

## Krakow and business: innovation, future technologies and the city's global ambitions

Krakow is consistently consolidating its position as one of the most dynamic and innovative urban centres in Poland. The year 2025 brought an intensification of the local government's efforts to cooperate with business, develop modern technologies and build international partnerships. The Krakow Mayor's Plenipotentiary for Cooperation with the Business Community, Dr Dominika Walec, who coordinates initiatives linking public administration, science and the private sector, plays a key role in this process.



Photo by Krakow City Council

## Modern ecosystem: from startups to global investors

One of the pillars of the city's innovation policy is the Krakow Smart Start programme, which has become a practical tool for cooperation between the city and startups. The programme enables innovative solutions to be tested in real urban conditions, with the direct involvement of Krakow's organisational units.

In 2025, as part of Krakow Smart Start:

- Peptechlab piloted a drought stress technology in collaboration with the Urban Greening Authority,

- Spectral Technologies was granted permission for test runs in the Zakrzówek area,
- the city started discussions with further companies, including REAKTO and Muotech, regarding monitoring of urban spaces and research tests of new technologies.

The programme not only supports the development of young technology companies, but also provides the city with innovative tools to improve public services and enhance the quality of life for residents.

### International dialogue and support for start-ups

Krakow is actively involved in national and international initiatives. As part of the Urban Tech Hub, the city has been represented in mentoring projects for startups, as well as at smart city technology events such as Smart City Expo Poland. Its presence at global conferences – including Viva Tech in Paris, Hello Tomorrow and the Eurocities forums – reinforces Kraków's recognition as a city open to innovation and technology partnerships. Economic diplomacy is also an important part of the strategy. In 2025, Krakow hosted delegations from Sweden, Belgium, China, Germany and representatives of international technology and medical companies, among others. Each visit was investment-networking in nature, serving to build long-term business relationships.

### Women in innovation and entrepreneurship

An important strand of the Plenipotentiary's work is to strengthen the role of women in the innovation sector. The She STARTS project, implemented together with partners from Poland, Germany and Ukraine, supports young female entrepreneurs in setting up their own businesses. The programme enabled participants to learn about Krakow's startup ecosystem and establish international relationships, while reinforcing Krakow's image as an inclusive and open city.

### Krakow bets on space technologies

One of the city's most ambitious developments is space technology. During the Tech On! technology festival, a letter of intent for cooperation in this area was signed with twelve partners, and Krakow began the process of branding itself 'Krakow Space City'.

Under the supervision of the Plenipotentiary, efforts were also initiated to acquire a European Space Agency (ESA) centre in Krakow. As part of this process, more than 50 letters of support were collected from institutions in

the Krakow and national innovation ecosystem. In parallel, promotional activities involving local space tech companies, scientific institutions and Krakow secondary school students carrying out space projects are being carried out.

### Cyber security, AI and the low carbon industry

In 2025, Krakow identified cyber security as one of its key development directions. The city has some of the best-qualified IT staff in the country and a strong academic background, which provides the basis for building advantages in this area. Of particular importance here are the initiatives implemented as part of FORT Krakow and the NATO DIANA accelerator – projects created by a consortium of the AGH University of Science and Technology and the Krakow Technology Park. These projects support the development of dual-use technologies, both civilian and military, and strengthen the city's digital security.

The artificial intelligence sector is also growing rapidly. Among other things, the city is collaborating with Cyfronet, developing AI infrastructure and creating a friendly consulting environment for technology companies that is conducive to AI Factory-type projects.

Low-carbon industry remains a separate direction, particularly in the context of the Nowa Huta Przyszłości project, where it is planned to create the conditions for modern, sustainable manufacturing activities that respond to the challenges of the energy and climate transition.

### TECH-ON! – the region's flagship technology festival

An important element in building a long-term competitive advantage for Krakow and Malopolska is the TECH-ON! festival, which has now become the region's flagship technological event and one of the key tools for integrating the innovation community. Much more than just another conference, TECH-ON! is creating a new space to talk about the future of technology and its impact on economic, social and cultural development. The festival has an important strategic function, supporting the building of cooperation between the city, business and science and strengthening Krakow's position in key development areas such as artificial intelligence, space technology, security, life science or urban innovation. It was during TECH-ON! that a letter of intent initiating broad cooperation in the space sector was signed, confirming the real and not just declarative dimension of the event.

TECH-ON! is also a clear signal sent to investors and international partners; Krakow and Malopolska is a place where technology blends harmoniously with culture and science with business. In this way, the festival effectively promotes the region as a space open to innovation, experimentation and high-tech development.

Human capital – a key advantage for Krakow

Human capital remains the foundation of all development efforts. Krakow has more than 120,000 specialists in the GBS/SSC/BPO sector, including more than 50,000 experts with more than a decade of experience in advanced services, technologies and business processes. Strong academic facilities and cooperation with universities are one of the pillars of the city's development as a knowledge-based metropolis.

A city ready for the future

The measures implemented in 2025 show that Krakow is consistently building its position as a modern, innovative city ready to take on global challenges. Investments in space technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, start-up development and international relations create a solid foundation for Krakow to become one of the most important innovation centres in Central Europe in the coming years.