

Innovation networks

- case study of Kraków Network

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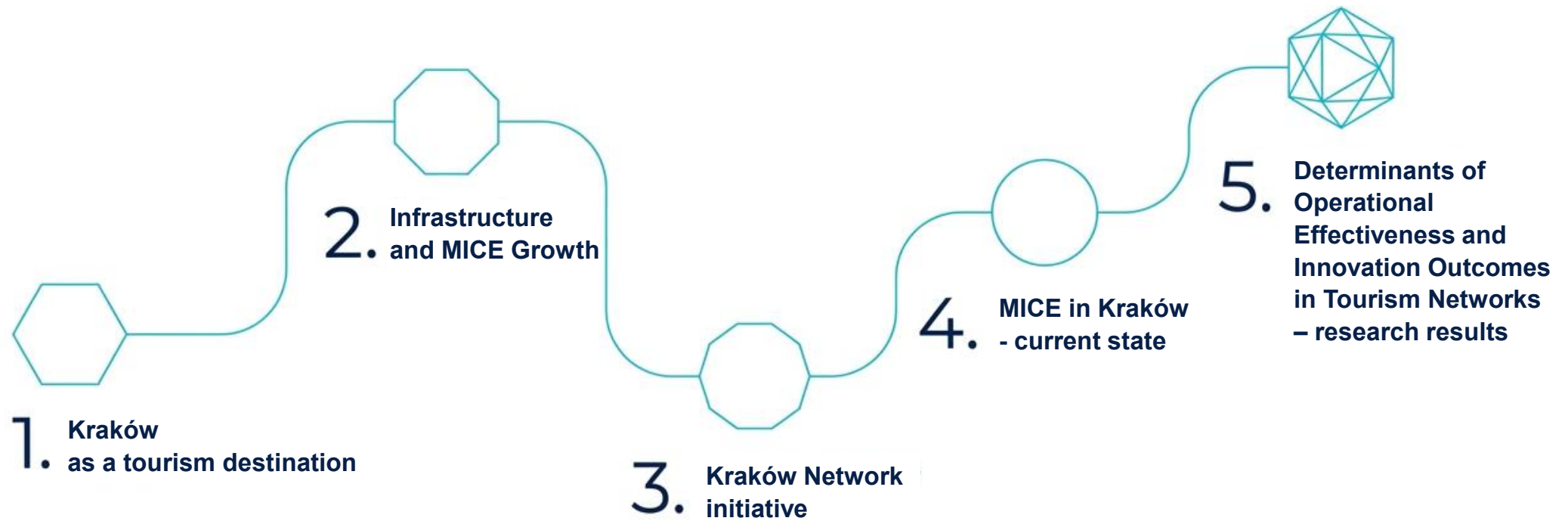
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Structure



Kraków as a Tourism Destination

Major historical city of Poland; UNESCO World Heritage Site (since 1978)

City & Academia Panel



Urban area: approx. 327 km²



Population:
approx. 810,600 (June 2025)



One of Poland's leading academic centres (23 higher education institutions; approx. 132,000 students)



Strong economic hub and BPO/IT centre in Eastern Europe

Tourism & Traffic KPIs

16,25 mln

visitors in 2025

8,79 mln

 tourists

7,10 mln

 domestic tourists
(dominant market)

- Key foreign markets (2025):
United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Italy

Average stay: 3 days. Two particularly important forms of tourism for the city are: **cultural tourism and business tourism.**

Infrastructure and MICE Growth – Historical Overview



ICE Kraków Congress Centre



TAURON Arena Kraków



EXPO Kraków

2004

Since 2004, business tourism has grown dynamically in Kraków alongside its expanding potential. The number of hotels increased from 83 in 2004 to 130 in 2014.

2014

In 2014, Kraków's MICE infrastructure was significantly strengthened with the opening of three large venues: ICE Kraków Congress Centre, TAURON Arena Kraków, and EXPO Kraków.

The opening of these venues significantly boosted the development of business tourism and the MICE sector.

Kraków Network

– History and Concept



2015

The Kraków Network initiative was established in 2015.

The network was launched by the Kraków Festival Office (KBF) – the former operator of ICE Kraków – as a project designed to integrate local stakeholders from the MICE industry.

2025

In 2025 it was incorporated directly into the structures of the Municipality of Kraków, which reinforces its top-down, institution-driven character.

Concurrently, in 2025, CKF Connect was launched as a venue-led networking initiative designed to integrate the event community, foster professional relationships, and elevate quality standards across business events.

MICE in Kraków – current state

164

Hotels in Kraków

5341

Events in 2025 (+14.93% YoY)

1365

International events: 25,56% of all meetings (up from 20%)

1,16 mln

Attendance: 1,16 mln participants

Growth -6,08% YoY

(with international delegates nearly tripling)

Kraków Network

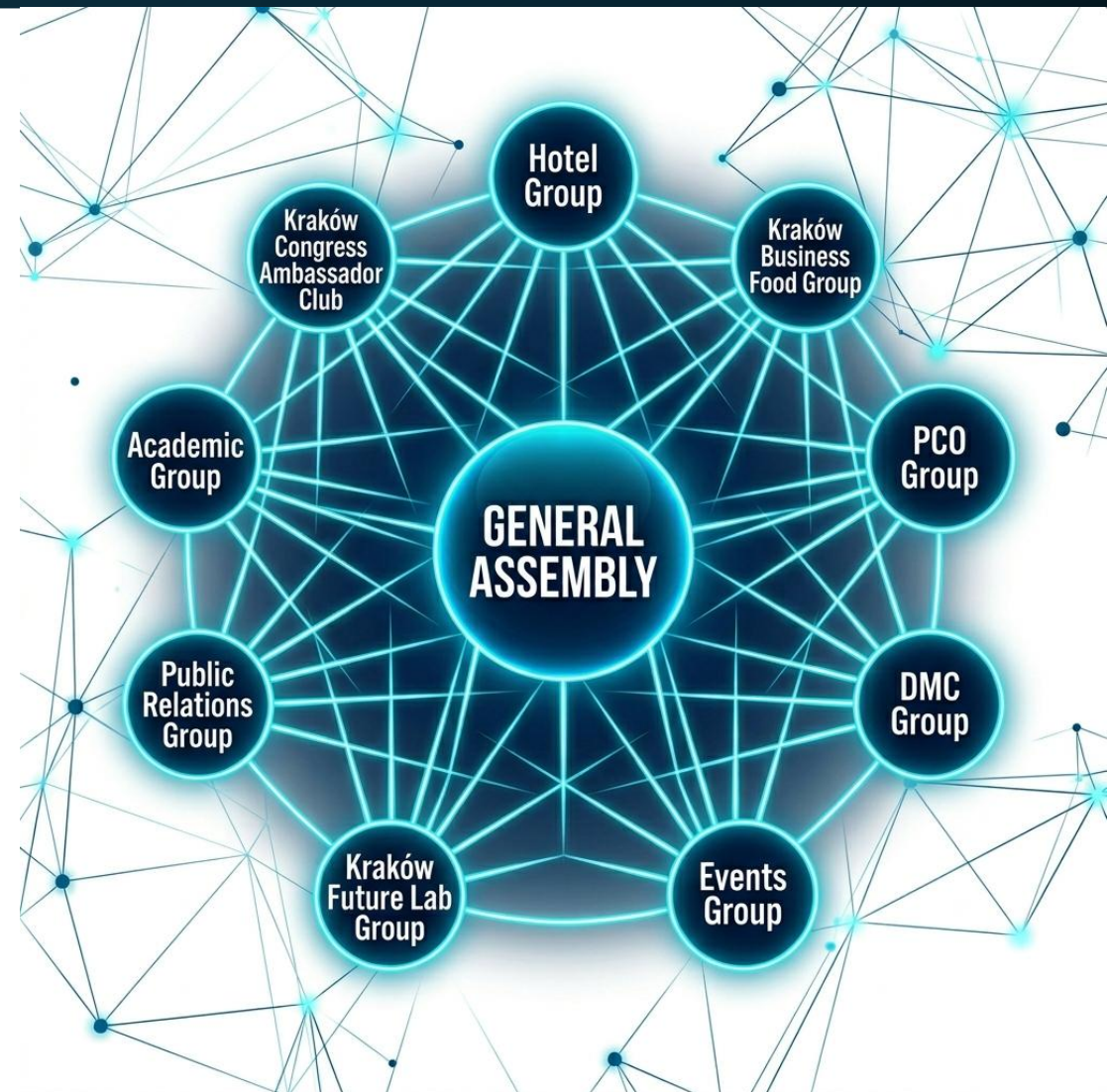
– Structure and Organization

The foundation of Kraków Network (KN) is **cross-sectoral collaboration**.

KN promotes regular **meetings of business tourism stakeholders**, typically held quarterly as general meetings („large” network).

It also includes **smaller, topic-specific working group meetings**, which are held more frequently.

Currently, the Kraków Network brings together **600 registered members across nine thematic groups**.



Kraków Network

– Strategic Goals

The initial mission of Krakow Network was to integrate partners to establish Krakow as a national leader and attract major international events.

Strategic goals included:

Developing a collaborative framework among market participants.

Attracting large, international events to Krakow.

Enhancing and promoting Kraków's image as a premier city of meetings.

Raising awareness among city authorities and stakeholders about the need for engagement.

Establishing Krakow as a regional leader.



What Makes Tourism Networks Effective and Innovative?

Determinants of Operational Performance and Innovation
Outcomes in the Case of Kraków Network - research results

Methodology of the Study

01

An exploratory approach: the qualitative data analysis

02

11 interviews with working group leaders and one with principal ex-leader

03

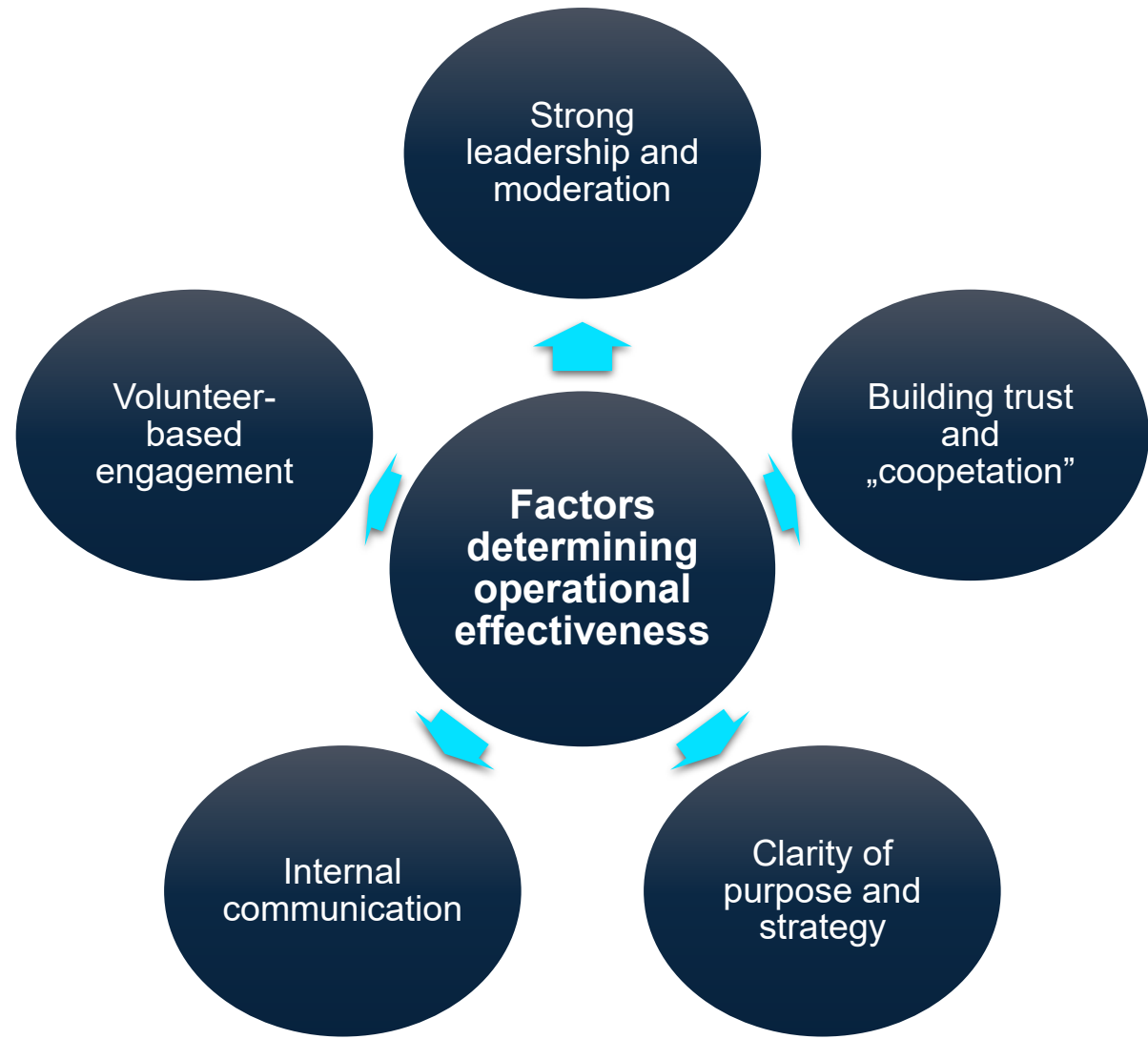
The total time of conversations: 6 hours 6 min

The average one conversation time: ~ 36 minutes

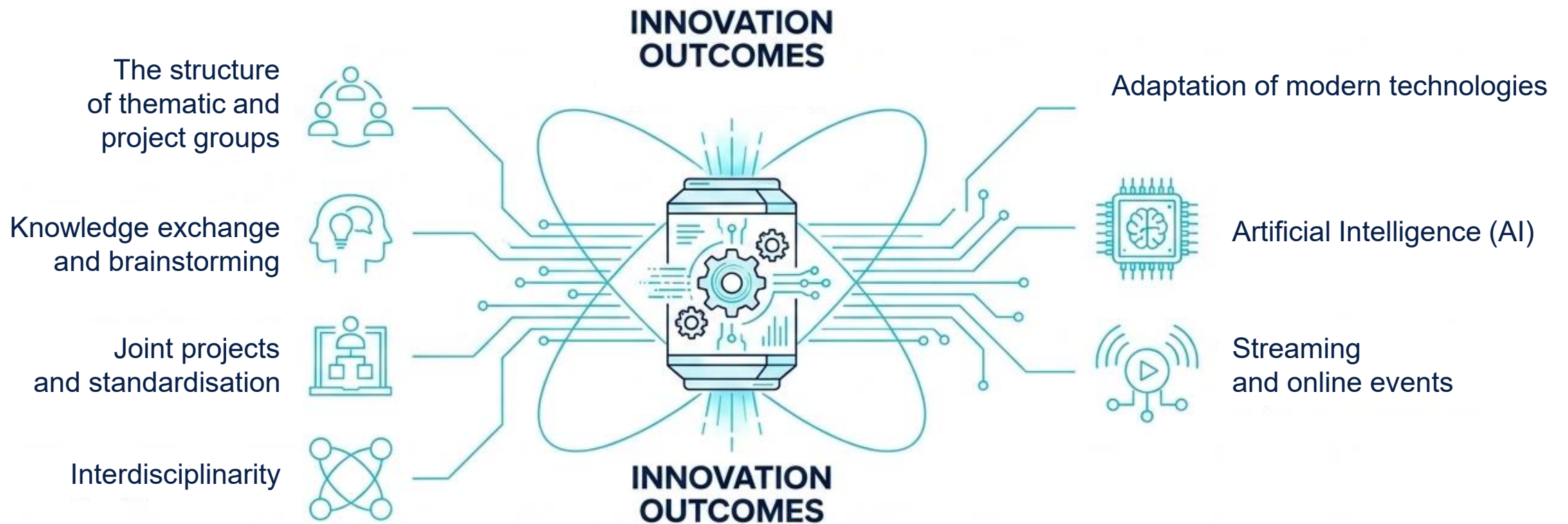
04

Semi-structured individual conversations based on the initial 8 questions, which formed the framework of the entire research

Factors Determining Operational Effectiveness

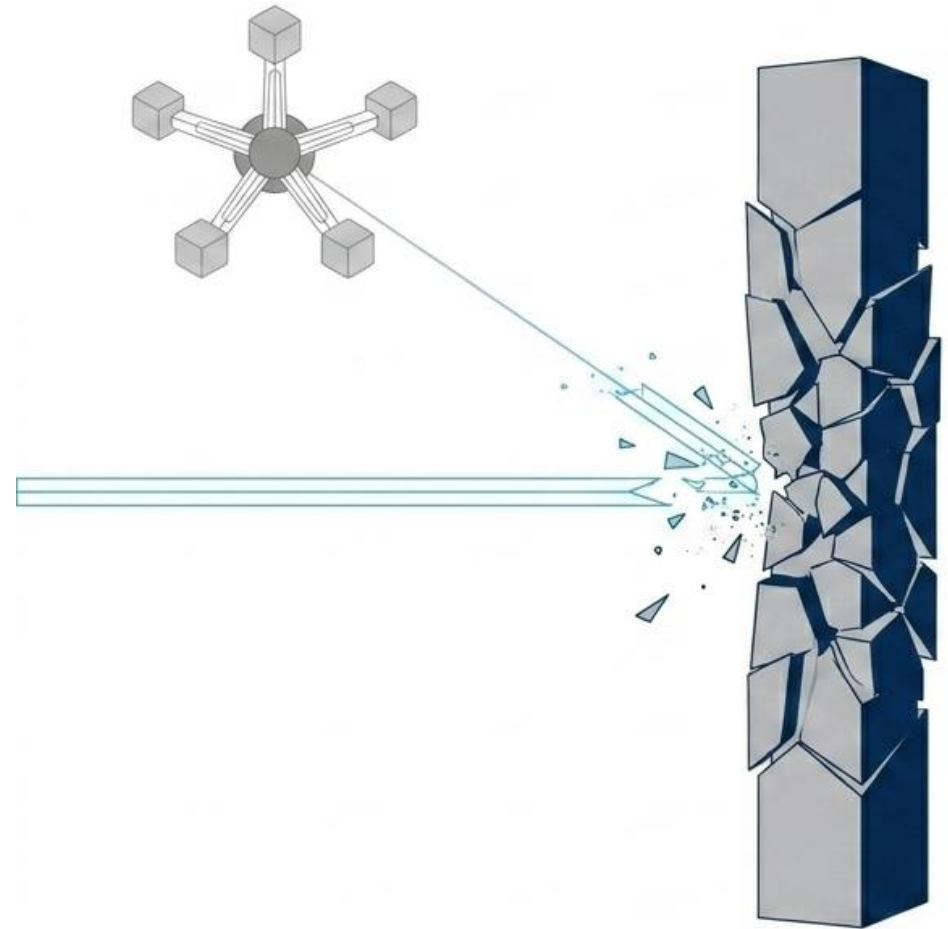


Determinants of Generating Innovative Outcomes



Barriers to innovation

However, barriers to innovation still include a „here and now” mentality and concerns about competitors copying ideas



Conclusions

Integration across sectors, including the MICE industry, city authorities, academia, NGOs and start-ups, creates favourable conditions **for city-wide** collaborative innovation

Partnerships based on the triple-helix model – linking business, government and academia – support the coordinated development of Kraków's meetings industry

The network facilitates structured **knowledge exchange** through thematic working groups, which operate as a practical platform for open innovation



Joint strategic initiatives, such as the **Kraków Network Protocol**, demonstrate the network's capacity to promote hybrid event formats, digital transformation and sustainability-oriented solutions

With more than 600 members and continuous growth, Kraków Network **represents a scalable model** of cooperation that strengthens the resilience of the local meetings ecosystem

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Thank you for your attention.