

Mikołajki as the Venue for an International Local Government Meeting

On March 3-4, 2025, the 10th European Congress of Local Governments (EKS) will be held in Mikołajki, gathering a record number of participants. So far, over 2000 people have registered, including nearly 500 guests from abroad. Among the participants will be guests from Ukraine, Italy, Scandinavia, France, Moldova, and many other countries. From the very beginning, the Congress has been designed as an international local government conference, which is both a challenge and a natural step due to the involvement of Polish local governments in international cooperation and building relationships with partners outside of Poland.

The topic of cross-border cooperation among regions as an example of good neighborly relations will be discussed in the panel *“Cross-border Cooperation of Regions as an Example of Good Neighborly Relations”*, with speakers such as **Olena Alkhovitska-Mahda** (Board Member of the Foundation for Effective Cooperation, Ukraine), **Cezar Grozavu** (Executive Director of the Romania-Ukraine Cross-border Cooperation Regional Office, Romania), **Janina Ewa Orzelowska** (Board Member of the Masovian Voivodeship, Poland), **Max Granström** (CEO of Visit Skåne AB, Sweden), **Jacek Protas** (Member of the European Parliament, Poland), **Radosław Roszkowski** (Starost of Prudnik, Poland), and **Ervin Eros** (Director of the Central European Cross-border Initiatives Service (CESCI), Serbia). The discussion will focus on best practices in cross-border cooperation.

Another important topic will be the future of decentralization and the scope of local government autonomy, which will be addressed during the panel *“The Future of the Idea of Decentralization – The Question of the Scope of Local Autonomy”*. Panelists, including **Ihor Koliushko** (Chairman of the Center for Political-Legal Reforms, Ukraine), **Krzysztof Kwiatkowski** (Senator, Poland), **Andrzej Płonka** (President of the Polish Association of Counties, Poland), **Sadia Gharet** (Deputy Mayor for International Relations, Europe, and Decentralized Cooperation, City of Besançon, France), and **Marek Chmaj** (Professor at SWPS University, Poland), will discuss whether we are ready to renegotiate the competencies of local governments in light of new financial and social challenges.

One of the important topics will also be the use of cultural heritage for the development of cities and regions. The panel *“The Past as the Key to a Better Future – How to Use Cultural Heritage for the Development of Cities and Regions”* will be led by **Michael Miguères** (CEO of France Business Leaders, France), with participation of **Sari Myllynen** (Tourism Development Director, City of Porvoo, Finland), **Roman Polikrowski** (Mayor of Zbarazh, Ukraine), **Nancy Sikes-Kline** (Mayor of St. Augustine, USA), **Paweł Grata** (Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Rzeszów, Poland), and **Alvydas Nikžentaitis** (Senior Researcher at the Lithuanian Institute of History, Lithuania). The participants will discuss how the promotion of historical monuments and the organization of historical events can attract tourists and investors.

The European Congress of Local Governments is a unique opportunity to exchange experiences, establish international contacts, and discuss the most important challenges facing local governments in Poland and Europe. With the participation of such a large group of experts from different countries, the Congress serves as a platform for building a better future for local communities. The organizers encourage all those who wish to actively participate in shaping the future of European regions to attend.

The Main Partner of the 10th European Congress of Local Governments is the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship.

The Host City of the 10th European Congress of Local Governments is Mikołajki.