**Support and develop the construction sector despite numerous challenges**

***Entrepreneurs are intensively seeking solutions to help them go through the crisis more smoothly. An excellent opportunity to establish new global contacts is the BUDMA fair, which we discuss with its director, Marta Szydłowska.***

**GPD: Last year you took over the position of BUDMA director, which is one of the larger and more important events held on the grounds of Poznań International Fair. What new things do you want to bring to this event and what are the objectives of the BUDMA 2023 fair you are preparing?**

**Marta Szydłowska:** *BUDMA is seen as the most important event for the construction industry in this part of Europe. It is here that you can follow cutting-edge solutions in the construction industry and find out how to improve the competitiveness of companies. We are keen to ensure that every potential trade fair visitor perceives BUDMA as a space for talks with manufacturers, exchange of experience and knowledge about the latest construction technologies, systems and products. The fundamental role of the trade fair was and still is to create an innovative platform to support business development. We can understand this as - on the one hand - the friendly infrastructure of the fairgrounds and, on the other hand, the opportunity to arrange a modern, interesting area for customers. “Supporting”, on the other hand, is a broader context that includes all marketing activities that promote exhibitors and their products to customers, with the final aim of bringing both parties together at the fair. The last few weeks have been very intense for us - it was the time of talks and meetings with exhibitors, which are of great importance to us. They are the most important indication of the direction we should follow and what we should emphasise at the next edition of BUDMA. We listen carefully to the comments of our exhibitors, partners and guests. The knowledge of the current expectations of the industry is of great help in preparing a trade fair addresses the heart of market needs.*

**GPD: The construction industry is currently entering a downturn phase, resulting in a less than ideal mood among suppliers to the sector. So why, despite inflation and a generally uninspiring business backdrop, is it worth attending the next edition of BUDMA?**

**M.S.:** *As trade fair organisers, we initiate meetings and exchanges of experience, promote communication and constantly seek global solutions that further drive business development. The current condition of the economy requires representatives of the construction sector to be well prepared and adapt quickly to emerging challenges. The industry landscape is evolving rapidly and manufacturing companies, contractors and participants throughout the supply chain need mentors like never before who can inspire and facilitate adaptation to the current market situation. The BUDMA fair is certainly an accelerator, supporting entrepreneurs in doing business, providing guaranteed access to cutting-edge solutions, facilitating the building of long-term international business relationships and networking. At present, entrepreneurs are intensively looking for solutions that will help them to go through the crisis more smoothly. An excellent opportunity to establish new global contacts is the BUDMA fair, while conferences and industry debates provide an opportunity to talk about optimisation, as well as to offer machines, tools and components for the production of woodwork and facades, as part of the WinDoor-tech fair taking place on the same dates.*

**GPD: However, the pandemic has shown that it is possible to develop companies and do business without meeting at trade fairs. So why are trade fairs needed in the age of the buzzing internet and social media? How is BUDMA changing to meet the current needs and expectations of exhibitors and fair visitors?**

**M.S.:** *The**past year has shown that virtual events cannot replace the energy of “live” meetings. It is worth emphasising that the best recommendation to attend the particular fair is the guaranteed presence of the customer. If we add to this a credible brand, the presence of leaders and fair partners of the “ top quality”, we arrive at a strong “incentive” to appear at the exhibition site During the four days BUDMA is visited by thousands of people directly involved in construction and architecture. A large group of them are foreign contractors from several dozen countries, from five continents. This is a potential that is hard to ignore. It was said that the Internet would re-evaluate everything, that there would be no need for meetings, but this is not the case. Of course, the Internet has changed the attitude of customers, who can easily get all the information about a product.*

**GPD: Is it the opportunity to meet, to talk, to establish details of cooperation that remains this “clou” of the fair?**

**M.S.:** *Where on neutral ground, in a less formal atmosphere, we can have an interesting and lucrative discussions. We have no shortage of challenges at the moment. That is why we are delighted that the BUDMA fair brand is well established. In unstable times this is certainly extremely helpful. However, we are constantly working for this success, and it is largely built by our exhibitors and partners. We appreciate their commitment immensely. It is they who create BUDMA together with us and it is to them that we owe the title of the most important construction and architecture trade fair in this part of Europe. We follow what is happening in the industry, we talk to companies, which share with us their insights on the current situation. This is why we also tailor the trade fair programme to meet current needs and expectations.*

**GPD: Also to the needs of the very developing and forward-looking timber construction market? What companies and solutions for this sector will we see in Poznań?**

**M.S.:** *Timber construction is the architecture of the future, and we are constantly expanding this range at BUDMA, creating the Ecotrends and Timber Homes zones with prefabrication, modular construction, energy-efficient construction and frame houses. The short construction time for timber buildings and the ease of reconstruction, especially in the case of modular prefabrication, favours the use of this type of construction in residential and public buildings. However, low public awareness of the advantages of such constructions is a fundamental limitation for the development of timber construction in Poland. Therefore, our key role is to present newer and newer solutions and to look for partners who, together with us, would contribute to the promotion of wood as an extremely durable, safe and highest quality material for building structures.*

**GPD: What interesting events will accompany BUDMA 2023?**

**M.S.:** *The trade fair programme, which we create together with our partners - direct market participants, always addresses the most relevant, current issues of the construction industry, points out the directions and opportunities for development both in the immediate and longer term future. The coming year will be marked by serious challenges and economic turmoil, caused by the effects of pandemics, the war in Ukraine or the energy crisis - these factors will be among the leading topics in the context of dealing with the threats faced by entrepreneurs on a daily basis: production stoppages, shortage of raw materials, progressing inflation, rising prices of construction materials, high costs of employment and implementation of investment, etc. We will also be discussing current affairs, i.e. changes in construction regulations, prospects for the industry in the coming years or export directions. Among others, such topics will be discussed during the next edition of the Build4Future Construction Economic Forum with the participation of distinguished experts, representatives of the government and the private sector. Together with the Polish Association of Construction Employers and PAIH, we are preparing the International Construction Poland-Ukraine Convention, which will analyse the most important aspects of post-war reconstruction of infrastructure of our eastern neighbour. In turn, extremely important topics concerning public space, or architecture in general, will be addressed during the D&A Design and Architecture Forum. The motto of next year's edition is “Renewal - consciously about energy”.*

**GPD: For the first time, the International Meeting Zone will also be organised. What is it exactly?**

**M.S.:** *This is a special space for foreign visitors, including a group of several hundred buyers participating in the Hosted Buyers programme, key visitors from Poland or, last but not least, for the BUDMA and WinDoor-tech exhibitors themselves, where we will not only help them find potential business partners, but also provide them with access to comprehensive and relevant knowledge on how to manage their company development internationally. The value of these meetings will be the substance and assistance of advisors in the areas of: conducting international transactions, looking for new financing opportunities, security and transport, and finally logistics itself in this new and changed supply chain reality. Networking will be assisted by a dedicated mobile application suggesting possible contacts, creating a calendar of meetings and a map of meetings.*

**GPD: How do you foresee the development of the construction sector in Poland? What problems have to be overcome and what opportunities do you see ahead??**

**M.S.:** *According to the**Polish Association of Construction Employers report on the future of the construction industry, the most likely scenario for the construction industry in the short to medium term is the continuation of high expenditure on public investment carried out at the central level - the road, railway, energy and hydraulic engineering segments, with a simultaneous decline in investment in local governments and a temporary reduction in new investment in some areas of the private market - mainly in the office and retail space segments. Despite the investment slowdown in some construction segments, large multi-discipline contractors will be able to maintain or even improve their existing margin levels - even with a moderate decline in revenue. It results from the stabilisation of prices in the construction market against the backdrop of the record highs of 2017-2018 and the good profitability of contracts won before the coronavirus pandemic.*

**GPD: It is said that trade fair is a mirror in which the condition of the economy is reflected... What can you see in it now?**

**M.S.:** *At the moment, the trade fair mirror shows anxiety for the future. BUDMA International Construction and Architecture Fair is one of the world's leading trade events, it attracts entrepreneurs from abroad and provides an opportunity for company development on the international arena, while the topics discussed at the events support the industry. For the seventh year in a row, we are continuing the Hosted Buyers programme, which has been very well received by our exhibitors and which brings representatives of foreign retail chains, purchasing groups, wholesalers or building materials distributors from the most promising export markets to Poznań. To date, we have already hosted over 3000 foreign buyers under this programme! The knowledge gained at BUDMA makes it easier to respond to changes, while the mechanisms introduced to the participants allow Polish representatives of the construction sector not only to survive uncertain times, but even to emerge from them successfully. There are plenty of challenges ahead for both the construction sector and the BUDMA team, but I am optimistic that the upcoming edition will once again impress with the multitude of innovative products and technologies in the construction industry, and contribute to developing solutions on how to provide the Polish economy with stable conditions for further development.*

**GPD: Thank you for the interview.**

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**BUDMA 2023, the International Construction and Architecture Fair, will be held from 31 January to 3 February.**