

# Feel The Change

Prague Congress Centre's Magazine | Vol. 2/2021

- Report from the Congress of the International Crystallographic Union
- Sun Curtain: a 40-meter work of art





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## Dear readers,

we have gone through a difficult period in recent months, but we are optimistic about the future, and we believe that we are beginning to return to a new normal. Life is gradually returning to the Prague Congress Centre, the calendar is once again filled with events with the physical presence of people, and our production and implementation team is busy.



This year, albeit on a smaller scale, we managed to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the opening of the PCC, with an exhibition led by the Caban brothers "From Pakul to Kongresák". I would like to thank all our partners and the production team who took part in the event, as well as all the visitors who came to see it. We have also launched our new brand the PCC Art, with which we strive for the return of cultural and social events to our premises for both Prague's citizens and the general public.

We again participated in the Open House project and continue to work on the ART District Vyšehrad project, within which we will develop the entire vicinity around the PCC towards the presentation of art, culture and design. The unique premises of the PCC also hold over 200 works of art and wonderful views of the whole of Prague, which you can enjoy during regular guided tours every Wednesday from 14:00.

During the summer, we organized the first large hybrid congress of the International Crystallographic Union (IUCR), and in mid-October, finally after a year and a half, the renewed premiere of the musical Děti ráje took place. In other words, events that can return tens of thousands of visitors to the PCC again.

And that is our goal, to make the PCC a great place for unique moments! A place where people meet not only at inspiring congresses and conferences, but especially at spectacular cultural and artistic events. We want the PCC to be a concept not only in the world of international congress tourism, but also locally and with the general public. I am convinced that we have something to offer everyone. See for yourselves.

Lenka Žlebková,  
CEO

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## Feel The Change

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## The exhibition From Pakul to the Congress Centre continues

In April, we celebrated 40 years since the opening of the Prague Congress Centre. On this occasion, an exhibition was launched documenting the 40-year history of the building. That includes cultural, social and political events, exhibitions, and international congresses. The exhibition also includes guided tours of the premises, which are not regularly open to the public.

The team led by the Cabana brothers took care of the concept and production of the exhibition. It was their idea to supplement the exhibition with the experience and memories of celebrities who have a personal connection to the building.

**The exhibition was extended, it only moved to the new premises of the PCC. Now you can visit it on the ground floor of the building - entrance 5.**

### The PCC will manage to save 213 million crowns on energy costs by 10 years

This means a 30% reduction in electricity, gas, and water consumption. Thanks to this, the PCC received an award in the Czech Energy and Ecological Project of the Year 2020 competition. This was possible thanks to a well-thought-out modernization of the energy management in 2016. Investments in cost-saving measures in heating, cooling, air conditioning, cogeneration and lighting amounted to 126 million crowns. Projects that took part in the competition took place in the Czech Republic from 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2020, if they have not yet presented themselves in this competition.

## The PCC became part of the Open House

**IN AUGUST, THE PCC REOPENED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC.** It participated in another year's Open House Prague festival, whose motto is "Architecture for All". The aim of this event is to enable those interested to see the otherwise inaccessible spaces of various buildings free of charge. The PCC made it possible to visit selected halls, lounges, the foyer and also see the works of art located in the main building.

## Culture at the PCC is coming to life

**AFTER MONTHS OF EMPTY HALLS, CULTURAL EVENTS ARE GRADUALLY RETURNING TO THE PCC.** It all started with the renewed premiere of the musical hit Děti ráje (for details on this event, see pages 20-21). At the end of October, all fans of rock music came to their senses, as the legendary Jethro Tull, led by Scottish musician and composer Ian Anderson, performed their repertoire.

Fans of the musical Mamma Mia! which returned to the PCC, will certainly be pleased. The musical, which was seen by 60 million spectators in more than 440 cities around the world, will be performed between December 26, 2021, and January 2, 2022. Ten dates of the performance are prepared.



# ➤600

participants attended another year of the HoombookFest book festival, which took place at the beginning of October at the PCC premises. The event was organized by Albatros Media. The aim of the festival, which has grown considerably since its inception in 2016, is a personal meeting with world and Czech authors, editors, translators, and bloggers. The event also includes workshops and an accompanying program.

## An evening with Czech chemistry at the PCC

**THE ASSOCIATION OF THE CHEMICAL** Industry of the Czech Republic organized an evening with Czech chemistry at the PCC. It was a professional conference supplanted with a gala dinner. The event was for 200 people and the organizers used the premises of Southern Lounge 1.



## ➤ Mussels everywhere you look

Prague Mussel Week was held on 13th of September. Among the restaurants where visitors could indulge in mussels, was Restaurant Esprit of the Holiday Inn Prague Congress Center. The mussel festival took place for the third time this year. On the festival's website, the customer received a free 1 + 1 voucher for a selected restaurant, where mussel delicacies were served.



# How Prague won the jubilee congress of the International Crystallographic Union

Getting a major international congress for Prague is not easy at all. It is years of negotiations, which might not have a good ending. In the case of the Congress of the International Crystallographic Union, however, we have had a happy ending.

The Congress of the International Crystallographic Union (IUCR) took place in August at the PCC. The fact that this event took place in Prague for the first time since 1948, when the first congress of IUCR took place, proves how important this was. And for long for the last time. Because the association organizes a worldwide meeting only once every three years, the number of organizers is significantly limited and it practically takes several decades, if any, before the congress gets to the country and even more so the city. One of the few cities that can boast of holding a congress twice is Montreal. The experts first met here in 1957, again in 2014, after 57 long years. Prague had the honor to organize the jubilee's 25th year.

Behind this success are the many years of work of many people. Namely, Prof. RNDr. Radomír Kužel, CSc. from the Department of Condensed Matter Physics at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University in Prague. It was he who spent many years preparing for the congress. Prague succeeded with its candidacy only on the fourth attempt.

## Four candidacies

Not that the previous candidacies were any worse, but the best offer is not always decisive in the election. It is largely a political decision, and care is taken to ensure that the conti-

nents alternate regularly. Therefore, if the congress takes place in Europe, for example, it is practically impossible for European candidates to succeed in the next year. It is therefore a long-term effort to obtain such an important congress for Prague. "We thought about the possibility of organizing a congress in Prague for the first time in 1999," admits Radomír Kužel. Prague managed several smaller events very successfully, so why not go for the biggest one? But there is a long way to go from idea to candidacy. The Crystallographic Congress in Prague had great support of the CzechTourism agency. Mr Kužel and his team used the Agency's promotional materials in various languages and distributed them to committee members in their mother tongue. "It was the first time anyone had done this," recalls Professor Kužel. In addition to ordinary English, German, French or Spanish, the materials were also available in Chinese, Japanese or Korean, for example.

The congress organizer is selected 6 years in advance. Prague first ran in 2005 but failed. Not even three years later, when it was to be expected after the congress in Europe, nor in 2011. The votes of the delegates were secret, the numbers of votes were surprisingly not published, so they did not even know how many votes they actually received and whether it made sense to run at all.

# As time went by



## Long preparations

Prague attended the congress in 2014, which took place in Montreal, with its fourth candidacy. Her opponent was Paris. "The French delegates were very confident," recalls Professor Kužel. "They even went around the individual delegates and tried to convince them. But we had a lot of support this year. Also, because we had run three times before. Delegates appreciate this," he adds.

Prague succeeded on the fourth attempt and the World Congress of Crystallographers was assigned to the Czech capital for the first time. "It is very prestigious for every field if such a large field congress is held in the Czech Republic," explains Radomír Kužel. In 2014, for the first time, an electronic vote was organized, and the results of the vote were also published for the first time, which turned out clearly. 82 percent of delegates voted for Prague.

However, with the assignment of the congress, everything did not end, in fact on the contrary. Preparations have only just begun. The place where the congress will take place, however, had to be booked before the candidacy itself. The PCC premises were reserved for this purpose as early as 2011. However, detailed preparations began only after the election of Prague, i.e., in 2014.

"I was elected to the organizing committee, which is always good. At least you know what's going on," explains Professor Kužel. The preparation of the congress also included meetings with various commissions. "There were 21 of them and it is necessary to negotiate with them all. The preparatory meeting lasts a week. We worked with three different budget options and expected the participation of 2 to 3 thousand people," adds Professor Kužel, adding that two thousand people was a real option, three thousand optimistic, but given how the delegates to Prague were looking forward to it, the variant was not unrealistic.

In the end, however, everything was different. As we all know, in spring of 2020, Covid-19 began to spread around the world, and the Congress had to be postponed for a year. In the end, however, it did not take place in the originally planned form, it turned into a hybrid Congress. You can find more about its course on the next page.



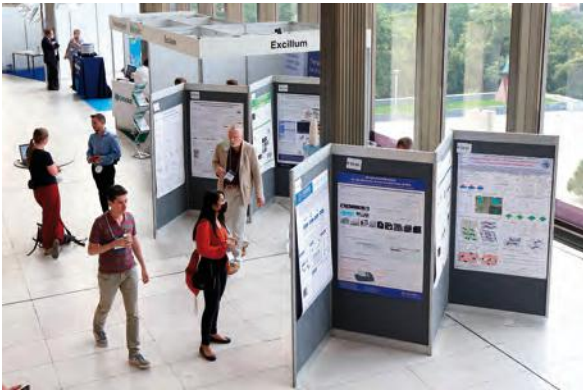
# When congress becomes hybrid

In 2004, Prague ran for the first time to become a host the Congress of the International Crystallographic Union (IUCr). The expected D-day was to come in August 2020. But that did not happen. The coronavirus situation made it impossible for the Congress to take place, so it was postponed until the following year. Even a year later, however, it was not possible to organize the congress according to the original plans. Many years of work had been wasted. Or not? The situation was saved by the PCC and their newly offered hybrid congresses.

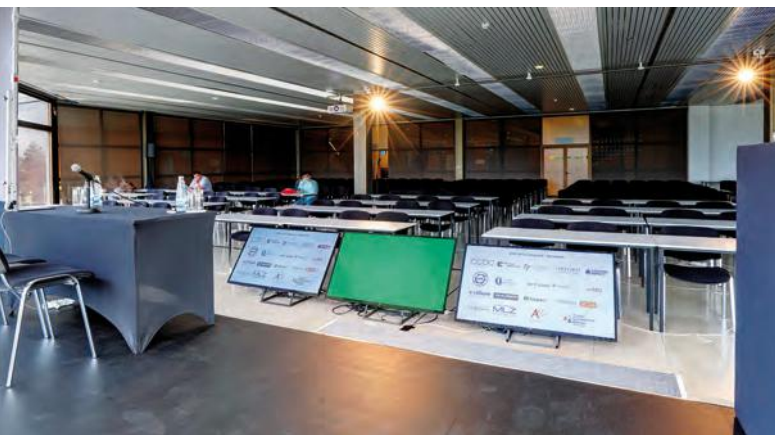
It is difficult to imagine a worse situation, than when you have been striving for something for more than 10 years and then, not by your fault, just before the final goal, all your plans are shattered. The organizers of the congress of the International Crystallographic Union found themselves in a similar situation, when due to the covid situation, massive events were limited or even canceled.

In February 2020, a complete program was completed, except for the registered lectures, which had over 100 sections. A number of participants, lecturers, had already registered. But a month later, a pandemic broke out. "It was clear that we would not be able to hold the congress in the summer, we unanimously agreed to postpone it," recalls Prof. last year. RNDr. Radomír Kužel, CSc.





In autumn, however, the situation grew even worse. Another postponement was out of question for a number of reasons. After a few months of the pandemic, online meetings started to work very well, but the organizers did not want to do this online. "An online event would of course be the simplest solution. But we didn't want that. "That was not something we strived for while organizing the congress for such a long time. "Explains Professor Kužel, adding, " This February we participated in the presentation of the gCon system of the company T.R.I. for hybrid congresses in the PCC, and we evaluated this as a good option in case the congress could not be organized in its original form, which was practically impossible to count on. It was possible to prepare the program regardless of whether the lecturers would be able to come or not, and they could make this decision at the last minute without influencing the program. In March, we opened a registration for online participation with the possibility of a later update into a present form. "



### **Till the last moment**

Still at the beginning of May, nothing was clear. However, the situation began to relatively calm down, so at the end of May, the registration for the present participation opened. There were a lot of people interested in participating. But in the summer everything became worse again. It was clear that the original form of the congress could not take place. Delegates from many countries wanted to come, but could not, due to restrictions in their country, typically Australia, New Zealand and others, or restrictions on our part. That was the case in Britain, the seat of the IUCr, where different restrictions applied to EU citizens living there and also different for the British. Delegates from some other countries could not come here, even though they were fully vaccinated. The second problem was that many organizations in different countries banned their people from traveling abroad. That's how the hybrid congress came into being.

This works in such a way that some of the guests are personally present in the congress centre, the rest of the participants are connected remotely via the Internet and watch the entire program, which is streamed live. Even remote participants can get involved. Speakers can ask questions and they also can communicate with participants who are present on the spot. It was the first hybrid congress of its kind to take place in the building of the PCC.

"At this moment, the flexibility of the PCC was absolutely crucial," praises Radomír Kužel. "One month before the event, we were not able to determine how many people will actually be present on our premises, so we did not know what halls we will need. Fortunately, the PCC has a wide range of options, which helped us a lot in this regard," says Professor Kužel.

Despite all the changes and difficulties, the program eventually went according to the original plan, nothing had to change. "The hybrid congress also has great advantages. Some speakers would not come in person because they would not have the time or resources to do so. They have just connected on-line for their section, and they did not have a problem with that." says Professor Kužel, adding, "the expectations of the participants was not high. We did not have any similar experience, so no one expected much, on the contrary, our previous experience with

similar events was rather negative. But the feedback was great. The system turned out to work well. Personally, I assume that for large, especially association congresses, the hybrid form will be more of a necessity in the future." What makes the hybrid congress different from the online congress is that on the stream online participants can see, that the event takes place in face-to-face form as well. One sees the participants in the hall, or cars driving on the highway. And therefore, even participants connected "from a distance" could admire concerts and even the view from the PCC.

Another huge advantage of hybrid (and online) congresses is that all recorded lectures are available to all participants after the congress for three months, which is pleasant news. This has never been an option in history.

## IUCR Hybrid Congress in numbers

➤ **1638** total registrations

➤ **523** direct participants

➤ **1400** hours of work of technicians

➤ **18,042** slides

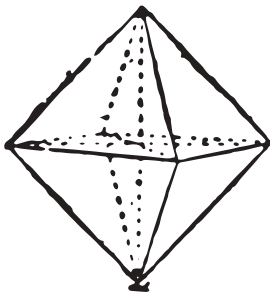
➤ **15,318** hours stream

➤ **11.8 TB** of transferred data

➤ **12,000** Over 12,000 online lecture visits (end of September 2021)

➤ **35,000** Over 35,000 online poster visits (end of September 2021)

# Mysterious Crystallography



The Congress of the International Crystallographic Union (IUCr), which took place in Prague, was a big event. But what exactly is crystallography? According to the name, most laymen will probably think that it is a science that deals with crystals. And maybe most people imagine specific crystals. But that would be a big simplification. The answer to what crystallography is, is not all that simple. After all, like science itself.

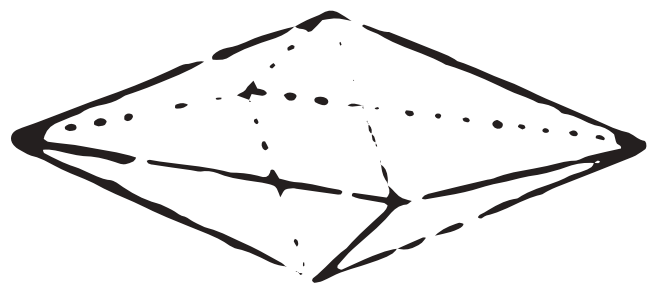
One of the most important pieces of information we can share about crystallography is that it is a multidisciplinary field that has a wide reach. We find it in physics, chemistry, materials science, but also in biology and other industries.

Crystallography deals with the structure of substances from the atomic level ranging to the nanometer scale. Primarily with the arrangement of atoms and molecules in crystalline substances, i.e., substances with their regular arrangement - the so-called crystal structure, but also the structure of substances with partial arrangement or completely disordered ones. It is closely related to the study of symmetry and thus intervenes with the fields of culture and human development. In addition, it is a part of the development of various new materials. This can include the development of drugs in pharmacies or the search for suitable materials for energy storage (batteries)

The origin of the word is derived from the Greek name for crystal - kristallos. The crystal structure is a common state of all solids. In most cases, however, conventional solids are composed of crystals too small to be seen with the naked eye. Therefore, the technique of X-ray, neutron or electron diffraction is mainly used to determine the structure, where due to the bending of the waves on the crystals and their folding, we get the so-called diffraction image - diffractogram. By analyzing it, we then obtain the necessary information.

According to these images reflecting the arrangement of atoms in a particular structure, phase, it is possible to identify this substance, i.e., to perform a phase analysis. The difference between the so-called phase and the chemical can be demonstrated on the school example of carbon. It has several different phases - structures with different arrangements of atoms, such as diamond or graphite. Thus, each crystalline substance has its typical diffractogram as people have their specific fingerprints.

And this is one of the reasons why crystallography can be found across many fields, including criminology or even art, where, for example, the authenticity of images is studied on the basis of the composition of dyes. Diffractograms are also part of drug patents.

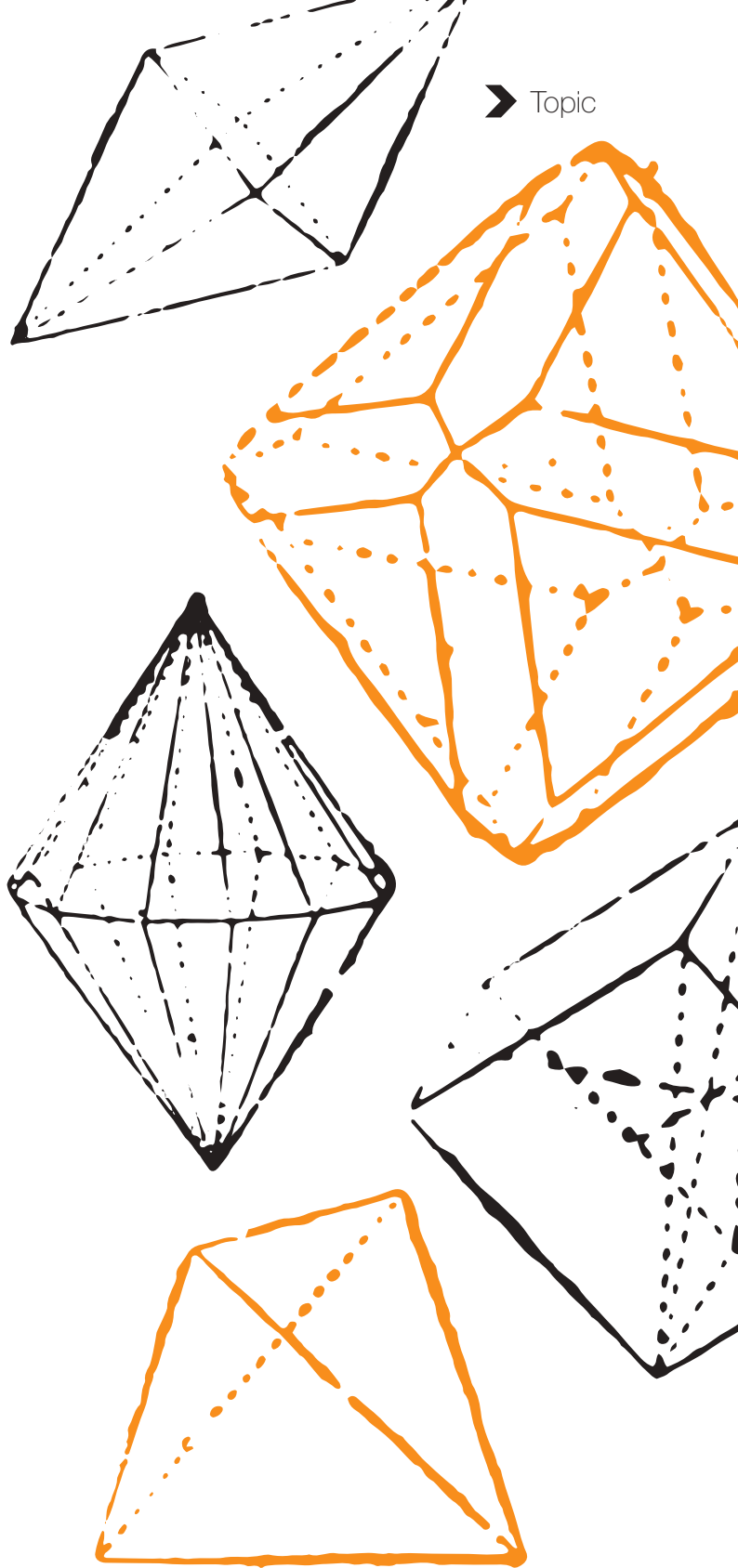


## History

The first mention of crystals can be found in ancient Greece. Gaius Pliny Secundus who died during the explosion of Mount Vesuvius in 79 BC, and came up with the theory that the walls of crystals are perfectly planar and that different substances crystallize in different crystal shapes. An important work and the oldest surviving written material of modern crystallography is Johann Kepler's treatise *On the Hexagonal Snowflake*, which he wrote during his stay in Prague and where he noticed the sixfold symmetry of the snowflake and develops reflections on the tight arrangement of spheres. In essence, this can be considered the basis of modern crystallography. Significant advances in crystallography were the discovery of X-rays in 1895 by W. C. Roentgen. In the 20th century, crystallography developed greatly, as the structure of crystals was gradually determined for many substances, including DNA. The fact that crystallography is an important science is also proved by the fact that discoveries related to crystals have won the Nobel Prize many times, whether for physics (the first three), chemistry or medicine.

The history of this field in the Czech lands is connected mainly with the Institute of Mineralogy of Charles University, whose experts dealt with the issue of crystallography until the Second World War. The institute was tragically affected by the Nazi occupation. After the Second World War, when Jiří Novák returned from detention in a concentration camp, the activities of the institute resumed. Jiří Novák participated in the first international meeting of crystallographers, which took place in 1946 and where it was decided to establish the International Crystallographic Union within the International Council of Scientific Unions. The International Crystallographic Union was officially founded in 1948 and Czechoslovakia became its fifth member. At that time, the patronage was provided by the Faculty of Science, and later by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

Over time, however, experts in other workplaces also began to engage themselves in crystallography. Today, for example, the workplaces of Charles University (Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Faculty of Science), CTU (FNSPE) in Prague and to various extent also at other universities (Brno, České Budějovice, Olomouc, Pardubice, Plzeň, Ostrava) or several institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. (e.g., Institute of Physics, Institute of Biotechnology - BIOCEV, Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry), CEITEC in Brno and others. The Crystallographic Society itself was established as a legal entity only in 1991. Even after the division of the common state, Czech and Slovak crystallographers cooperate and associate in a joint Crystallographic Society, which includes the Regional Committee of Czech and Slovak Crystallographers (with parity), which is a member of the International Crystallographic Society.



# Prague at Head of Hybrid City Alliance

Prague has, for several years, been one of the top destinations of the world's meeting industry, where almost three quarters of a million people a year arrived to participate in congresses, conferences or corporate events. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic tampered with the development of this key sector of the economy. This started to change the ways people meet, and the meeting industry literally had to move almost entirely into the online world overnight.

One of the first destinations to react flexibly to the situation was Prague. The Prague Convention Bureau, as an umbrella organization of the Prague meeting industry, in cooperation with three other cities (The Hague, Ottawa and Geneva), co-founded a group called Hybrid City Alliance at the end of 2020.

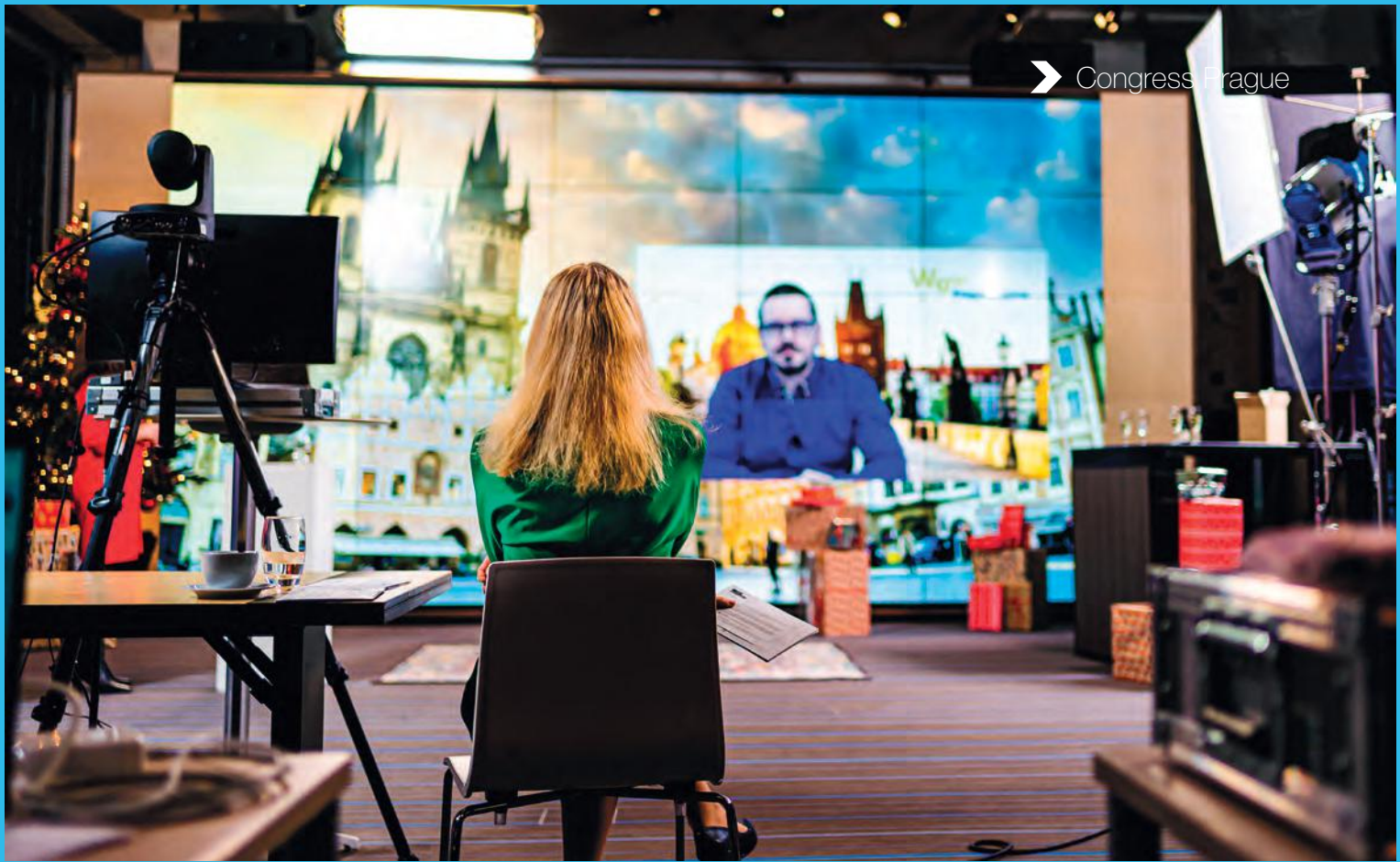
The idea of the Alliance is to connect selected meeting destinations with the aim of cross-selling and mutual support of hybrid events together with creating and connecting hubs in the individual destinations involved. The main reason to create the Hybrid City Alliance has been an ambition to make planning of hybrid events easier for clients and use this connection as an opportunity to present a comprehensive offer of realization of not only regional hybrid events, but also of events with international overlap to those interested. The Alliance thus makes a single point of contact for all event organisers who will need to obtain and compare hybrid event offers from various destinations quickly and efficiently. Each of the participating members can reach out to client with a unique proposal presenting the best hybrid solutions available in the destination, but in cooperation with other cities and their offer,

they will create a strong and competitive multinational product. In the relatively short time of its existence, Hybrid City Alliance has attracted a lot of attention, both from the event organizers and media themselves, as well as from other destinations that have expressed their interest in becoming members of the Alliance. Currently, the Alliance network covers a total of 22 destinations spreading across six continents of the world.

 **22** destinations

 **6** continents

However, the Hybrid City Alliance's goal is not only to facilitate the possibility of connecting destinations in the organization of



hybrid events and helping to plan them. The Alliance also to a large extent takes pride in the education and sharing of the latest knowledge and examples of best practice. That is why from the very beginning, the individual destinations involved began to work on an extensive white paper, which will serve all event organizers as a guide for planning hybrid multi-hub events. The document, entitled "Your Ultimate Guide to Multi-City Hybrid Events", was based on four workshops with clients, event organizers and other service providers. The white paper, released in early June of this year, along with the launch of the Alliance's new website:

- defines hybrid multi-hub events and what it takes to plan and organize them;
- describes the benefits and challenges that hybrid events bring, helping event organizers decide which type of event they choose;
- provides useful advice and ideas on how to effectively and successfully organise a hybrid event;
- focuses on the sustainability aspect of hybrid events;
- emphasises the safety of events, especially in view of the currently ongoing pandemic.

"Current situation regarding COVID-19 and restrictions related to it within tourism and meetings industry sector have acted as a catalyst for the development of various technological solutions. Hybrid events or broadcasting from virtual studios were used in a small extent to complement the usual on-site meetings long before the crisis hit. But now, these event types come to the fore and we expect them to play a significant role in each MICE-focused destination in the future as well. Prague definitely has a lot to offer in this area, which is why we perceive our involvement in the Hybrid City Alliance as key to the future direction of the destination and the fulfilment of the Czech Republic's vision as a Country for the Future," concludes Roman Muška, Director of the Prague Convention Bureau.



[www.hybridcityalliance.org](http://www.hybridcityalliance.org)

# I Will Fight For My Vision

Lenka Žlebková has been named CEO of the PCC as of March 1st, 2020. The day, when the first cases of the new type of the coronavirus infection were confirmed in the Czech Republic. It is no wonder that her first year in this position was marked by the fight against the consequences of the pandemic.

## **How was the first year of the PCC CEO?**

Demanding. I learned a lot, especially in crisis management and also in thinking about the future. It's been a very diverse year. When everything is running as usual, the work is standardized, and I can focus more on development projects. But of course, when there is a crisis, my priorities change. The situation is still difficult, and it is a great challenge to move something forward in these times. With the exception of digitization, where we have jumped forward, for example in the use of digital technologies, it was very difficult to improve all further business development.

## **Did you have to change the vision with which you came into your new position?**

The basic vision did not change, but it has receded and may have changed a little. Even because our sales have decreased by 55 percent, our financial reserve in our account has decreased and the state of our business is still a bit uncertain, shareholders are now a little hesitant about some projects, and this is hampering the overall development. That's why the vision is changing a bit, but I'm not giving up and I'm still convinced that it has sense.

## **Are you alluding on the project of building a new hall?**

Yes. The hall was approved before covid, the project was ready, we had money for it. If covid hadn't come, we would certainly have built the hall. The project had already commenced. Unfortunately, we are now in a situation where we are almost at the beginning. So, we have to convince everyone again that the project makes sense. At the same time, we are hoping that next year will be better and that our funds will be collected again.

## **Has the fact that you previously worked at the PCC in another position helped you in the last year?**

Most certainly. If I hadn't been here before, I wouldn't know how things work here, or the people and the field itself. I can't

even imagine what I would be going through. I think that would be completely unmanageable.

## **Have you ever been in a similar situation that you had to deal with?**

I have never had to deal with such a crisis situation, and I don't think any of us had to. It was a new situation for everyone, no one had ever encountered anything like it. I'm sure I didn't do it perfectly either, but I did the best I could and what I thought would be the best. I gave it one hundred percent, sometimes 125.

## **What was the worst thing for you personally at the time?**

The hardest part was that we had to say goodbye to a lot of employees. Everything else were situations that just come and that one tries to resolve somehow. Every manager encounters non-standard situations in his life, which he tries to solve. This was no different. The problem came and I tried to find the best solution and move on. But it's hard when you're in a situation where you suddenly have to reduce 30 percent of your employees. It just was difficult to decide who, or how to approach it. Behind every human being you have empathy for their fate. That was definitely the worst thing for me in the whole situation.

## **Is there at least something positive that the covid situation has brought?**

The use of technology by employees has moved incredibly forward. Even older employees, whom I would normally persuade for a long time to learn to work with Microsoft teams and similar programs, learned it because they suddenly had no other choice and they found out that it is possible. We also made progress in transforming the corporate culture, which was one of the visions I came up with as CEO. The PCC is changing from a conservative authoritarian company to a democratic and open society.





tried to agree with clients, to meet their needs. Our main goal was to postpone the events, not to cancel them.

**Is that 70 percent a good result for you?**

It is very positive for Prague. International statistics state that 60 percent of events in Europe have moved. The other 40 percent have either been canceled or have taken place online. Only 30 percent of events were canceled for Prague. If the ban on events does not continue, we can look forward to Prague doing better and therefore the events will return.

**Will off-line congresses return again, or will they remain online or hybrid?**

People are partly used to being online. But after being online for a long time, they realized they just didn't want to have everything completely online. I think covid has helped a lot of people to find balance. Before it, many people demanded home office and thought that there was nothing better. That it is enough to make appointments online. But gradually they found that too much of anything is damaging. Both home office and online. And that in the end the best is the middle road. It is similar in this respect with hybrid events. I think that online will remain partially.

But according to international surveys, it turns out that 70 percent of organizers think that events will return to purely offline. And only 5 percent expect the events to take place online only. At the moment, the interest in hybrid events does not prevail, and it seems that most congress events will take place as before. Which is good news for us. And this can also be seen at the events that took place at the PCC in September. You can see the desire of people to meet in person after a long time.

**You have a demanding year and a half behind you. What are your next plans now?**

I would like to continue in the established vision of transformation of both, the PCC and its corporate culture, as well as the entire locality around the PCC. Now we took a breath and started running. This year, we have defined a strategic plan until 2023, so we have precisely defined goals for each department. We want to continue on the established path. I will also support trade so that both Czech and foreign events return to the PCC. Therefore, my role will be in business development, which I'm close to and enjoy. Re-establish business relationships. As the director of the PCC, I will continue to fight for the new hall, because it still makes sense to me. It would be a new spark for the building, a new impetus. If I spent the same money inside the building, the client would not see much and it would not bring new events. But when a new hall is built, it will be a new impulse, the start of something new. And it transforms the whole site.

What I have in mind is, for example, open communication with employees, flexible working hours, home office... These are all things that did not exist in the past. I have never been against home office myself, but I think that even its biggest critics at the time of covid understood that there was no other way. As a result, the corporate culture changed rapidly. This was also related to the necessary reduction of employees. We said goodbye primarily to those who did not identify with our new corporate culture. We now have more people in the PCC who are proactive, who know why they are here and share the same values. When we slowly start recruiting new employees, we choose those who are in line with our corporate values.

**What about contracted events? Did you have to cancel them or were you looking for a different date?**

Most events, about 70 percent, have been postponed. Some events have even moved twice, first from 2020 to 2021 and then from 2021 to 2022, some even for later, for example to 2026. We

# The Retail Summit introduces the New Reality of Commerce

At the end of September, another year of the Retail Summit took place at the PCC premises. The main topic of this meeting was The New Reality of Business. The event showed how people after a year and a half of solitude crave personal encounters. The organizers of the event was the company Blue Events and the Confederation of Trade and Tourism of the Czech Republic. The conference follows up with the previous 26 years.

The summit took place over three days and was attended by 80 speakers. The interest in participating was such that the organizers had to close registrations for the event in advance, as all the seats available in the second largest hall of the PCC were filled. It was sold out a week before the event. The summit was attended by almost a thousand people. This made the event one of the largest conferences on trade in Europe.

The Retail Summit is associated with the awarding of significant awards to the most successful merchants - during the gala evening, the Mastercard Merchant of the Year 2020 awards and, more recently, the O2 Digital Retailer award were presented. The award for Innovation of the Year and Sustainable Trader of the Year was also awarded.

The diverse program enriched the gala evening. The special guest was the musician Xindl X. The evening was moderated by Lucie Výborná. The next year of the event will take place from 4th to 6th April next year, again at the PCC premises.

There are several reasons why the organizers decided to change the venue after all the years. One is the air conditioning at the PCC, which does not circulate, and in the current situation thus guarantees greater safety for all participants of the event. Another reason why the organizers decided to hold a summit in the PCC is the foyer. "As soon as we first saw it, we were captivated," admits Jan Patera from the Blue Events agency. "It's a generous

space with daylight and wonderful views," he adds. Jan Patera also appreciates the advantage of the hall where the event took place. "Thanks to the galleries, one saw perfectly from all the places," he points out.

The summit included a gala evening as well as a gala dinner for CEOs. Thanks to the flexibility of the space, these accompanying events could also take place in the PCC, as well as various workshops, there was also space for refreshments and stalls and even for a concert.

The summit was to take place first in February, then in April and then moved to June. On the fourth attempt everything worked out. "Thanks to the solidarity of all, we were able to successfully organize the event in the end, even though we were limited by the number of participants, which was one thousand. Everyone at the PCC came to our aid as much as possible," says Jan Patera. Not only his impressions, but also the feedback from the participants was entirely positive. According to Mr. Patera, people are very sensitive to changes in the environment, but this time the new premises were excellent. "We see great potential in the PCC. There is great technology, a large LED wall and most importantly a huge Congress Hall. We would like to use that in the future. We have ambitions for the Retail Summit to continue to grow. I believe that in a few years we will be able to occupy the largest hall in the PCC," concludes Jan Patera.



# The musical Děti ráje finally at the PCC

The premiere of the new production of the popular musical Děti ráje (Children of Paradise) was set for April 2020. Due to the current epidemic situation, it had to be moved several times, and only this year in October did the creators, performers and the audience, for the first time in the Prague Congress Centre, finally get to see it.



**The original production of the musical Děti ráje has been played since 2009 for six years. Now the audience is waiting for a new staging of this hit. How are the two versions different?**

"Of course, the same script remained, which includes all the memorable HITS. It is the Děti ráje that our audience knows and loves. What is new is the directorial production, which was created six years ago, when Děti ráje travelled with me to the Bobycentrum in Brno. That's when I told the director of the production (Radek Balaš) to make it a much bigger show.

And the result was really successful. We have a new huge stage, motorcycles and cars that ride around our stage, beautiful new costumes, an expanded number of dancers in new choreographies (QAŠA), and a number of newcomers have joined and strengthened our acting team in Brno (such as Martin Dejdar, Honza Kopečný, Petra Peterová, Ladislav Korbela and many others), who fit perfectly into our theatrical family. Of course, our audience can also look forward to the regulars of our ensemble, such as Lukáš Vaculík, Bořek Slezáček, Tomáš Löbl, Míša Nosková, Braňo Polák, Genny Ciatti or Jan Kříž, who was awarded the prestigious Thalia Theater Prize for his role. All of them have been inextricably linked

with this musical for the whole time (now actually 12 years), "explains the creator of the musical and one of the representatives of the main roles, Sagvan Tofi.

His dream was that the musical, which was played in Brno for a year, returns back to the capital. New premises were therefore sought. And the search was not easy at all, because ordinary theater stages are just too small for this musical. "Děti ráje needs a large space, a wide stage, which a normal theater is not able to offer. The stage of the Great Hall of the Congress Center is therefore an ideal place. In addition, thanks to the proper elevation of the auditorium, the audience can actually see the entire 30-meter stage from all places, and Bičovice Square (the small Czech town where the whole musical takes place) is literally in the palm of your hand. I am very glad that the management and the whole team of the Prague Congress Centre, led by the director Ing. Lenka Žlebková fulfilled our requirements, and I believe that Děti ráje will settle here and that my other upcoming projects will be added to them in the future," says Sagvan Tofi.

## **Premiere after 18 months**

The premiere of the new production was prepared for April



2020. But the coronavirus pandemic came. This was followed by alternate dates for the renewed premiere on November 26, 2020, then for May 27, 2021, until the ceremonial premiere was held on October 14, 2021.

Because cultural life was completely stopped for many months, it also affected the composition of the performers. In the meantime, some have found other professions which they have now stayed with. The musical *Děti ráje* had to completely change the actors for the children's roles, as the original ones had grown up in the meantime. Before the date of the renewed premiere, rehearsals had to be resumed as well.

"Unfortunately, as a private production, we cannot afford to keep our own ensemble. Our actors are only paid for played performances, so many of them have found alternative jobs for a temporary period (whether they delivered food, replenished goods in a supermarket or helped as nurses). Throughout the pandemic, only the narrowest operation of the office itself was maintained and assured. We changed the premiere date and tickets three times and ordered actors and equipment. Over the summer, we have done at least with a concert version for our audience. When we finally knew that the performance would take place, a very intense two months of preparations, choreographic and acting rehearsals and tutoring began to put it all together. After those two years, we were all looking forward to the audience, but it was really hard to get back to normal operation. We suddenly had to revive and rehearse many things that one hadn't thought about before and worked automatically on stage, repeating the lyrics, the choreography," adds Sagvan Tofi, who praises the fact that we finally managed to play the long-delayed premiere.

I have to say that the audience enjoys the performance very much and I'm glad that in the end they always dance and sing together with us, and in fact every replay turns into such a big party for them in the end. And when our viewers are satisfied, this is always the biggest reward for all the effort and worries around me," concludes Sagvan Tofi.

## Events Are Gradually Coming Back to The PCC

Jan Ferjenčík replaced Lenka Žlebková in the position of the sales and marketing director of the PCC. He also joined on March 1, 2020, with many plans but he had to put them off indefinitely a few days later.

### **Your first year in office was very turbulent. How would you describe it?**

I remember 9/11, the financial crisis and the floods in Prague, but I have never experienced anything like this. I thought we could be prepared for such a situation, but we weren't. For all the previous events that I mentioned, there was some time estimate, it was possible to predict how it would develop further. The Covid pandemic has been and is completely out of control, and the worst thing about it is the long-term uncertainty.

### **You had to deal with the crisis literally a few days after taking office...**

The plans with the director lasted for 9 days. After two sold-out concerts, Mireille Mathieu left us for Bratislava, but she was not let in. And it was clear that something was probably going on. At the time, we were still cautiously optimistic and planned to move events to autumn. We had a naive vision that when September or October came, the situation would be under control, and we would start operating normally again. In July and August, we started rescheduling the events for the second time, and we were already unsure of this. It came in waves. This spring, I was left with innate optimism and cautious realism, perhaps even cynicism. To everything I now add: yes, but on the condition that...

### **What was the hardest thing for you?**

Making decisions without information. I'm quite an analytical type, I need to take things apart, compare the pros and cons, I do not shoot into the dark. It's ideal for me to be able to sleep on a big decision. In this situation, however, it was important to make decisions quickly and without enough information. Estimate, decide blindly and constantly monitor external influences and react to them, with the proviso that what is true today may change fundamentally tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

### **Did you have to stop any projects due to the pandemic?**

We have stopped all major investments. But we didn't just go to sleep for a year and a half, we made smaller investments and repairs and maintenance from the reserve funds we had created.



Jan Ferjenčík

As for business and marketing, we unfortunately had to postpone or stop some projects. One of them is the SKARTO project - furniture from office waste, which we had to put away due to problems with material processing. According to our plans, the first step of the Art District Vyšehrad project did not work out for us. We installed cells on the outdoor terrace of KOMA and we wanted to enliven this terrace with a presentation of art and design. But it didn't work out the

way we imagined. The planned partners refused to cooperate due to a significant reduction in the number of outdoor visitors. Due to a minimal interest from spectators, we also had to cancel the Theater Summer - a project with a summer stage on the outdoor terrace, and we were not happy about it. So, these are mainly projects where we needed spectators and visitors and of course, partners. Without them, we would not have been able to celebrate the 40th anniversary. We had bolder plans than what actually took place in the end.

**How did you manage to convince the organizers not to cancel the events?**

From the very beginning, we communicated actively with all partners. Colleagues from the business team were given tasks to keep in touch with these partners. Basically, we encountered three types of approaches. Some partners decided to cancel the event immediately. Here we tried to meet the cancellation with dignity, to reach a mutually acceptable compromise, which, fortunately, we succeeded in doing. There were also partners who were and are willing to implement the event under the currently valid conditions. We agreed with them to move the event, move the backups and search for new dates, or change the format of the event. We always look for a common solution to the whole situation. Such an example is the August Congress of Crystallographers, which shrunk to 500 participants physically and about 1,600 online from the expected participation of 3,000 participants. Here we have completely changed the format of the event. Then there are partners who would like to implement the event, but do not have free dates. This is especially true for cultural events. For example, we moved some concerts twice, but the third time we had to cancel them because the performer no longer has a free date. We bet on communication from the very beginning, and even though we had to change our communication tools, I think we were successful.

**Is it possible to gradually attract people to the PCC?**

It is important to distinguish between organizers and visitors. The organizers came to life. During the summer, a turning point came,

when we suddenly began to experience new demands again. The market has started to revive a bit, but the structure of events is different. The events are smaller, local and planned in a short time period. Foreign partners are optimistic but cautious about larger and longer-term events. New events are also emerging, but the novelty is that contracts are being reviewed for much longer. Previously, we had a contract prepared, which the partners mostly accepted with minimal changes, now the contract is being negotiated to the last detail. The organizers want to insure any conceivable or inconceivable situation. Another thing is that the contracts are signed with a shorter time interval, much closer to the event date. Whereas in the past it was weeks before the event, today it is a matter of days. Our work is more demanding and stressful because the event organizers are waiting until the last possible moment to be able to cancel the event with minimal consequences.

We see and feel much more caution from visitors. When congress delegates want to meet, they have clear rules within the congress. We perceive different behavior among visitors of cultural events. People go to events but leave the purchase of tickets for the last minute. The organizers then cancel the events or reduce them to such an extent that they come out economically settled in the best way possible. The situation is far from normal.

**Will you continue with the ART District Vyšehrad project?**

The aim of the project is to revive the public space, to connect with the surroundings, so that the unwelcoming space becomes a place for people. We have signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Vyšehrad National Cultural Monument and are now looking for ways to use our neighborhood together. We are also starting to collaborate with individual artists or ensembles to give them the opportunity to present their work. We have plans, but we are not able to implement them so quickly. We will definitely continue, but covid has greatly slowed us down.

**Did covid bring anything positive?**

It made us think carefully about what we do and how we do it. It made us look for new forms and ways to work and communicate both within the team and with our clients and partners. We managed to master new forms of communication, new forms of implementation of events and we verified that if we strain all our efforts, we can do it even with cut throat deadlines and with limited resources.

**What are your next plans and visions?**

To start our main activities - congresses, conferences, and cultural and social events. To stop thinking negatively and not be disgusted by what is happening around us. To throw ourselves into work, to make sure that we enjoy our work and we have created a great place for unique moments at the PCC. And last but not least, to be among the TOP 10 congress centers in Europe and to maintain its number one position among congress centers in the Czech Republic.

# Sun at Forty Meters

It has several firsts, it is the largest work of art in the Prague Congress Center, the largest Art protis in the world, but at the same time it is a piece of work that its author has not seen completed. The subject of our interest is the curtain of the Sun in the Congress Hall designed by Alois Fišárek, a prominent Czechoslovak painter, illustrator, and visual artist.

Theater curtains have always been the most important work of art in theater buildings. Hundreds of spectators examined them the night before the performances. Millions of people saw the Hynais curtain at the National Theater. Thousands saw the curtain in the congress center, but they probably don't know the author's name. Alois Fišárek (1906-1980) is one artistic creator who has received real appreciation only now, especially for his works in architecture and public space. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. He was one of the most talented graduates. At the age of only 23, he exhibited together with members of the Mánes Association of Fine Artists, and two years later he was accepted as a full member. He devoted himself fully to painting and ventured into all thematic genres, figure, landscape, still life.

The courage to try different routes paid off for him at the end of the 1930s, when he moved from Prague to Opočno. He worked for the textile factories of the Sochor brothers in Králové Dvůr, which in the 1930s became the largest Czechoslovak producer of printed textiles. At this stage of his life, Fišárek used his childhood experience spent in his father's tailoring workshop in Pro-

stějov and used it creatively to design patterns for fabrics. That didn't last long, in 1942 the factory began producing parts for Junkers aircraft.

The designs of fabrics have permanently remained a part of Fišárek's creative repertoire. When, after the war, the company was nationalized and incorporated into the national company Textile Printers, Finishing and Inks, later known as TIBA, he became chairman of its art council and it wasn't the only function he acquired. For Czechoslovakia, the textile industry was a strategic sector, so, much attention was focused on it in education and culture. Fišárek was already appointed professor of applied painting with a focus on textile production at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague in 1946. In 1947-49 he was the first chairman of the Union of Czechoslovak Fine Artists, became the artistic director of Textile Creation, chairman of the textile section of the Institute of Housing and Clothing Culture. Socialist Czechoslovakia supported the interconnection of arts and crafts, and state-built buildings were equipped with a number of tapestries.



The first tapestry called Songs and Dances was designed by Fišárek for the Internacional Hotel in Dejvice, Prague (1953). He designed the tapestry Masopust (Mardi Gras) in Southern Bohemia (1956) for the Czechoslovak Embassy in Moscow, and its variant was also exhibited at the World Exhibition EXPO58 in Brussels and, together with a decorative curtain for a restaurant, it won the Gold Medal and the Grand Prize. He also used the motif of Mardi Gras for *Laterna magika* (1959). The design of the curtain for the emergence of the Janáček Theater in Brno with motifs from the opera *Liška Bystrouška* from 1960 was also excellent. Although the approving commission did not recommend the proposal for the curtain, five years later, according to the proposal, the tapestry manufactory in Valašské Meziříčí wove a tapestry, which still adorns the foyer of the Janáček Theater.

Twenty years later, he created a design for the curtain of the Prague Palace of Culture. The unique work is very concise in its form, but fascinating. The curtain was created using the Art protis technique, which is a Czechoslovak patent developed by the Brno Wool Research Institute in 1964. The wool fleece was

an endless surface created for artists who treated it like an art canvas. They created the paintings by laying layers of multicolored wool, fibers, textiles, or printing, which the special machine densely sewed and connected permanently.

The technology made it possible to significantly reduce the cost of producing textile paintings. At the same time, creators could be more creative in their work than when they stood at painting stands. Art commissions approving works of art were sometimes more progressive than artistic ones. Fišárek's curtain of the Sun can be considered a demonstration of the possibilities of using Art protis. The motif of the sun is formed by gold braids, which are sewn on a woolen base with huge dimensions (15 x 40 m) twice. It will be difficult to find a larger Art protis artwork and it will be difficult to find a larger curtain. Alois Fišárek was able to create a monumental work, yet as delicate and ethereal as the rays of the sun themselves.

**Martina Lehmannová**

The author is a museum worker and executive director of the Czech ICOM committee

# What we enjoy

The Prague Congress Centre could not function without people. Some employees are familiar faces that you will meet at your events, but many of them remain hidden. However, all of them are equally indispensable for the functioning of the PCC. But because life is not just about working, we decided to introduce you to some PCC employees in a non-traditional way; Through what they do in their free time.

## We asked our employees 3 questions:

1. Can you introduce us to your hobby, and how long have you been pursuing it?
2. How did you get into your hobby?
3. What is your biggest success / experience?



**Kamil Hrádek**  
Senior WEB Developer  
& Marketing Specialist

**1.** I love heights, especially to getting as high as possible. So, I direct my hobbies such that I don't stay on the ground. From alpine climbing in Nepal or the Caucasus to active paragliding in the Alps. But all this was preceded by my earlier hobby - aircraft modeling.

**2.** From the age of 10 I had the need to create and research. It started by gluing paper models from ABC magazine. When the models no longer fit on the shelves and the varnishes and thinners smelled throughout the apartment, my dad cleaned one cellar for my workshop "production room". The new space allowed me to design aircraft of all types - gliders, tethered models. After 1989, I started making radio-controlled models and I still do them today, which has been almost 40 years. Today I'm glad that my two boys are also modeling.



**3.** I'm not the competitive type. It makes me happy when I can create something that others have to buy. My field, robotics, and cybernetics, complements modeling appropriately. When I manage to create something that starts with the design of a printed circuit board, mounting and programming of microprocessor chips, reviving and creating service software or applications, even for a mobile phone, and it comes to the state where I say: "it works", so I'm happy.



**David Kovrzek**  
International Conference Manager

**1.** I am a football coach of the "under 13" category and, if necessary, of the squirt club Slavoj Pozdeň. Pozdeň is the village where I live. I have been doing this for about three years.

**2.** When you live in a village, and you want sports or, in general, social life to work here, you have to get involved. My brothers-in-law used to run the youth football. I joined as soon as an expansion of age categories was needed. I also coach my son. I have a level C coaching license.

**3.** I coach the U13 category together with my friend Peter. We're not doing it for the results only. We're not turning the boys into professional footballers. Our motivation is for the kids to move and understand football as an everyday part of their lives. When we reopened training after the lockdown, hardly anyone quit. On the contrary, even more kids joined. That's our greatest achievement and proof that they enjoy it.





## Šárka Žižková

Lawyer

**1.** I have a lot of hobbies, but because I'm a very sporty person, they include running, swimming, cycling, and now golf; but also, less physically demanding activities such as sewing or reading. In recent years, however, most of my free time, and especially almost all of my vacation, is taken up by rugby. I

used to play rugby as a player, and because I didn't want to lose the atmosphere of this extraordinary team sport even after the end of my playing career, I accepted the offer to work as a manager of the national team. What is rugby all about? Most people correctly guess that this is a game with a ball. :-) Players run forwards and they can only pass the ball backwards. Teams get points for placing the ball behind the goal line (five) or by kicking the goal, the so-called hook. A characteristic element of rugby is also the "dump", which is an action in which a player trying to seize the ball attacks an opponent carrying the ball and knocks them to the ground. More detailed rules, which often change over the years to ensure greater safety for players, but this is for a longer lecture. Of course, their complexity doesn't need a lawyer and is definitely not detrimental, but a good orientation in them as a player often brought me considerable benefits.

**2.** During my studies at primary and secondary school, I swam competitively, so rugby was a clear choice :-D Of course I'm joking, these two sports can't be more different, although some parallels can be found, for example, when swimming, you dive into a pool and in rugby a bunch of players also throw themselves almost head first on each other, which is called a ruck. I was introduced to rugby by a teammate, whom I met at a dragon boat race, she talked about rugby very nicely and at the time I was looking for a sport that I could do. The next week I went to training and they haven't gotten rid of me yet.

**3.** As for success as a player, it is undoubtedly the fact that I had the honor of being the captain of a 7-player national rugby team for two years. With this team, I also attended the European Trophy Championship several times, where we won 3rd place in my last player season, and at the same time we participated in the Olympic qualifying tournament in Kazan, Russia, where I ended my playing career. As for the experience in my new role as a team manager, this year is full of success, not only has the national team of men in rugby 7 in which I work, advanced to the highest European level of the Championship, but also my other team, the national team for players under 20 rugby XV, advanced to the European Championships for the first time, in which we will

participate in the first half of November. I can say for myself that rugby, whether from the position of a player or a member of the management team, is an emotionally charged sport that can be easily described by its values, which are honesty, enthusiasm, cohesion, discipline, and respect. Every training, every concentration, every match, or tournament is a unique experience, and I am glad that I can be a part of something like that.



## Andrea Papiasvili

Event Manager

**1.** I like sports, mountain biking and running. But the main thing I do is running because you can run all year round. I've been doing this for about seven years. I run an average of three times a week. I live near Stromovka, where I already have my routes.

I usually run 6, 8 or 10 kilometers. Thanks to running, endorphins are released, then I always feel great. I run after work, clear my head, settle my thoughts. But sometimes, on the contrary, something not so great occurs to me. And running is good for your health. When I have a runny nose, I go jogging, my body sweats and I'm not sick.

**2.** First, I went to the gym, where I ran on the treadmill. My partner, who is an experienced runner and has even run a marathon got me into outside running. I ran 4 kilometers from the beginning and in fact, I thought I was going to die. I made the classic mistakes of beginners. I didn't stretch, I tried to run as fast as I could, so I didn't have the strength after 2 kilometers. So, I asked my partner for advice. He was initially my running guru.

**3.** I don't take part in races. I haven't really had any racing success. But the biggest success for me is probably that running fits into my daily routine. I take it as a part of life, I can't be without it. It's such an addiction. Even if we go on vacation, I take running shoes with me so that I can run there as well. And when for some reason I can't run for a long time, like now due to an injury, I'm already impatient and looking forward to run again.

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## Sunday brunch

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## ➤ Cooking courses with chef Jan Wiesner

**Do you want to learn to cook as a chef or just improve your culinary skills?** Then our cooking classes are just right for you. During the course we will lend you all the equipment and you will learn to prepare a menu of fresh and quality ingredients under the guidance of our chef Jan Wiesner. You can then share your culinary experience over a glass of wine or a soft drink. At the end, all participants will receive a certificate. We also offer course graduates the opportunity to try out our renovated rooms for a discounted price.

## ➤ The Holiday Inn Prague Congress Center is preparing a new lobby

Get acquainted with the new concept of the open lobby, the so-called OPEN LOBBY, the reconstruction of which is planned for the first half of 2022.

This new and innovative concept will revolutionize the design of hotel public spaces. The Open Lobby changes the traditional format of the hotel lobby by connecting public spaces, i.e., the reception, lobby, restaurant, bar, and lounge, into one open, integrated space through a fresh modern design. This concept was created based on an analysis of the needs of our guests who want to not only work, but also relax and have fun.

In addition to a generous space for informal meetings and variable seating options, there will be a relaxation zone with game elements as well as a space for business meetings, conferences, or

workshops. Of course, electrical outlets will be available in every sector and free Wi-Fi as well.

A new gastronomic concept will be introduced within the Open Lobby. Guests can choose from an all-day menu at any time of the day, have a drink with friends at the bar, sit in the new café or terrace, or take food and drinks to their room.

Thanks to the Open Lobby, we will be able to offer guests a pleasant environment where they can eat, drink, work, meet, relax, and have fun, whether they are traveling alone or with a group, with children or with colleagues.

Zdroj: [www.ihg.com](http://www.ihg.com).

Source of visualizations: mackovič architecture s. r. o.

