as the Plenary Hall in the classroom system with workstations for nearly 400 delegates, members of the Executive Committee, and the Presidium. To this end, a few hundred chairs were removed and specially designed desks were installed.
- Secretariats and offices preparing documents for the session were installed in the Conference Room Complex using the mobile sound-proof wall system.
- The Theatre Hall and half of the Chamber Hall, as well as a few smaller rooms in the boardroom system, served as offices for advisory organisations and UNESCO representatives.
- Even dressing rooms underwent complete metamorphosis, adapted to serve as small offices of advisory organisations and institutions, such as the host country ministries.



The spaces for organisation of events by guest countries were arranged in the three-level glazed foyer overlooking the Wawel Hill.

- Half of the Chamber Hall and the underground S5 Hall served as venues for lectures, film screenings, exhibitions, and small receptions.

SECURITY FIRST

The security of the session participants was a priority for the organisers. Regular meetings and discussions of the security staff were held for a few months. The Police, the Government Protection Bureau, the State Fire Service, the Municipal Guard, the Border Guard, the representatives of the Krakow City Office, and other central and local government institutions (Sanepid (Sanitary-Epidemiological Station), Government Protection Bureau, Ambulance Service, Municipal Infrastructure and Transport Board, Krakow Festival Office) are but a few examples of bodies in charge of the preparation of the Centre for the session. Fire and sanitary safety checks and fire service drills were carried out in ICE Kraków simulating a hazardous situation. The security zone was established in the nearest vicinity of the Congress Centre with strict access control.

In view of the UNESCO security precaution requirements and standards, it was the most complex event to have ever been held in ICE Kraków.

SESSION IN FIGURES

- 1 966 delegates
- 3 009 identifiers issued
- >1 000 service people involved
- 200 - 700 policemen in place to secure the session on a daily basis
- 38 gendarmes safeguarded the security of the session
- 29 000 checks of persons accessing ICE Kraków
- 35 accompanying events held in ICE Kraków
- 51 re-arranged rooms
- 400 power and network sockets connected to desks in the Auditorium Hall
- A 100 m2 LED screen with 4K mounted in the Auditorium Hall
- 20 772 publications issued

IMAGINATION IS THE LIMIT

ICE Kraków Congress Centre was set up to carry out such great events as the 41st session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The facility can host the most prestigious international congresses. The ICE Kraków staff is ready to take up any challenge to adapt the facility to the organiser's requirements and in terms of service standards. The Client's imagination is the limit!

COMMENTS:

- **Professor Jacek Purchla, the Chair of the World Heritage Committee**
"The present session is a great example showing the importance of culture and the



building of Poland's international image. The City, that is the Krakow Festival Office acting as the ICE Kraków operator, made a great effort to adapt the Centre to this challenge, so it met the expectations of the UNESCO Secretariat and the participants in the session."

- **David Martel, Conference Officer CLT / CCS, UNESCO**

"I'm the conference officer in cultural section of UNESCO for more than 20 years. For the first time we were organising session in that kind of venue. Auditorium Hall was changed into Plenary Hall – it was a huge challenge for all of us, but it also shows, that is possible. I can truly say that session in Kraków, thanks to flexibility of the venue, was one of the most innovative."

- **Katarzyna Piotrowska, Head of the National Heritage Board of Poland task force team for the organisation of the 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee in Poland**

"The organisation of the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee was a great and complex project, involving a few ministries, many public order and security services, and a large group of subcontractors. Cooperation at all levels was coordinated by the National Heritage Board of Poland that was in charge of the concept and the schedule of the event delivery and provided substantive support to the Polish delegation that now serves on the Committee for a four-year term. 35 people worked in the task force team that carried out some tasks and supervised work of several hundred subcontractors. The agenda of the session was very extensive and abounded with attractions – the participants were offered visits to selected world heritage sites and the option to participate in over 50 side events, i.e. extra lectures, exhibitions and cultural events organised by various countries. The delivery of the tasks at the implementation stage ran smoothly and, in our capacity as the organisers, we were able to meet UNESCO's needs and requirements and the expectations of more than 2 000 participants from all over the world."

- **Janusz Jabłoński, President of the Board of BERM, Professional Congress Organiser**

"We are very satisfied with the results we have achieved. The entire team of more than 120 people worked hard for the success of the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee. A committed team who at all times went to great lengths throughout the process, no matter how tired its members might be, the ICE Kraków Congress Centre meeting the highest standards, and close cooperation with the Contracting Party – the National Heritage Board of Poland – made the session to be officially recognised as the best organised convention ever."

- **Izabela Helbin, Director of the Krakow Festival Office, the operator of ICE Kraków"**

The organisation of one of the greatest world events bringing together guests from almost all countries of the world was a great challenge but at the same time a great lesson for us. The delivery of the session has shown that ICE Kraków knows no limits. It is also a signal for event organisers that Krakow is able to host the most prestigious events. Now the 41st session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee is added to our portfolio of events, which have included World Youth Days, UEFA EURO 2012, and UEFA EURO U21."

See also:



**Magiczny
Kraków**

- [UNESCO World Heritage Committee Session in ICE Kraków - case study \(PDF\)](#)