

Poznan – From Wild Card Winner to Independent Exhibitor

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Poznan is prime example of why IMEX Wild Card works

In 2003, the Polish city of Poznan exhibited at IMEX in Frankfurt as one of the winners of the show's innovative IMEX Wild Card Programme. This was the first time that the destination had exhibited at a world travel fair independently from the Polish national stand. Six years on, Poznan has continued to grow as a popular destination for business travel to the point where the city proudly exhibited independently on its own stand at IMEX in Frankfurt 2010, representing the Poznan Congress Centre and the Poznan Convention Bureau.

"It's nice to be in sight of our previous stand host, the Poland national stand", said the head of the Poznan Convention Bureau, Katarzyna Parysek, on the second day of IMEX in Frankfurt this May, "but we are also far enough away to be autonomous and are enjoying the luxury of having more space to work in."

"As our first time exhibiting alone we are facing a new set of challenges to make sure we get the most out of the exhibition," continued Katarzyna. "We have been comparing the Poznan stand to other stands here at IMEX in order to get some good ideas for future years and I think that next year we will be much more adventurous in our attempts to attract the attention of visitors! That said, I've been really happy with the traffic to our stand so far, allowing us to share all that Poznan has to offer as a destination to many visitors from all over the world and helping us to grow in marketing confidence too."

For Poznan, winning the Wild Card in 2003 helped to begin attracting the business that would kick-start a huge development programme for the city, which continues to advance today. Poznan currently hosts over 2,000 conferences and congresses each year, with medical and political conferences among the most common, according to Parysek. And these are not small ventures either. For 12 days in 2008, for example, Poznan preceded Copenhagen as the host of the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

"To help dovetail the growth of our conference and congress industry in Poznan we are developing the conference centre and improving our infrastructure in great strides", continued Katarzyna. "Plans to combine the centre with a new conference hall with a capacity of 2,500 together with expanding another hall from a 7,000 capacity to be able to comfortably hold 12,000 are already well in motion."

And the future remains bright for the destination too. The construction of a new motorway linking to the German border will improve accessibility and is set for completion in 2011. This will no doubt play its part when Poznan welcomes the rest of Europe as one of the cities hosting the European Football Championships in 2012, held jointly by Poland and Ukraine. Here, the Congress Centre will probably provide a venue for an official Fan Zone in the city. Further down the line, Poznan is also a candidate to become the European Capital of Culture in 2016.

The Wild Card Programme is part of IMEX's commitment to fostering growth and development amongst new and emerging destinations in the global meetings, events and incentive travel industry. The programme recognises how difficult it can be for newer destinations to break into the international meetings market (even if they have a strong track record in the leisure side of the market) and provides them with a unique opportunity to 'win' their way into IMEX.

As IMEX Group Chairman, Ray Bloom, explains: "The Wild Card programme offers emerging destinations the ideal platform for focusing their marketing efforts on the meetings and conventions industry. It's a low-risk, extremely high-value opportunity, and one that puts winners in front of thousands of high quality international buyers whilst lending unparalleled credibility and a global profile."

Winners of the IMEX Wild Card Programme receive a package including free exhibition space, access to discounted flights and accommodation. The winners also receive ongoing marketing guidance and support from the IMEX project team.

With her final thoughts on how IMEX has played its part in the development of this up and coming destination, Katarzyna finished: "The affiliation with IMEX, gained through winning the Wild Card, was extremely positive for us. Even just getting to read about yourself on the front page of the IMEX Daily is a real treat, and also alerts exhibition visitors to our presence here.

"If you are serious about increasing business for your destination then you simply have to be at IMEX as this is the place where the industry meets. The opportunity to showcase our offering via the Wild Card has no doubt been a significant contributing factor in our journey here today, exhibiting on our own at IMEX 2010! Long may this journey continue and we look forward to coming back next year with even more to shout about!"

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