

# Poland Scores in Meeting Market



There's a lot more to 2012 than the London Olympics, and from a Polish perspective, it's the European Football Championships - UEFA EURO 2012 - that are getting people in that country excited right now. EURO 2012 will undoubtedly put to the test Poland's ability to organise major international sports events - will the events planning industry be up to it? Well, if Poland's track record of winning and running major conferences is anything to go by, the answer is a resounding 'Tak'!

Over the past decade, Poland's stable economy, strategic location, competitive prices, natural and cultural attractions and strong traditions of hospitality have turned this country into vibrant and successful destination for meetings large and small. Polish cities are attracting a growing number of corporate meetings of foreign companies that have business interests in Poland. Year in, year out, the number of foreign investors in Poland grows steadily (according to the "Rzeczpospolita" daily, Poland is the world's sixth most attractive country for investors). But, increasingly, international associations are also choosing Poland as the destination for their annual conferences, drawn to that country by its novelty-value, its fast-improving network of international air-links, its excellent value-for-money - and the skills and professionalism of Poland's conference organisers and destination management companies.

One of the country's leading PCOs is the TRIP Group, a company that has consistently risen to the challenges of successfully operating in Poland's event and conference market. Established as a three-persons' company in the southern Polish city of Zakopane 20 years ago, TRIP now employs several hundred people, operates a number of hotels, runs a nationwide tour-operator business, and, through its PCO role, makes a vital contribution to Poland's inbound and domestic conference and events market. Going from strength to strength, TRIP has recently received a further boost, from its membership of ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association) which has helped it develop its conference offer worldwide and promote the partnerships it has with local Convention Bureaus.

- ICCA's logo on our website, it is not just a badge - says Kuba Chechliński, CEO of Trip Group - We want to take advantage from the international experience of this organization and use its energy and creativity; by this way Poland's offer will be unrivaled.

Some example of events managed by TRIP serve to demonstrate the company's capabilities: Concert of Mariza Fado in September 2008 at the National Theatre, co-organized with the Embassy of Portugal in Poland, the 2nd Congress of Women held in Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science in September 2010 with 4,000 attendees on this 2-day event and the Congress of the Polish Society for Vascular Surgery, for 800 was held from 22 - 24 April 2011 in the company's own Hotel Ossa in Rawa Mazowiecka, about 80km from Warsaw. 900 delegates attended, making use of most of the hotel's 26 meeting rooms.

So, can Poland pull it off next year, with the eyes of the world closely focused on its capacity to organise a mega-event like EURO 2012? Someone who's not losing any sleep over this is Rob Davidson, Senior Lecturer in Events Management at the University of Greenwich, London. As a consultant with significant experience of working with the Polish meetings industry, Rob has been following that country's progress as a conference and events destination over the past decade, and his conclusion is that EURO 2012 will be an event that Poland can be proud of. "10 years ago, I wouldn't have been so confident. But I've seen fantastic advances in the levels of professionalism and expertise in the people who work in Polish PCOs, DMCs and convention bureaux. This is a

country known for the energy, resourcefulness and sheer hard work of its people, and that gives it a huge competitive advantage. I just met Davide Odella, one of the TRIP managers, at an ICCA conference in Gdansk recently, and it's people like him who keep me convinced that the future of Poland's conference and events industry is in good hands".

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