Kosmetyczni.pl is 20 years old

On 5th September, the Polish Union of the Cosmetics Industry invited over 270 guests from cosmetic companies, state and EU institutions, and partners to an event held in Józefów near Warsaw to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the largest cosmetic organisation in Poland. This was a time for sharing memories, but most of all for a thorough review of current projects, and even a far-sighted look into the future of the industry.

The Kosmetyczni.pl (The Polish Union of the Cosmetics Industry) jubilee was opened by the President Wanda Stypułkowska and Henryk Orfinger, one of the founders of the organisation who said: *I have always been and always will be a dreamer*. It was his dream and the dreams of 14 other companies that made it possible to establish the Polish Union of the Cosmetics Industry 20 years ago. The organisation continues to develop and strengthen its position with the addition of new companies. It is this community - diverse and at the same time able to identify common goals and act together to achieve them - that is the greatest strength of the organisation today, as emphasized by **MEP Elżbieta Łukacijewska** in a recording addressed specifically to conference participants. The **Director General of Kosmetyczni.pl, Blanka Chmurzyńska-Brown**, also spoke about it, pointing out why this is so important for the organisation, which today has over 240 member companies: *At the beginning of our journey, we worked on one legal act. Today we are working simultaneously on about a hundred documents, strategies and policies. Only together are we able to ensure that the cosmetics industry gains as much as possible from them.*

Right from the start of the event you could feel good energy, as the last time such a large gathering of member companies took place it was in a completely different reality. *We are celebrating the Union's 20th anniversary at an extraordinary political, social and economic time - in the shadow of COVID-19, the war and economic crisis, and recently also an ecological disaster. When we saw each other for the last time in a large group over 2 years ago, the world looked and acted completely different. We thought we knew what to expect. Now we know that we were right: we only thought we knew*, said the **President of the Union, Wanda Stypułkowska**.

**A large dose of current knowledge about the industry**

This is the best way to summarize all the topics discussed at the conference. From morning to late afternoon, the discussion revolved around 3 main topics.

In the first panel, the moderator and invited guests assessed how the sector has evolved over the last 20 years. Much time was devoted to discussing the challenges that companies faced at the beginning of the organisation's existence. Ms **Małgorzata Wenerska-Craps, Minister Counsellor and Head of the Economics and Trade Section at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the European Union**, emphasized, however, that diplomats would strive in Brussels to ensure that new legislation for the cosmetics industry would not be absurd. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that if the draft revision of the Cosmetics Regulation is published by the end of 2022, there will be enormous pressure in the EU institutions to complete the work during this term. And this means for the cosmetics industry that there will be little time for negotiations. However, it was encouraging that all companies participating in this panel - both small, medium and large - declared readiness to act. *After all, we participated in all stages of legislative work, and the largest number of Polish SMEs - Union members participated in targeted consultations. Hence, it is us, Kosmetyczni.pl, who have the right to talk about the impact of the proposed changes on the Polish sector*, summed up **Blanka Chmurzyńska-Brown.**

The second panel was dominated by the topic of the essentiality of cosmetics, which appeared in the public debate thanks to the European Commission and raises a lot of controversy in the industry. The advantage of this part of the meeting was the opportunity to put a direct question to the representative of the Commission, Mr **Hans Ingels from the General Directorate and Unit F2**. Both the panellists and the conference participants took advantage of it. The **Director General of Cosmetics Europe, John Chave**, also took an important role in the discussion, presenting the results of a pan-European survey on the perception of cosmetics by consumers in everyday life. During the debate he also reminded that the axis of the discussion about cosmetics should be primarily safety issues. However, the talks in this part of the meeting went beyond the regulatory aspects thanks to the presence of **MEP Janina Ochojska**, who spoke about the essentiality from the perspective of providing humanitarian aid. **Prof Marcin Napiórkowski**, a cultural semiotician, prepared a speech devoted to the ways of storytelling and understanding the topic of security and essentiality. On the other hand, Ms Agnieszka Gościniewicz, a **beneficiary of the Beautiful Life Foundation**, an oncological patient, recalled the perspective of women struggling with cancer, assessing the essentiality of cosmetics from this very different, emotional perspective. It moved everyone by making them aware of the importance of cosmetics, restoring a sense of dignity and femininity, and giving patients strength to fight the disease.

The last topic was devoted to transparency in running a cosmetics business. This section opened with a recording prepared especially for the conference participants by **MEP Róża Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein and Andrew McDougall, Director of the Beauty and Personal Care department at Mintel - the exclusive partner of the conference**. Andrew talked about changes in consumer behaviour, perception of beauty, and assessments of entrepreneurs' actions over the past two decades, as well as current and future beauty trends. *Beauty standards are not permanent and are constantly changing. One person's vision of beauty differs from that of another. Thanks to social media, we now see beauty in so many different lights. Groups of people who previously had no voice have one now and they use it to fight traditional canons of beauty to more faithfully represent all the body and beauty types that exist in the world*, explained Andrew McDougall. Over the next few years, Mintel expects consumers to pressure companies to be more effective on issues such as climate change, while achieving simultaneous clear and tangible indicators of ethics and sustainability. This topic was also discussed by **Marta Marczak, a branding expert** advising companies on the processes of change, as well as speakers like Małgorzata Cieloch, spokeswoman for the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection, heads of small and large cosmetic companies, and **Agnieszka Plencler, President of the Consumer Forum**. Everyone agreed with the latter that without the involvement of consumers and their conscious choices, the change of the reality around us will not take place quickly, and successive EU directives do not guarantee success.

**Kosmetyczni.pl does good at every opportunity**

Since 5th September is also International Day of Charity, the guests of the Polish Union of the Cosmetics Industry who attended the conference and evening gala participated in the fundraiser for the Beautiful Life Foundation - the Polish edition of the *Look Good, Feel Better* project, which celebrated its 15th anniversary last year.

*We wanted to use this occasion, this gathering of many people to do good things, so we decided that the evening gala would become a charity event. This is important because the Foundation’s operations were suspended for several months due to problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that this will help them re-start their operations*, said **Blanka Chmurzyńska-Brown.**

**What’s next for the Union?**

The industry is facing many decisions and challenges, but 20 years of experience makes things easier for its organisations and companies. Today, the Polish Union of the Cosmetics Industry is a strong brand both in Poland and around the world. It is a brand which, according to **Blanka Chmurzyńska-Brown**, has clearly defined goals and knows its value for companies in the cosmetics industry: *We are older, more experienced and stronger than we were at the last big jubilee of our organisation. Since then, almost 100 new member companies have joined us - this is the greatest growth in the history of Kosmetyczni.pl, we did not grow so quickly in the previous periods. For this reason, for many member companies, the Union's 20th anniversary was their first chance to meet the Union's authorities and the team in person. We are very grateful to everyone for their presence and involvement in creating this event*, concluded the head of the Union.

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**The Polish Union of the Cosmetics Industry**, as the only organisation in Poland, represents and supports the strategic goals of entrepreneurs exclusively in the cosmetics industry. For over 20 years it has been an active voice of the sector in the process of law making. It effectively cooperates with institutions of Polish and European administration on a daily basis, and together with member companies it develops and implements solutions that lead to the development of the Polish cosmetics market, which is now fifth in the European Union.

The Union belongs to Cosmetics Europe - the European trade organisation and Confederation Lewiatan - the most influential organisation of employers in Poland. It is also involved in activities building the position of the sector abroad and helps promote the export of Polish cosmetics, builds a network of partnerships and, together with partners, removes barriers in international trade. The organisation also acts as a platform for the exchange of experiences - educates and trains companies, improving the quality of the entire sector. For 16 years, it has also been conducting the social project Beautiful Life Foundation.

The Union brings together over 240 companies, including cosmetics producers and distributors, laboratories, consulting companies and teaching centres, as well as their branch partners - suppliers of packaging and raw materials. It unites and works for startups, small family businesses as well as large international corporations and the largest Polish cosmetics companies, which work together effectively in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, while maintaining all competition rules.