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● Polish IT Sector with Strong Hiring Plans 22

● Poland's Economic Growth 8 ● Luxury market in Poland 30

BUSINESS | CULTURE | PEOPLE

POLAND Weekly+

FOUR YEARS OF TRUMP

As Trump enters his second term, Poland finds itself at a crossroads—caught between opportunities for closer cooperation and the risks of geopolitical shifts.

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Sylwia Ziemacka

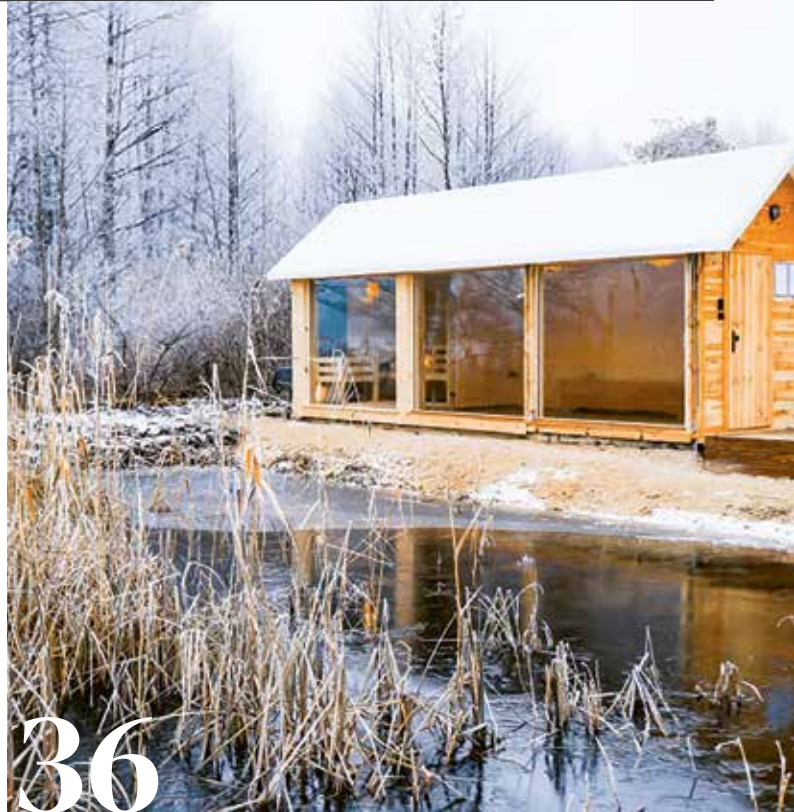
Managing Editor & Director

Poland's economy continues to defy expectations, positioning itself as a growth leader in Europe. According to preliminary data, GDP expanded by 3.5% in Q4 2024, and economists anticipate further acceleration in 2025, driven by strong investment activity. Both the IMF and EU projections confirm that Poland is set to be a top performer in the region, reinforcing its reputation as a stable and dynamic economy. Poland has a history of resilience, famously earning the title of "Green Island" during the 2009 financial crisis, when it was the only EU country to maintain GDP growth. Even in challenging geopolitical times, such as the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Poland remained an attractive destination for foreign direct investment, proving its economic adaptability. Beyond numbers, Poland's success is reflected in quality-of-life rankings, with Eurostat data placing it among the best in Europe. A combination of economic stability, investment appeal, and improving living standards makes Poland not just a leader in growth—but a great place to be. Learn more about Poland with our magazine, online portal, and video programs on our YouTube channel.

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FOUR YEARS OF TRUMP - HOW POLES SEE PROSPECTS

So think nearly half of Poles, according to a new poll by United Surveys on behalf of Wirtualna Polska website in the running to the inauguration. Asked how Donald Trump's presidency will affect Poland's security, some 46.2% of respondents believed the outlook was positive. Among the optimists, 13.9% considered that security would "definitely improve", while 32.3% thought that it would "rather improve".

If Trump's first term is anything to go by, the US leader has shown openness to cooperation. He forged excellent relations with Polish President Andrzej Duda during his first term in the US's top spot, and had favoured high-spending Poland over other Nato members who had spent less on defence. There's no indicating those relations have waned.

Poland was the only European Union member state to make the list of top twenty countries for Donald Trump to make contact with on taking office. On the list made public in late January by the State Department Poland figured as number 15. Even large trading partners like Germany and



Poles are observing the second term of the 47th president of the United States with some trepidation and as deportations start and the risks of tech wars sink in. However, there could also be benefits for Poland from co-operation with the Republican leader.

photo credit: PAP/MICHAEL REYNOLDS

France did not make the roster, not to mention the UK.

There's no indication that relations with the Polish head of state and armed forces chief have waned but as Duda's term is now entering its last few months, it is Donald Tusk the Polish Prime Minister who will play first fiddle.

The two often locked horns when Tusk was head of the European Council, the body assembling government ministers of the member countries. The scuffles over imports of French cheese, whisky and planes we saw 8 years ago could be small beer compared to what Trump has been threatening.

For the next 6 months Poland holds the presidency of the bloc, and will set the agenda for European policy. Poland's position on US relations will be closely aligned to Europe's. These close relations could be easily soured.

Trump is taking a hard line against European automotive imports, which would hurt Poland's bottom line. Industry statistics indicate around 10% of the parts on German cars, for example, originate from Polish factories.

Worse still is the exclusion of Poland and many other European countries from the list of countries who will be able to import the newest generation of US-designed silicon chips used in the most advanced AI development projects.

The newly-announced US Government Stargate project which promises from \$500 bn of state support for technology projects



will further create a gulf in technology investment between the US and Europe.

That aside, the progress the Chinese rival to Open AI's Chat GPT - Deep Seek - has made on less advanced chips could encourage Polish IT wannabees that all is not lost. Using older US chips they have produced a highly praised AI Chatbox, competitor. Analysts are calling Deep Seek's success a "Sputnik moment" for the US, similar to when the Russians soared ahead in the space race in the 1960s.. The barriers to entry of the biggest players may be porous.

Another trying aspect of this new era of Polish US relations is Trump's expulsion of illegal refugees, which is now dividing Poles.

The overtly strong-arm policy of sending home people without the right papers, does not get support across the board here. The problem is that among the 10 million US residents identifying as Pol-

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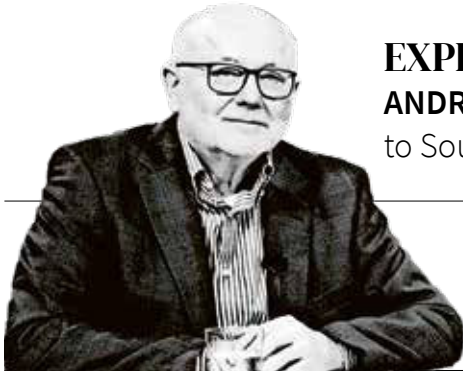
The problem is that among the 10 million US residents identifying as Polish, as many as 30,000 have overstayed their visas and could be sent home.

ish, as many as 30,000 have overstayed their visas and could be sent home. Even Polish right wingers are shocked.

Only 9.1% of respondents to a recent poll in Rzeczpospolita daily strongly agree that the illegal immigrants from Poland should be sent home. Meanwhile 25.2% answered "rather yes". "Rz" adds that 23.9% chose the answer +rather not+, and , while 14.3% +definitely not+. A large group of Poles - 27.5% - have no opinion" - it reports. However, the sight of plane loads of evicted long term residents would not be gladly perceived in Poland.

Poles have faith in Trump's team taking a sensible approach to negotiations to end the war in Ukraine, and there are indications Trump understands why he couldn't end it on day one of his presidency.

Peace would bring Poland dividends, as does US solidarity with Ukraine's cause. Nevertheless unpredictability is an expectation Trump is guaranteed to fulfil.



EXPERT COMMENTARY

ANDRZEJ DERLATKA, former Polish ambassador to South Korea, founder of the Intelligence Agency



Trump's Second Term

Donald Trump's return to the US presidency signals a revival of his signature political strategy: hard-nosed pragmatism and a foreign policy centered on restoring America's global dominance. His slogan, "Make America Great Again," is more than just a campaign tagline—it reflects a philosophy that prioritizes US interests, with allies expected to take greater responsibility for their security and economies.

For Europe, particularly Poland, Trump's second term carries major implications. His stance on NATO will likely remain firm, pressuring member states to boost defense spending and making US military support more conditional. Trump has suggested allies should "pay for protection" and has questioned some US international commitments. However, this shift does not necessarily weaken NATO but rather makes it more transactional, where each member must prove its value.

Trump does not view Russia as an existential threat to the US. Instead, he sees China as America's primary competitor, with its economic and technological rise challenging US dominance.

For Poland, the key question is whether Trump considers it a strategic partner or just a bargaining chip. His first term saw an increased US military presence and support for Polish-led initiatives like the Three Seas Initiative. However, his transactional approach means nothing is guaranteed—if Poland fails to meet expectations, it cannot count on preferential treatment.

Poland still lacks strong negotiating leverage with the US. American policy toward Poland is shaped as much by business and lobbying interests as by strategic consider-

ations. At this stage, Poland must focus on key priorities. Securing a long-term US military presence is essential. Given potential NATO shifts, Poland must ensure American forces remain—ideally permanently.

Building strong European alliances is also crucial. Trump's skepticism toward the EU and preference for bilateral relations may offer Poland greater flexibility in shaping its role within Europe.

Continued military modernization is necessary. If the US scales back its NATO commitments, Poland must be prepared to enhance its own defense capabilities.

Strategic diplomacy toward Russia and China is equally vital. Regardless of Washington's decisions, Poland must shape its own policies to avoid being used as a bargaining tool in global power struggles.

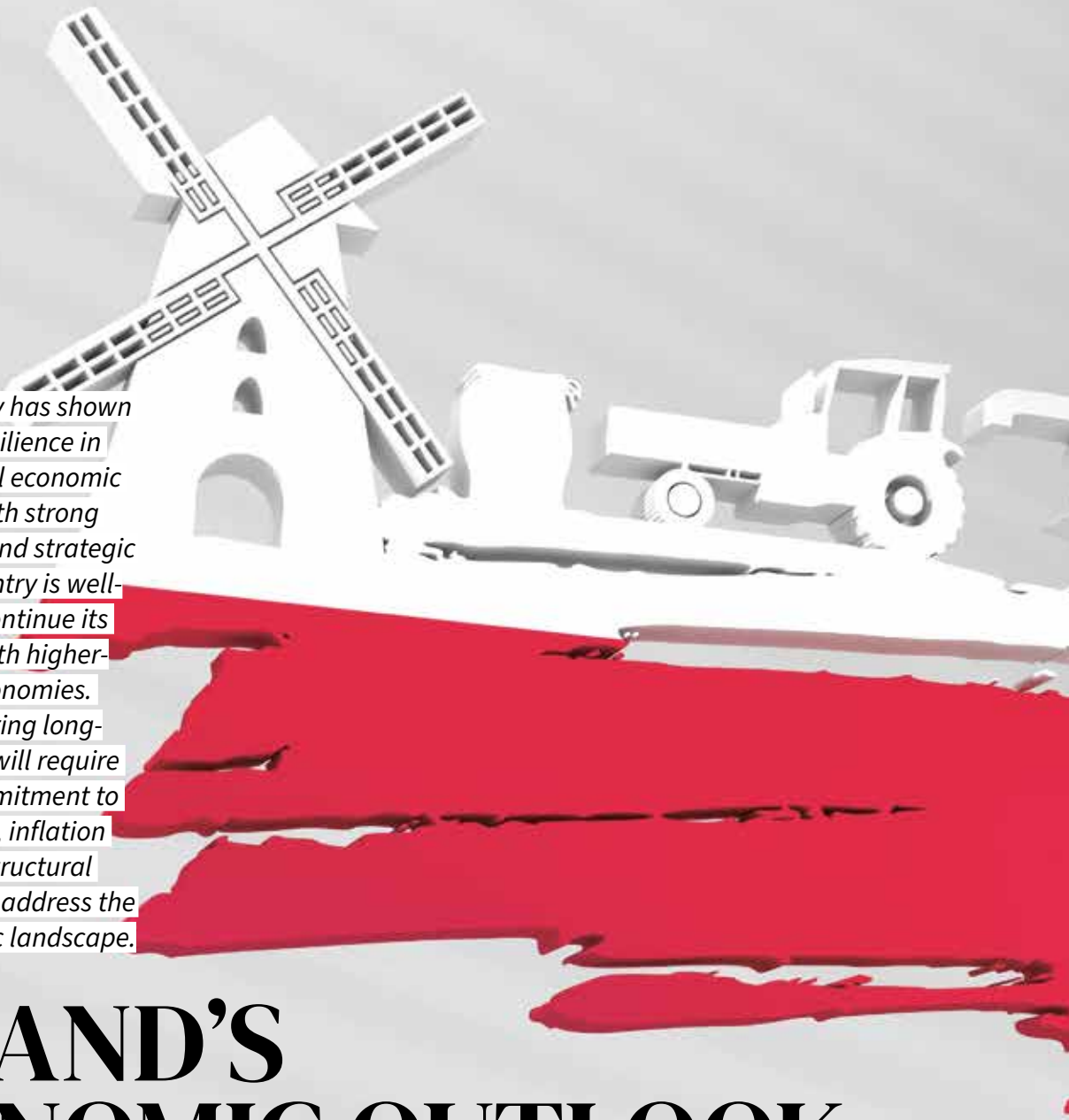
A New Yalta?

A shift in global power dynamics could create new spheres of influence. If Poland fails to strengthen its international position, it risks becoming a secondary player, with its interests dictated by larger powers.

Trump's actions toward Russia and China will have global consequences. Will he push for confrontation with Beijing at the expense of Eastern Europe? Will he build new alliances or dismantle the current international order?

One thing is certain—Trump is not guided by ideology but by business logic, weighing deals, profits, and losses. Poland must adopt a similar mindset, basing its policies on strategic calculation rather than sentiment. Only then can it secure its position in a rapidly changing world.

Trump does not view Russia as an existential threat to the US. Instead, he sees China as America's primary competitor, with its economic and technological rise challenging US dominance.



Poland's economy has shown remarkable resilience in the face of global economic headwinds. With strong policy measures and strategic reforms, the country is well-positioned to continue its convergence with higher-income EU economies. However, ensuring long-term prosperity will require a steadfast commitment to fiscal discipline, inflation control, and structural transformation to address the evolving economic landscape.

POLAND'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK:

Growth, Challenges, and Policy Recommendations

photo credit: Adobestock

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently concluded its Article IV consultation with Poland, revealing a dynamic economic landscape marked by both opportunities and challenges. The Polish economy demonstrated resilience in 2024, with growth estimated at 2.8%, driven primarily by a rebound in domestic demand. However, structural challenges such as inflation, fiscal pressures, and demographic trends pose significant hurdles for sustainable long-term growth.

Economic Growth and Key Drivers

Poland's economic expansion in 2024 has been fueled by strong private

consumption, supported by robust wage growth and declining inflation. As inflationary pressures eased, real incomes improved, leading to higher household spending. Despite these positive trends, net exports posed a drag on growth due to subdued demand from the Euro Area, Poland's key trading partner.

Looking ahead, growth is projected to accelerate to 3.5% in 2025 and 2026, driven by the absorption of Next Generation EU (NGEU) funds. These funds are expected to support infrastructure investment, innovation, and productivity enhancements across various sectors. However, beyond 2026, growth is anticipated to moderate to below 3% as the impact of EU funds diminishes and demographic challenges intensify.

Fiscal Pressures and Public Debt

The fiscal deficit widened to an estimated 5.9% of GDP in 2024, primarily due to increased public sector wages and social benefits, partially offset by savings from lower energy subsidies. In 2025, the deficit is expected to remain high at 5.6% of GDP, largely due to elevated defense spending amid geopolitical uncertainties.

Poland's government has outlined a medium-term fiscal consolidation plan aimed at reducing the deficit to 2.9% of GDP by 2028. However, the IMF report highlights that additional measures will be necessary to achieve this target, with fiscal consolidation efforts likely to focus on revenue mobilization, targeted social spending, and pension reforms. Public debt is projected to stabilize around 65% of GDP in the medium

term, provided that fiscal discipline is maintained.

Inflation Trends and Monetary Policy

Poland has made significant progress in curbing inflation, which has declined sharply from 2023 levels. However, core inflation remains elevated due to strong wage growth and persistent labor market tightness. The IMF anticipates inflation to moderate to the upper end of the National Bank of Poland's target range of 2.5±1% by the end of 2025.

The monetary policy stance remains tight, with the central bank prioritizing price stability. The IMF recommends maintaining a cautious approach, with potential interest rate cuts only once inflation demonstrates a sustained downward trajectory and wage growth decelerates. Ensuring that inflation expectations remain anchored is crucial for long-term economic stability.

Financial Sector Resilience

Poland's financial system remains robust, with capital and liquidity buffers well above regulatory requirements. Asset quality has improved, and bank profitability has been bolstered by higher net interest margins. The private credit market has shown signs of recovery, supported by initiatives such as the subsidized mortgage scheme.

Despite these positive indicators, the IMF cautions against further regulatory tightening that could impede credit growth. Efforts to enhance financial sector stability

should focus on addressing legal risks and reducing distortions in private credit markets.

Foreign Workers and Economic Contributions

Poland's labor market has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, shifting from a net labor exporter to an importer of foreign talent. The influx of foreign workers, particularly from Ukraine and Belarus, has been instrumental in alleviating labor shortages. Pre-pandemic, Ukrainian workers constituted the majority of foreign labor, and their presence has only grown following the war in Ukraine, which brought a significant influx of refugees.

Currently, around 1 million foreign workers are officially registered in Poland, but the actual number is likely higher due to informal employment. Foreign workers are predominantly employed in the service sectors, with administrative and support services being the largest employer. The Polish government has taken proactive measures to facilitate their integration into the labor market by providing access to work permits and social security benefits.

Despite their contributions, foreign workers and refugees face challenges such as language barriers, skill mismatches, and difficulties in having their qualifications recognized. Addressing these challenges through targeted policies, such as vocational training and support for language acquisition, will be crucial in maximizing their potential contribution to the economy.

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The IMF anticipates inflation to moderate to the upper end of the National Bank of Poland's target range of 2.5±1% by the end of 2025.

Moreover, demographic trends underscore the importance of foreign labor in sustaining economic growth. As Poland's native working-age population declines, foreign workers can play a key role in bridging labor gaps and ensuring continued economic momentum.

Structural Reforms for Sustainable Growth

To sustain long-term growth, Poland must undertake comprehensive structural reforms aimed at enhancing productivity and addressing demographic challenges. Key policy recommendations include promoting labor market participation among women, older adults, and refugees, strengthening the innovation ecosystem by providing incentives for research and development, and accelerating efforts to decarbonize the economy.

Policy Recommendations and Outlook

The IMF emphasizes the need for a balanced policy approach to sustain Poland's economic momentum. Fiscal policy should prioritize reducing the deficit and ensuring debt sustainability while preserving essential public investments. Monetary policy should remain data-driven, with adjustments contingent on inflation dynamics. While the near-term outlook remains positive, risks to growth include external shocks, geopolitical uncertainties, and a slower-than-expected recovery in the Euro Area. Strengthening economic resilience through prudent macroeconomic management and structural reforms will be key to navigating these challenges effectively.

POLAND
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Poland IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Connecting Local Realities with Global Impact

Poland in the Global Context is an original YouTube show by Poland Online that dives into the intersecting worlds of geopolitics, business, and economics. With expert insights and in-depth analysis, the show explores Poland's evolving role on the global stage, uncovering how local decisions influence international dynamics and vice versa.

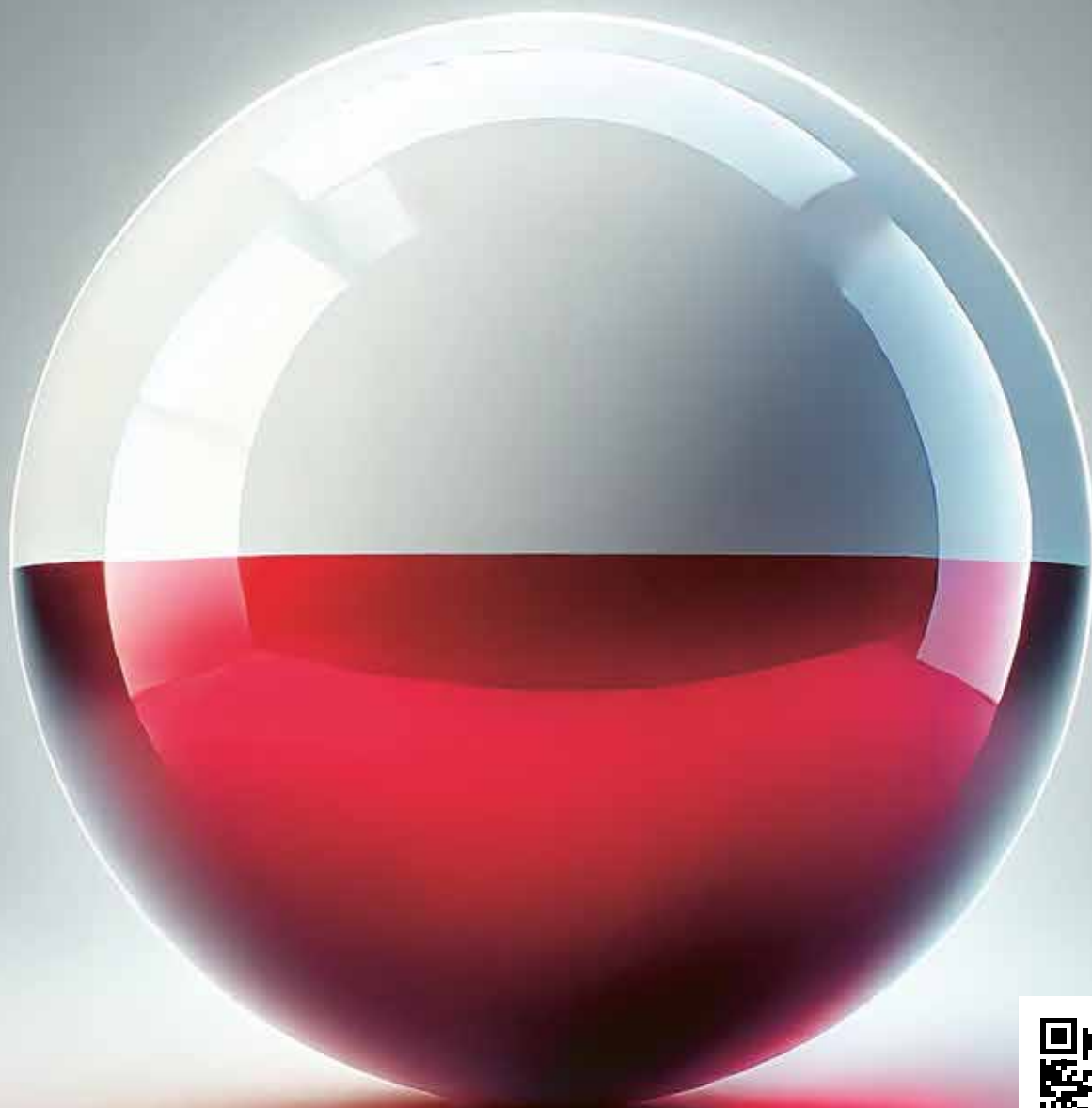




photo credit: BSH

BSH New Factory

BSH Home Appliances Group, Europe's leading home appliances manufacturer, is expanding its Polish operations by construction of a state-of-the-art factory for small home appliances in Rudna Wielka near Rzeszów in south-east Poland. The facility will be built by mid-2026 by Panattoni, global leader in industrial real estate development with strong Polish origins. The factory valued at nearly zł 600 m (\$ 150 m) is to replace BSH's current production site. Spanning 73,000 square meters with production halls, logistics areas and offices it will employ over 1,000 people focusing on high-quality working conditions. Situated just 5 km from Rzeszów, it will benefit from excellent transport

links, including proximity to highways and public transportation.

After construction of BSH's dishwasher factory in Łódź, the project in Rudna Wielka continues a successful partnership between BSH and Panattoni. "We are proud to collaborate once again with BSH on this strategic investment. This factory will not only meet BSH's needs but also contribute to the growth of the region and the broader home appliances industry in Poland," said Marek Dobrzycki, Partner at Panattoni.

Konrad Pokutycki, President of BSH Poland, also emphasized significance of this investment. "This project marks another milestone for BSH and underscores our con-

"Over the past 30 years, we have invested nearly 1.5 billion euros in Poland, creating over 7,000 jobs across six factories, logistics centers, R&D facilities, and shared service centers," emphasized Konrad Pokutycki, President of BSH Poland.



fidence in Poland as a strategic location. Over the past 30 years, we have invested nearly 1.5 billion euros in Poland, creating over 7,000 jobs across six factories, logistics centers, R&D facilities, and shared service centers. This new factory reaffirms our long-term commitment to the Podkarpacie region and the Polish market."

BSH has been operating in the Podkarpacie region for 12 years producing Bosch Tassimo capsule coffee machines and vacuum cleaners distributed globally. Recently it developed its production lines to include vertical cordless Bosch vacuum cleaners. The region also hosts BSH's R&D center for small home appliances, which will soon move to the new facility further reinforcing Rzeszów's role in BSH's global operations.



photo credit: InpostUK

InPost's Billion Parcels

2024 was a breakthrough year for InPost that exceeded a staggering threshold of over 1 billion parcels delivered in a single year. The precise score amounting to 1,091,644,003 deliveries reflected 22% year-over-year growth. During the holiday peak the company also established a new daily record delivering nearly 14 million parcels. Moreover, InPost achieved significant growth in all its key markets:

- Poland (25,000 lockers) with 709.3 million parcels (+20% y/y),
- France (9,200 lockers) with 267 million parcels (+11% y/y),
- United Kingdom (9,200 lockers) with 93.2 million parcels (doubling the 2023 volume).

In total in 2024 InPost deployed 11,500 new lockers ending the

year with a huge record of 46,977 (+33% y/y) and enlarging its network to over 82,000 out-of-home (OOH) points. With strategic acquisitions like Menzies in the UK, development of InPost Pay and loyalty programs, it elevated the user experience to a whole new level. InPost was founded by Rafał Brzoska in Kraków in 2006. It offers parcels delivery and express mail services through lockers (Automated Parcels Machines or APMs) and pick-up drop-off points (PUDOs) in Poland, Italy, United Kingdom, France, Benelux, Spain and Portugal. Its outlets are also available in local courier and postal networks in UAE, Baltic States, Czechia, Slovakia, Germany, Iceland, Columbia, Ireland, Brazil and Australia.

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\$15 Billion Nuclear Plant Funding

In January 2025 the Polish government adopted a draft Law on financing Polskie Elektrownie Jądrowe (PEJ), state-owned nuclear industry operator, with zł 60 billion (\$ 15 billion) from 2025 to 2030. PEJ will receive the funds to prepare and accomplish the investment of construction of the first Polish nuclear power plant in Choczewo Commune at the Baltic seaside. The funding will be provided in the form of equity increase through financial transfers and T-notes. The Choczewo project is estimated at total zł 150b (\$ 37b). In September 2023 Westinghouse Electric Company and Bechtel Corporation created a consortium to build the plant with three AProo0 reactors of the world most advanced III+PWR generation to produce 3750 MW since 2040. The consortium agreement also provides for creating the supplies chain with over 500 Polish companies.

photo credit: Westinghouse





creotech



photo credit: Creotech

Military Observation Satellites

The Ministry of National Defence signed a contract with Creotech Instruments S.A. to engineer a constellation of four Earth observation satellites in Mikroglob system based on HyperSat platform. The project will be financed with zł 557 million (\$ 140 million) from the National Reconstruction Plan (KPO) and the EUNextGeneration (NGEU) instrument of the European Union. The first satellites are to be put in orbit in 2026 and the whole constellation will achieve readiness in 2027. They will operate on low Sun-synchronous orbit (SSO) enabling passage over Earth objects at the same time with short intervals to render and transmit images in infrared and visible bands. The ground facil-

ities included in the project will consist of mission control and data processing components. Detailed specification remains secret but is expected to resemble a similar satellite EagleEye also based on HyperSat platform and launched to Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) by SpaceX' Falcon 9 rocket in August 2024, which creates images with resolution below 1 meter per pixel at orbital period of 95 minutes. "So far the Polish Armed Forces were absent from the space domain but will soon become active there. The project will be realised by a Polish company and the entire system will be operated by the Polish Armed Forces. This is a breakthrough moment" said the Minister of Defence Kosiniak-Kamysz.

The first satellites are to be put in orbit in 2026 and the whole constellation will achieve readiness in 2027.

Baltic Ports Prosperity

The main Polish Baltic ports ended 2024 with record-breaking annual net profit growths: Gdańsk by 24 proc., Gdynia by 32 proc. and Szczecin-Świnoujście by 23 proc. Total volume of their container operations also grew by 9 proc. Now all of them carry out intensive works to expand their infrastructures. The biggest changes are expected in Świnoujście with construction of the Deep Water Container Terminal to handle the biggest Asian container ships from 2028. Gdańsk is building a new grain terminal of large loading capacity and is continuing construction of Baltic Hub T3 container terminal. Gdynia is working on construction of the External Port. There are also plans to deepen the seaway to Elbląg port and to construct the seaway connecting Vistula Lagoon with Gdańsk Bay. All the investments in the Polish marine industry in 2025 are to cost zł 2 billion (\$ 500 million).

photo credit: Baltic Hub





photo credit: Hitachi

Hitachi Cyber Center in Kraków

Hitachi Cyber announced opening of a new Security Operations Center (SOC) in Kraków utilizing the capabilities of Hitachi's digital engineering company GlobalLogic. This launch comes at a critical time as all organizations around the world face increased cybersecurity risks, including AI-driven attacks, ransomware-as-a-service and supply chain vulnerabilities. Reports from ENISA highlight doubling of cyber incidents across Europe in the last year, especially in healthcare, energy and manufacturing sectors. Fortinet's 2024 Global Cybersecurity Skills Gap Report reveals that 70% of companies struggle to se-

cure their assets due to a shortage of skilled professionals.

The Kraków SOC aims to address these challenges with 24/7 monitoring and customized solutions to mitigate risks, ensure compliance with regulations like GDPR and NIS2 and enhance resilience against sophisticated cyber threats. Offering a unique combination of services, SOC will provide protection for networks, servers, applications, devices and processes. Leveraging advanced technologies, including AI, it will ensure precise threat detection and rapid response in operational technology (OT) and information technology (IT).



"The opening of the SOC in Kraków marks another step in our mission to support European companies in protecting their data and safeguarding their reputations," said Igor Byeda, GlobalLogic Vice-President.

Thanks to SOC large organizations will be able to scale their operations to meet growing security demands, while small and medium-sized enterprises will be able to outsource SOC functions without costs of building infrastructure.

Hitachi Europe has been a leading provider of IT services in finance and energy sectors for the last 18 years with an important role played by six Polish companies employing over 6700 people. "The opening of the SOC in Kraków marks another step in our mission to support European companies in protecting their data and safeguarding their reputations. Utilizing Hitachi Cyber, we provide clients with comprehensive protection that not only addresses current needs but also prepares them for future challenges" said Igor Byeda, GlobalLogic Vice-President.



How Raben and Henkel Built a Model Partnership

THREE DECADES OF LOGISTICS EXCELLENCE

In the fast-moving world of global supply chains, few business partnerships withstand the test of time. Markets shift, technologies evolve, and companies pivot to meet new demands. Yet, for Henkel Polska and Raben Group, change has only strengthened their alliance. What began as a simple customs service agreement in the mid-1990s has grown into a strategic logistics collaboration spanning Poland and beyond, proving that trust, adaptability, and shared vision are the true cornerstones of long-term success.

As they celebrate thirty years of partnership in 2025, their journey is more than a milestone—it is a testament to how businesses can scale best

practices and set new standards in logistics and supply chain management.

From Customs Support to European Expansion

Henkel, a global leader in the chemical and cosmetics industry, relies on an intricate logistics network to ensure its products reach millions of consumers. From adhesives and detergents to beauty and industrial solutions, the company's extensive portfolio demands a logistics partner capable of handling complex supply chain operations with precision and efficiency. When Raben first started working with Henkel in Poland, its role was limited to customs services. But as

One of the most defining moments of this partnership came in 2019 with the opening of a high-bay warehouse in Robakowo, near Poznań.

the industry evolved and Henkel's footprint expanded, so too did the responsibilities of its logistics provider. Over the years, Raben took on warehousing, domestic and international transport, and specialized services such as copacking, shaping an integrated logistics model that allowed Henkel to scale its operations seamlessly.

One of the most defining moments of this partnership came in 2019 with the opening of a high-bay warehouse in Robakowo, near Poznań. The facility was not just a storage space—it was a custom-built logistics hub designed to meet the highest safety and environmental standards, ensuring both efficiency and sustainability. It also provided scalability, a crucial element as Henkel continued to grow its market presence.

The success of this model in Poland set the stage for further collaboration. In 2021, Raben expanded its logistics services for Henkel to Hungary, where it now operates two dedicated warehouses for the company's adhesives division. What started as a local partnership had now become a multi-country logistics network, proving that a well-built supply chain model could be successfully replicated across different markets.

The Key to Longevity: Trust and Shared Values

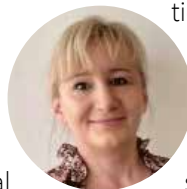
A thirty-year business relationship does not endure without a strong foundation. In a sector where speed, precision, and adaptability are non-negotiable, companies must align not only in operational efficiency but also in strategic outlook. For **Lucyna Zaborowska-Princ**, Regional Director at Raben Logistics Polska, this partnership has thrived because both companies share a commitment to trust, flexibility, and continuous improvement.



"Thirty years ago, we embarked on a joint journey with Henkel Polska, becoming part of their supply chain. Over these years, we've created a unique model of cooperation built on mutual trust.

This anniversary is proof of how long-term commitment and a shared vision lead to outstanding results," she reflects.

For Henkel, Raben has not been just a service provider—it has been a key enabler of supply chain resilience. **Iwona Przybył**, Director SCH at Henkel Polska, points out that the ability to anticipate and navigate logistical challenges has been critical to maintaining the company's operational excellence.



"The commitment of the people working here and their pursuit of excellence have enabled us to overcome many logistical challenges. This 30th anniversary is proof of how much can be achieved through collaboration rooted in shared values," she says.

Innovation and Sustainability: The Future of Logistics

While the past thirty years have established a solid foundation, the future of this partnership will be shaped by technological advancements and sustainability-driven initiatives.

Both Henkel and Raben are working towards a logistics model that is more agile, transparent, and environmentally responsible. Investments in advanced supply chain monitoring systems are helping them improve operational efficiency, while efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions align with broader industry goals for greener logistics. The Robakowo warehouse, for instance, was designed with sustainability in mind, setting a precedent for future infrastructure projects.

Innovation, too, plays a critical role. The companies are actively exploring digital solutions that will enhance supply chain visibility, streamline inventory management, and further optimize transport routes. The ability to adapt to shifting consumer expectations and regulatory requirements will define the next chapter of this partnership.

Looking Ahead: Scaling Best Practices for the Future

As Raben and Henkel celebrate this significant milestone, their sights are set firmly on the future. The challenges facing modern supply chains—from geopolitical disruptions to climate commitments—demand new levels of agility and foresight. Yet, if the past three decades have shown anything, it is that a strong, trusted partnership can weather even the most unpredictable shifts in the market. "Together, we are building a future where logistics becomes more agile, sustainable, and customer-focused," Przybył says.

For three decades, Raben has been more than just a logistics provider—it has been a true partner in logistics, helping to bind all elements of the supply chain as effectively as the adhesives from Henkel's extensive product range. As they look ahead, the collaboration between these two companies is poised not just to continue, but to evolve, setting new benchmarks for scalable, sustainable logistics solutions in Europe and beyond.

The presence of women in executive leadership and supervisory boards of companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange (WSE) is on the rise. However, with the 2026 EU gender balance directive looming, urgent action is needed to accelerate progress. Could the growing emphasis on ESG and regulatory changes be the game-changer?

ESG and Regulations: A Pathway to Gender Equality

The role of women in decision-making positions is evolving as businesses increasingly recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While more WSE-listed companies now include women on their boards, only one in four currently meets the EU's regulatory requirements aimed at improving gender balance. By 2026, EU directives mandate that at least 33% of board seats be filled by individuals from the underrepresented gender. In 2023, according to Deloitte's "Women in the Boardroom" report, only 17% of Polish listed companies met this target.

The Numbers: Where We Stand

Deloitte's report, based on 2023 data from 408 WSE-listed companies across various stock indices, highlights the growing but still insufficient female representation. Leading the way is the financial sector, with women holding board seats in 23% of companies, followed by biomedical sciences and healthcare at 22%. The consumer goods industry stands at 18%, real estate and construction at 17%, and energy, raw materials, and industrial sectors at 16%. The lowest female representation—14%—is found in technology, media, and telecommunications.

WOMEN RISING

ESG and Regulations Paving the Way





Encouragingly, progress has been noted across most sectors. Between 2021 and 2023, female representation increased in five out of six industries, with the biomedical sciences and healthcare sector leading the growth at six percentage points. The financial, real estate, and construction sectors each saw a four-percentage-point rise, while consumer goods and technology sectors posted smaller gains.

Regulations: The Driving Force Behind Change

Regulatory measures play a key role in fostering gender balance. The financial sector, subject to stricter gender equality obligations, including quotas and pay gap reporting, serves as a prime example of the impact regulations can have. Currently, nearly 25% of financial firms on the WSE have women on their supervisory boards, highlighting the effectiveness of legislative frameworks.

Despite positive trends, experts warn that without more decisive actions, progress may stagnate. "To meet the 2026 requirements, we need both regulatory support and proactive efforts from businesses. Implementing mandatory quotas and integrating diversity into management strategies are crucial next steps," says Joanna Świerzyńska, President of Deloitte Poland.

ESG: A Catalyst for Women's Leadership

The rising importance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles presents another opportunity to boost women's leadership. Sectors such as energy and heavy industry, which have seen

slower progress in gender diversity, could benefit from the increasing emphasis on sustainability reporting and ESG strategies.

Experts note that ESG initiatives often align with greater gender inclusivity, as sustainability departments tend to have higher female representation. The growing trend of appointing Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) to executive boards further supports this shift. "ESG is not just a compliance requirement but a strategic business driver that can create more opportunities for women in leadership roles," says Malwina Choinśka, Partner at Deloitte's Audit and Assurance Department.

Looking Ahead: A Call to Action

To achieve the EU-mandated gender targets, Poland's corporate sector must embrace systemic change. Companies should embed DEI principles into their core strategies, support gender equality initiatives, and enhance transparency in reporting.

"DEI is not a passing trend but a critical component of sustainable business growth and competitiveness," emphasizes Iva Georgijew, Chair of the Board of Directors at Deloitte Central Europe.

The road ahead requires collaboration between regulatory bodies and businesses to ensure meaningful progress. With ESG at the forefront of corporate strategy, the hope is that more women will find their place in boardrooms, shaping the future of Poland's business landscape.

POLISH TRANSPORT SECTOR: RESILIENCE AMID CRISIS

Despite an ongoing industry crisis, Polish road transport companies continue to dominate the European market, accounting for 20% of transport operations across the continent. However, structural changes and regulatory challenges are putting increasing pressure on the sector.

The Polish road transport sector remains a major player in Europe, performing 20% of the continent's transport work, according to the latest report, "Road Transport in Poland 2024/2025." This achievement comes despite an ongoing crisis that has affected the industry since 2023, with more than half of businesses reporting revenue declines.

The report, prepared by the Employers' Association "Transport and Logistics Poland" (TLP) and analytical center SpotData, in cooperation with Continental Tires Poland and Shell Poland, highlights key challenges faced by the industry and outlines strategies for long-term growth and sustainability.



"This is the most serious crisis in the road transport market in over 20 years," said **Maciej Wroński**, President of TLP. He noted that the sector's share in bankruptcy and restructuring pro-

ceedings across the entire economy has surged from 5% in 2021 to 13% in 2024.

Structural Changes and Challenges

In 2024, for the first time, the number of companies holding community licenses for international transport decreased, according to the Chief Inspectorate of Road Transport. Another key indicator of the downturn is the decline in driver certificates issued to foreign workers.

"Last year, we saw a decline in the number of immigrants working in Poland's road transport sector, particularly those from Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova," stated **Ignacy Morawski**, Director of SpotData and co-author of the report.

Since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, its transport companies have increased their market share from 5% to the current 20%, surpassing their German counterparts. However, industry



experts warn that further expansion faces structural hurdles.

Regulatory Pressures and Decarbonization Efforts

Polish carriers must adapt to rapidly evolving regulatory requirements, particularly in the area of decarbonization. EU policies are pushing the industry toward zero-emission vehicles, but economic feasibility and infrastructure gaps remain significant challenges.

"Electrification is an excellent solution for last-mile and distribution transport; however, it is not yet viable for long-haul operations. LNG and BioLNG are currently the most feasible alternatives for reducing CO₂ emissions in long-haul transport," said Michał Niemiec, Sales Manager at Shell Poland.



Poland.

Despite regulatory pressure, only 10% of surveyed companies plan to invest in electric vehicle fleets over the next five years.

A Future Built on Technology and Efficiency

Polish transport firms are focusing on enhancing efficiency through digitalization and technological investments to stay competitive. According to the report, 70% of companies plan to expand their fleets in the next five years, while 54% are investing in process digitalization.

"Polish transport companies, as European market leaders, are intensively investing in digital technologies and seeking more efficient business models. These efforts aim

to maintain competitiveness and create a foundation for future growth and profitability," said Artur Sko-



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rupa, Sales Director at Continental Automotive.

Industry leaders emphasize that the upcoming Polish EU presidency presents a strategic opportunity to advocate for adjustments to policies such as the Green Deal, which could better align with the economic and political interests of the sector.

Looking Ahead

While the Polish road transport sector is currently facing a challenging period, businesses are not standing still. They are adapting, investing, and preparing for a future where growth and profitability can return.

"Our industry has strong fundamentals that will allow us not only to survive these difficult times but also to return to a path of sustainable growth," concluded Maciej Wroński.

POLISH IT SECTOR DEFIES ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN WITH STRONG HIRING PLANS

Despite market uncertainties and economic slowdowns affecting many European economies, Poland's IT sector remains robust and forward-looking.

The latest "IT Contracting Salary Report 2025" by Hays Poland reveals that an impressive 88% of IT companies are planning to recruit, although 43% anticipate recruitment challenges ahead.

Steady Growth Despite Market Challenges

The IT industry, though not immune to economic fluctuations, has shown remarkable stability. According to Hays Poland's latest research, while many sectors faced financial hardships in 2023, the IT sector remains a strong player in the market. However, challenges persist, with 41% of employers citing unrealistic candidate expectations and 22% reporting a shortage of specialists and managers.

Encouragingly, the report indicates a significant 25-percentage-point drop in companies

identifying skill gaps as their biggest hiring challenge. Additionally, 69% of employers report an increase in job applicants compared to previous years.

Economic Conditions Influence Salaries

The economic environment is shaping job availability and salary trends in the tech industry. While over 70% of surveyed companies expect salary increases, the majority predict they will remain below 10%. Experts note that salary expectations for junior developers and mobile application specialists have either plateaued or declined compared to last year.

"The economic context influences salary trends and hiring strategies. While IT remains resilient, companies are exercising greater caution when investing in new talent," ex-





plains **Arkadiusz Wargin**, CEE Executive Director – IT & Engineering Contracting at Hays Poland.



Key Skills Driving Demand

The report highlights that IT professionals specializing in cybersecurity, data analytics, ERP systems, and artificial intelligence remain in high demand, enjoying salary growth and promising career prospects. With increasing adoption of AI, companies are actively seeking skilled professionals to drive digital transformation.

"Automation and AI are shaping the future of IT hiring in Poland. Specialists in these fields will continue to find exciting opportunities," says **Milena Osiurak**, Recruitment Manager at Hays Poland.

The AI Effect on IT Careers

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the IT landscape. According to the report, the percentage of IT professionals using AI tools at work has increased by 12 percentage points to 61% over the past year. While 45% of specialists believe AI will create new career opportunities or have no impact, 34% express concerns that AI advancements could limit job prospects.

"AI brings opportunities, but it also requires professionals to upskill and adapt to remain competitive," notes Osiurak.

Looking Ahead: Adaptation and Digital Transformation

As companies continue to focus on process automation and optimization, IT professionals need to align their skills with evolving industry demands. Hays Poland experts predict that 2025 will see an increased focus on digital transformation projects, AI-driven solutions, and the ongoing integration of advanced technologies.

Poland and the United Kingdom are reinforcing their strategic partnership with a renewed focus on security and defense cooperation. Prime Ministers Donald Tusk and Keir Starmer met in Warsaw in the middle of January to initiate negotiations on a new Defense and Security Treaty, discuss support for Ukraine, and enhance collaboration in tackling global threats.



POLAND AND UK STRENGTHEN DEFENSE AND SECURITY TIES

“NAREW” short-range air defense system with CAMM-ER missiles

photo credit: MBDA

Strengthening Bilateral Security Cooperation

During their meeting, the leaders of Poland and the UK announced the launch of negotiations for a new Defense and Security Treaty. The agreement aims to deepen cooperation across various security dimensions, including military support, intelligence sharing, and cybersecurity.

"This agreement will be the culmination of what we have been working towards in practice. Security is a shared priority for both our nations," said Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative,

highlighting its role in identifying and countering emerging threats. "We welcome the opportunity to further our defense collaboration, ensuring our mutual security and stability," Starmer stated.

Poland's East Shield Initiative and Baltic Security

The discussions also covered Poland's "East Shield" project, designed to strengthen the country's eastern border and NATO's external frontier. The UK has pledged its support for the initiative, underscoring the importance of securing Europe's eastern flank against potential threats.

Additionally, the leaders addressed security challenges in the Baltic and

North Seas. Poland and the UK will collaborate on preventing acts of sabotage at sea, leveraging advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence to monitor and protect maritime borders.

Defense Industrial Collaboration

As part of the growing defense partnership, a joint Polish-British program office is set to open in Bristol later this year. The office will oversee projects such as the NAREW air defense system, a £4 billion (over 20 billion PLN) bilateral initiative aimed at enhancing Poland's short-range missile defense capabilities. "This new office will support the implementation of critical defense projects and



photo credit: PAP/Pawel Supernak

We are united in our approach and commitment to supporting Ukraine in every possible way," Tusk emphasized. The UK and Poland also plan to expand sanctions against Russia to hold the country accountable for the destruction in Ukraine and to deter further aggression.

EU-UK Relations and Economic Cooperation

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss Poland's priorities during its presidency of the Council of the European Union under the theme "Security, Europe!" Both leaders agreed on the need to strengthen UK-EU relations, particularly in the areas of security and economic cooperation. Starmer praised Poland's focus on security during its presidency, stating, "This is the right time to prioritize security issues within the European agenda."

Migration and Border Security

Illegal migration remains a significant challenge for both nations. Poland and the UK will enhance

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cooperation to combat smuggling networks and protect their borders. Plans include the exchange of best practices and increased data sharing to tackle the instrumentalization of migration by hostile actors.

Cultural and Economic Collaboration

Beyond security and defense, the leaders explored avenues for enhancing economic ties, energy transition, and cultural exchange. The upcoming UK-Poland Season of Culture 2025 aims to strengthen cultural relations and foster greater understanding between the two nations. "Our partnership extends beyond security – we are deepening ties in trade, energy, and cultural cooperation to ensure mutual growth and prosperity," noted Tusk. The meeting between the Polish and British Prime Ministers underscored the strength of their bilateral partnership and commitment to mutual security. With a focus on defense collaboration, support for Ukraine, and economic ties, both nations are poised to navigate the evolving geopolitical landscape together.

strengthen our industrial ties," said Starmer.

Joint Commitment to Ukraine

Support for Ukraine remains a central theme in Polish-British relations. Both countries reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to aiding Ukraine in its fight for sovereignty and defense against Russian aggression. Military assistance, infrastructure rebuilding, and training programs will continue to be a focal point of their joint efforts.

"Our stance on Ukraine and Russian aggression is identical.

BALTIC HUB

Record Growth and Bold Expansion in 2024

Baltic Hub, the largest container terminal in the Baltic Sea, reflects on a year of record-breaking achievements and strategic investments.

In 2024, the terminal reported record volumes, advanced infrastructure developments, and a strong focus on sustainability, further solidifying its position as a key logistics hub in the region.

Record-Breaking Volumes and Operational Success

2024 was a landmark year for Baltic Hub, marked by unprecedented operational performance and progress on ma-

ior infrastructure projects. Operating within the Port of Gdansk, Baltic Hub handled a record-breaking 2,242,401 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units), surpassing last year's figures. The terminal managed 642 vessels, including 147 ocean-going ships, with a record-setting volume of 20,459 TEUs handled in a single vessel call in July.

Major Milestones in T3 Terminal Development

A significant highlight of 2024 was the progress on the T3 terminal expansion. On June 5, Baltic Hub celebrated a cornerstone ceremony for the new terminal, marking a pivotal moment for Poland's maritime economy. The event gathered key stakeholders, shareholders, customers, contractors, and government



representatives, underlining the strategic importance of this investment.

Once completed, the T3 terminal will increase Baltic Hub's annual handling capacity to 4.5 million TEUs. The semi-automated terminal will enable remote equipment control from ergonomically designed workstations, ensuring a safe and efficient work environment.

In October 2024, Baltic Hub received four state-of-the-art Ship-to-Shore (STS) cranes for the new T3 terminal. Each crane, weighing 2,000 tonnes and standing 96 meters high (140 meters with jib), boasts a lifting capacity of up to 65 tonnes. These cranes will be operational by the first half of 2025, with three additional STS cranes set to arrive by February 2025. "The construction of the T3 terminal is a critical phase in Baltic Hub's growth

and showcases Poland's commitment to modern port infrastructure. Our investment in cutting-edge technology and eco-friendly solutions creates opportunities for expansion, benefiting not only our company but also our partners in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary," said Charles Baker, CEO of Baltic Hub.

Enhancing Rail Connectivity with the Fourth RMG Crane

In July 2024, Baltic Hub commissioned its fourth Rail Mounted Gantry (RMG) crane on the rail siding. Equipped with Optical Character Recognition (OCR), anti-collision systems, and operator support cameras, the new crane has significantly enhanced safety, efficiency, and precision. This addition has increased the rail siding's capacity to over 800,000 TEUs per year, meeting the ris-

ing demand for rail connections to Central and Eastern Europe.

Future Growth and Sustainability Commitments

Looking ahead, Baltic Hub remains dedicated to innovation and sustainability. The T3 deep-water quay, scheduled for completion in 2025, along with the new 36-hectare container yard and 717-meter deep-water quay, will add 1.5 million TEUs to the terminal's handling capacity.

Baltic Hub's future plans include further improvements in energy efficiency, a stronger commitment to sustainability initiatives, and continued social responsibility efforts. These strategic developments will ensure that Baltic Hub remains a leading force in the logistics industry, ready to meet future market demands.

photo credit: Baltic Hub



UNLEASHING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL



In a recent conversation for Impact Leaders, Magda Petryniak spoke with **DR. JOHN SCHERER**, a globally recognized leadership and change expert, about his transformative approach to personal and organizational development. Dr. Scherer, who has worked with leaders in 55 countries, is known for his groundbreaking executive development intensives that help individuals unlock their full potential.

Recognized as one of America's Top 100 Thought Leaders in Personal Leadership Development by Stephen Covey and Executive Excellence Magazine, he originally came to Poland in 2008 for a six-month project—only to stay for 16 years. In this interview, he shares insights on authentic leadership, navigating change, and why bringing one's true self to the workplace is crucial for success.

Six months turned into 16 years in Poland! What kept you here for so long?

I initially came to Poland at the invitation of a woman in Kraków who ran a leadership training company. She heard my talk in California on "Work and the Human Spirit" and asked me to deliver the same session for her client, an oil company. The opportunity to visit a former communist country and talk to executives about something as deep as the human spirit intrigued me. I thought, "I'll do it for free!" Once I arrived, I saw the impact of my work and realized that in this region, people often hide their true selves in professional settings. I wanted to challenge that.

With more than 50 years of experience in leadership and organizational transformation, how would you encapsulate your mission?

My mission is about unleashing human potential. I discovered this during my time in the U.S. Navy when I

was placed in leadership positions without prior experience. I had to figure out how to lead 12 people effectively. That experience made me realize that leadership is about bringing out the best in others. This lesson has guided me ever since.

You frequently use the phrase "unleashing the human spirit." Could you elaborate on what that means?

Absolutely. When I first arrived in Poland, my translator had to explain to the audience that my use of "human spirit" wasn't about religion or ghosts. It's about the inner force that drives us to get up every morning and engage with the world. Leadership is not just about titles; it's about who you are as a person and how you bring your authentic self to work. Too often, people suppress their true selves in professional environments. My goal is to help them break through those barriers.

Polish culture, influenced by history, often encourages people to be reserved. Why is it so important to bring one's full self to work?

It's a shame to spend your whole life not being fully yourself. Many people in Poland were taught to be cautious outside their homes. But organizations need individuals to bring their whole selves to work. Authentic leadership fosters engagement, creativity, and innovation. My commitment is to help leaders create spaces where people can be who they truly are.

How do you balance leadership styles in hierarchical cultures that emphasize command and control?

It's about adapting. When I first arrived in Poland, the country was figuring out how to turn newfound freedom into effectiveness. Leadership in such environments requires balancing structure with flexibility. Successful organizations engage employees at all levels, particularly middle management, to facilitate transformation.

In today's turbulent times, what characteristics define organizations that thrive through change?

Organizations that succeed embrace conscious change. Kurt Lewin, a pioneer in change management, introduced the concept of "unfreezing" situations to create opportunities for transformation. Thriving organizations are those that engage their teams, encourage participation, and foster a culture of continuous learning.

How does your leadership development intensive program support transformation?

True transformation starts from within. Leaders cannot facilitate external change without experiencing internal change. My intensives provide a space for self-reflection, helping leaders understand their strengths, blind spots, and areas for growth. Hundreds of Polish organizations have incorporated this approach to create meaningful change.

You often talk about the importance of facing one's "tigers." Can you explain this concept?

Tigers represent the challenges we face in life and work. When you avoid them, they control you. But when you turn and face them, you create the possibility for a different outcome. My five-question framework helps leaders confront their tigers, understand what drives them, and take meaningful action.

How do you maintain your energy and motivation after so many years in the field?

Mark Twain said, "If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life." I'm passionate about helping people discover their full potential. Every conversation, every breakthrough, keeps me going. I don't see this as work; it's my calling.

You've spent a significant part of your life in Poland. Do you consider it your home?

Poland holds a special place in my heart. It's been an incredible journey to witness the country's transformation and be a part of it. However, I continue to travel between Poland and the U.S., embracing both cultures.

What's next for you?

I'm currently exploring ways to take my work online, reaching a broader audience through digital platforms. The world needs authentic leadership now more than ever, and I'm excited to continue making an impact.



STORIES OF REDEFINING SUCCESS
 In this series we engage in conversations with leaders committed to making the world a better place – the impact leaders.

LUXURY IN POLAND

The Shift from Status Symbols to Immersive Experiences



For years, Poland's luxury market was defined by material symbols of success—high-end cars, designer fashion, and exclusive jewelry. But a transformation is underway. Today's affluent consumers are seeking something different: personalized, immersive experiences that engage the senses and promote well-being.

According to KPMG's latest report, the fastest-growing segment is no longer material goods but experiences—particularly in premium hospitality, wellness, and SPA services. The total value of Poland's luxury market soared by 24.6% year-over-year in 2024, reaching 55.6 billion PLN, with luxury hotels and SPAs seeing a 16.7% increase. This reflects a global shift away

from ownership-based status symbols toward experience-driven luxury.

Wellness as the New Wealth

The pandemic accelerated a shift toward health, balance, and well-being as core elements of a luxurious lifestyle. Poland's high-end hospitality sector is responding, with the number of five-star hotels

growing by 4.3% year-over-year, making up an increasing share of the premium travel market.

Luxury hotels today are more than just accommodations—they are sensory-driven retreats designed to immerse guests in curated experiences. Properties are integrating local culture, art, and history into their architecture and interiors, creating environments that feel both authentic and indulgent. The trend toward heritage hotels—transforming historical buildings into high-end accommodations—illustrates the blending of tradition and modernity that defines Poland's evolving luxury landscape.

Culinary experiences have also become a crucial part of this transformation. Luxury hotels are moving beyond standard dining, introducing multi-room gastronomic journeys, where guests enjoy different meals in uniquely designed spaces, enhancing the overall experience.

The SPA Boom: Transformative Wellness Over Traditional Relaxation

One of the most striking trends in Poland's luxury market is the booming demand for high-end SPA and wellness facilities. The sector is set to reach 7.8 billion PLN in value in 2024, with projections suggesting it will surpass 11 billion PLN by 2029.

Luxury SPAs are evolving beyond traditional relaxation to offer holistic, science-backed wellness experiences. Many of the most exclusive SPAs now feature personalized wellness programs, where guests undergo consultations with nutritionists, sleep special-

ists, and fitness experts to create tailored plans for long-term well-being. The demand for cutting-edge bihacking therapies is also rising, with services like oxygen treatments, infrared saunas, and IV drips becoming part of premium wellness packages. More high-end retreats are also integrating nature into their offerings, designing forest bathing experiences, open-air meditation decks, and mountain-view relaxation zones that help guests disconnect from daily stress.

The shift in luxury wellness is clear: it is no longer just about indulgence—it is about transformation. Affluent consumers want more than temporary relaxation; they seek lasting improvements to their health, longevity, and overall quality of life.

Pricing and the Rise of Ultra-Luxury

Despite inflation, luxury hotel rates in Poland now rival those in Western Europe. Travelers are willing to pay premium prices, but they demand exceptional experiences in return. To meet expectations, hotels are elevating their offerings, ensuring every element—design, service, and sensory experience—feels curated and exclusive.

Poland's luxury hotel investment market is also booming. Recent acquisitions, including the Sofitel Grand Sopot and premium Holiday Inn properties in Warsaw and Bydgoszcz, highlight growing investor confidence in the sector. RevPAR (revenue per available room) in Poland's luxury hotels has consistently risen, driven by international and business tourism.



Sofitel Grand Sopot

The Future of Luxury in Poland: Experiences Over Possessions

KPMG's report makes one thing clear: luxury consumers in Poland are evolving. While high-end material goods still hold appeal, the real future of luxury lies in experiences that enrich, heal, and inspire.

As digital transformation reshapes retail and an estimated 25% of luxury transactions are expected to take place online by 2025, physical spaces must offer something that cannot be replicated virtually. This is where luxury SPAs, boutique hotels, and immersive retreats excel.

More than ever, high-net-worth individuals are prioritizing wellness, sustainability, and personalization in their choices. They are no longer just looking for opulence; they want experiences that reflect their values and aspirations. In response, Poland's luxury market is redefining what it means to indulge—shifting from traditional status symbols to meaningful, transformative encounters that leave a lasting impact. The question is no longer whether the market will grow, but how far it will push the boundaries of what luxury truly means.

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longevity
CENTER

SWITZERLAND



Longevity corner

THE LONGEVITY CENTER ZURICH

A New Benchmark in Preventive and Personalized Medicine

For years, luxury was synonymous with designer fashion, high-end travel, and exclusive experiences, but a profound shift is underway. Health and longevity are emerging as the ultimate status symbols, with cutting-edge science and personalized wellness becoming central to the way affluent individuals invest in their futures. In response to this growing demand, the Longevity Center Zurich has officially opened its doors, marking a significant milestone in the evolution of health optimization.

Following the success of its centers in Poland and Germany, Joanna Bensch, CEO and Founder of the Longevity Center, has brought this pioneering approach to Switzerland, setting a new benchmark in preventive and personalized medicine.

A Historic Setting for the Future of Health

Nestled in the heart of Zurich, the Longevity Center Zurich finds its home in the Rotes Schloss, an iconic historic

building that seamlessly blends old-world elegance with modern innovation. The setting is symbolic of the center's mission—honoring tradition while embracing the latest advancements in longevity science. Zurich, known for its excellence in medical research and biotechnology, provides the perfect backdrop for this forward-thinking initiative.

The center is more than just a medical facility. It represents a new era of health optimization, one where science, technology, and holistic well-being come together to redefine aging. With a focus on prevention and proactive care, the Longevity Center Zurich is designed to empower individuals to take control of their health, extending both their lifespan and healthspan.

The Longevity Center Method®: Personalized Medicine

At the core of the Longevity Center Zurich is the Longevity Center Method®, a highly individualized approach to health optimization and biological age reduction. Instead of ad-

dressing symptoms as they arise, the center emphasizes early intervention and customized treatment plans, allowing clients to slow down the aging process and enhance their overall vitality.

Each client begins their journey with a comprehensive health assessment, designed to map out their unique biological makeup. This includes genetic and epigenetic testing to uncover inherited health risks, bloodwork and hormonal analysis to detect imbalances, and metabolic assessments to evaluate overall cellular function. Advanced imaging techniques such as DEXA scans, 3D body scans, and VO2Max testing provide deeper insights into physical performance, bone density, and cardiovascular efficiency.

With this detailed picture of each client's health, the medical team, led by Dr. Christine Pfeiffer, develops a personalized roadmap that incorporates precision nutrition, targeted supplementation, regenerative therapies, and metabolic treatments. Every recommendation is backed by scientific evidence, ensuring that clients receive not just wellness guidance but a medically informed longevity strategy.

Advanced Medical Technology for Longevity Optimization

To provide the highest level of personalized care, the Longevity Center Zurich is equipped with some of the most advanced medical technology available today. Diagnostic tools

such as DEXA scans and 3D imaging help track skeletal and metabolic health over time, while VO2Max and Luna Physio assessments offer deep insights into cardiovascular and musculoskeletal function. Red light therapy is used to support cellular regeneration and reduce inflammation, while cutting-edge genetic, epigenetic, and microbiome testing ensures tailored interventions at a molecular level.

By leveraging these state-of-the-art technologies, the center ensures that every decision, treatment, and recommendation is based on precise, real-time health data. This data-driven approach helps clients optimize their health for years to come.

A Holistic Vision: The Intersection of Science and Well-Being Beyond medical advancements, the Longevity Center Zurich recognizes the importance of mental and emotional well-being in the pursuit of a longer, healthier life. One of the center's most unique features is its in-house art gallery, which showcases rotating exhibitions from local and international artists.

Scientific studies have long demonstrated the positive effects of art on mental and physical health, with benefits including stress reduction, enhanced cognitive function, and improved emotional resilience. By integrating art into the healing environment, the Longevity Center creates a space that nurtures not just the body, but also the mind and spirit.



THE LUXURY OF TASTE

How Fine Dining Complements Poland's Evolving Luxury Market



As Poland's luxury market shifts toward immersive experiences and sensory-driven indulgence, fine dining is emerging as an essential element of this transformation. In the world of high-end hospitality, wellness, and personalized services, gastronomy is no longer just about eating—it is about storytelling, craftsmanship, and the pursuit of perfection.



photo credit: Edward Trzeciakiewicz

Chef Andrea Camastra, a seven-time Michelin-starred restaurateur, believes that food is evolving alongside Poland's broader luxury trends. "A great menu must tell a story, a narrative that we want to 'serve' our guests," he explains. As high-net-worth consumers demand richer, more authentic experiences, fine dining is adapting with a re-

newed focus on local sourcing, sustainability, and global inspirations.

From Tradition to Innovation: The Art of Culinary Luxury

Much like Poland's top luxury hotels, fine dining establishments are redefining the meaning of indulgence by blending tradition with innovation. The growing appreciation for fermentation, pickling, and smoking reflects a broader movement toward authenticity and craftsmanship. No

longer just methods of preservation, these techniques now serve to enhance flavor, connect diners to centuries-old culinary heritage, and support the zero-waste philosophy embraced by Poland's leading chefs.

At NUTA, which recently earned its second Michelin star, the team smokes their own fish and meats while fermenting seasonal ingredients like plums, raspberries, and cranberries in-house. Even the simplest elements—like butter—are transformed, infused with nduja, truffle, or black garlic aged for months. This attention to detail mirrors the level of personalization seen in luxury wellness retreats, where every element of the experience is curated to heighten the senses.

Sustainability and Local Sourcing: The New Definition of Luxury

Poland's premium hospitality sector is increasingly built on local authenticity, and fine dining is no exception. Just as luxury SPAs and boutique hotels draw inspiration from their surroundings, top restaurants are turning to local farmers, regional fisheries, and small-scale producers to shape their menus.

"Polish food products are of excellent quality. Why import when we have such a wealth of ingredients right here?" asks Camastra. His restaurant sources Złotnicka pork, beef from Bieszczady, pike-perch from Masurian lakes, and even Polish caviar, showcasing the country's culinary wealth. This commitment to regional excellence aligns with the growing pref-

erence for sustainable, place-based luxury, where authenticity and environmental consciousness define premium experiences.

Global Influences Meet Local Heritage

The evolution of luxury in Poland is not just about preserving tradition—it is about elevating it through global inspiration. Just as Poland's high-end hotels integrate contemporary design into historical architecture, fine dining is introducing Middle Eastern and Asian influences to reimagine traditional Polish cuisine.

Camastra's take on pierogi exemplifies this fusion. He reinvents the classic pierogi ruskie by using a delicate dim sum-style dough filled with a potato soufflé, leeks, and Pecorino Romano. Other variations introduce ginger, cilantro, and chili, while seafood fillings incorporate pike-perch, fresh thyme, and nduja. These unexpected flavor combinations transform familiar dishes into modern luxury experiences, much like the way Poland's high-end hotels are reinventing their guest offerings through multisensory design and hyper-personalized services.

Fine Dining as an Extension of Poland's Luxury Evolution

The Polish luxury market is no longer defined by material goods alone. Whether through high-end wellness retreats, five-star hotels, or Michelin-starred restaurants, today's luxury consumers seek deeper, more meaningful experiences that engage their senses, connect them to place, and elevate everyday moments into something extraordinary.



Nuta restaurant

photo credit: nuta.com.pl

Poland's premium hospitality sector is increasingly built on local authenticity, and fine dining is no exception.

As Camastra sees it, fine dining is not separate from this movement—it is a crucial part of it. The ability to taste the essence of a region, experience a chef's interpretation of tradition, and savor meticulously crafted flavors is the ultimate luxury. Just as Poland's hospitality sector is thriving by creating immersive, experience-driven stays, the country's top restaurants are transforming dining into an unforgettable journey—one dish at a time.

Poland's Hidden Spa Retreats: A Journey into Wellness

From tranquil forests to scenic lakeshores, Poland is home to a collection of exceptional boutique spas that offer more than just relaxation. These retreats combine stunning natural settings, personalized wellness treatments, and unique experiences that go beyond traditional pampering. Whether it's wine therapy, holistic healing, or an active getaway, these top spa destinations cater to those seeking deep rejuvenation in an intimate, serene environment.



Manor House SPA – A Sanctuary of Holistic Wellness

Set in a historic estate, Manor House SPA offers a peaceful escape infused with aristocratic charm and energy-balancing therapies. Surrounded by a beautiful park, the resort is home to the Energy Garden of Meditation, where guests can realign body and mind in the Stone Circle of Power or near the Horus Pyramid. The spa specializes in holistic healing and bio-vital therapies, making it an ideal retreat for those seeking deeper restoration and balance.

Głębozec Vine Resort & Spa – Wine-Inspired Relaxation

Overlooking Lake Forbin in the Brodnica Lake District, Głębozec Vine Resort & Spa seamlessly blends nature, luxury, and winemaking traditions. The on-site Vine Spa offers signature vinotherapy treatments, using extracts from the resort's own vineyard of 2,000 grapevines. Every autumn, guests can take part in the annual Wine Harvest Festival, while the extensive wine cellar provides guided tastings in an elegant, intimate setting.



Saltic Resort & SPA – A Coastal Escape

A short walk from Grzybowo's sandy beaches, Saltic Resort & SPA is a modern hideaway surrounded by a pine forest. Its SPA & Wellness zone offers tailored treatments, detoxifying saunas, and indoor-outdoor pools, ensuring complete mind and body relaxation. The resort's nature-inspired design and tranquil atmosphere make it a perfect coastal wellness retreat.





Healing Village – A Holistic Retreat in Nature

Located in the Kazimierski Landscape Park, near the Nałęczów health resort, Healing Village is a small, intimate sanctuary focused on holistic well-being. The resort combines Ayurveda with traditional Polish natural therapies, offering yoga, meditation, breathwork, and detox programs. With only 11 rooms, 2 suites, and 2 cottages, it provides an exclusive and deeply rejuvenating experience for those seeking a personalized wellness journey.

Lake Hill Karkonosze Resort & SPA – Mountain Tranquility

With panoramic views of Sosnówka Lake and the Karkonosze Mountains, Lake Hill Resort & SPA is a haven for nature lovers and wellness seekers. The elegant design, state-of-the-art spa, and indoor and outdoor pools create an atmosphere of refinement and relaxation. Guests can enjoy wellness treatments, gourmet dining, and the breathtaking mountain landscape, making it an ideal alpine escape.



BoniFaCio SPA & Sport Re- sort – The Active Wellness Experience

Tucked away in a 10-hectare clearing, BoniFaCio SPA & Sport Resort is the ultimate retreat for those who seek both relaxation and movement. With sports fields, tennis courts, a heated indoor pool, and outdoor adventure trails, the resort encourages active regeneration. The Clarins Beauty SPA offers high-end skincare and rejuvenating treatments, while the slow-food-certified Żurawia Restaurant serves nutritious gourmet cuisine. Combining wellness, fitness, and holistic relaxation, BoniFaCio is a one-of-a-kind retreat for body and mind.



BREATHE IN THE AIR...

Almost every time I meet a Polish person for the first time, they are curious to know why an Englishman lives in Poland. Recently, I have started to think this will no longer be someone's first question.

As a foreigner, I see the country from a different perspective. Generally, Poles seem to have a very low estimation of their country despite their fierce patriotism! They prefer to take long drives to Croatia or Italy for their holidays, and Poles ignore places of beauty closer to home. To them, it seems strange that foreigners live in Poland—and it has nothing to do with polar bears roaming the streets.

So much for Brexit Britain!

Various forecasts indicate that the United Kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita continues to grow at an average of 0.5% annually. If Poland maintains its 3.6% annual growth, it will overtake Britain by 2030, and the Poles consider their country to be poor!

Countries once considered to be 'poor' like Romania with 3.8%, and Hungary with 3%, these too will overtake Britain by 2040. This is a regrettable economic situation for a once powerful country which used to be the heart of a world-dominating empire.

But if the UK is no longer an attractive prospect for European migrants or even British people, does Poland offer a more attractive alternative?

Traffic congestion

A typical driver in Warsaw spends 70 hours stuck in traffic, making the Polish capital Europe's sixth most congested city. There has been a sharp increase in congestion over the past two years, perhaps a sign of greater affluence with an increase in car ownership.

Besides these high traffic volumes, Polish roads are among the EU's most dangerous, with a high rate of pedestrian and road fatalities. However, significant improvements have been made in recent years with tighter laws particularly related to drink driving.

Air-quality

Poland is one of the most polluted countries in the EU. According to a 2022 World Health Organization database, as many as 23 of the 50 most polluted cities are in Poland.

Around 50,000 people die prematurely every year from diseases linked to air pollution, which shortens the life expectancy of the average Polish citizen by 9 months.

Places like Kraków, which is a beautiful city and very popular with tourists, tops the list of polluted cities. Similarly, Wrocław is also high on the list and Warsaw is top five.

Causes of air pollution

Most of the air pollution across Poland comes from coal used to heat homes and power the economy. Antiquated household heating systems are the main sources of particulate matter and other carcinogenic substances.

As the second largest coal-mining country in Europe, the industry remains an important part of the economy and employs many. Despite this, Katowice serves as an example to other industrial cities wanting to move away from fossil fuels. Although unemployment rose to 70%, the city has transformed, replacing lost jobs with those in new technology, the entertainment industry and culture—unemployment is now less than 1%!

As with many other countries, a major source of pollution also comes from the vehicles congesting the cities.

So, is Poland a good place to live?

In a recent EU survey of top European cities for quality living, the Baltic city of Gdańsk came in at number four. It is a place I have visited several times and the honour is well-deserved.

In general, smaller cities are perceived as better places for many reasons, including safety, availability of public spaces, healthcare, housing affordability, and local public administrations. The study found Groningen, Braga, and Gdańsk are among the best European cities for immigrants.

So, annoyingly I am often asked 'What are you doing in Poland?'

I won't flatter myself by saying that I predicted this, but it seems that Poland is becoming an increasingly more attractive option for those looking for an alternative place to live—especially those from the wind-swept isles on the Atlantic edge of Europe!

VIBES of POLAND



**Discover the spirit of Poland with Vibes of Poland,
the newest original video show on YouTube by Poland Online!**

Hosted by the dynamic Patrick Ney, this series offers a fresh take on Poland, blending vibrant culture, stunning destinations, and unique travel experiences with the latest news and views from across the country. Dive into the stories shaping Poland today!





Poznań Palm House

For those, who long for the summer days and atmosphere, a walk among the tropical greenery may be the right substitute brightening the last months of Polish winter. The Palm House located in the Wilson Park in Poznań is over a hundred years old. It's the largest and the oldest palm house in Poland and one of the oldest gardens of this type in Europe. It invites on a journey to distant continents among the rich vegetation of various climatic zones, enriched by the sounds of birds and water, as well as by the aquariums full of exotic fish. Over a thousand species of plants are presented in 9 pavilions and 170 species of fish and 50 species of aquatic plants can be admired in aquariums.



Mushroom Lady, Marek Pawłowski

Art of the Excluded

The Artsider Foundation together with the Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions in Rzeszów prepared a unique presentation of art created by extraordinary artists suffering from mental illnesses, who experienced exclusion and misunderstanding in their surroundings. The title of the exhibition refers to the experience of isolation and social chal-

lenges that mentally ill face on a daily basis, especially after schizophrenic crisis. Art becomes a unique means of communication for them – a space, where they express emotions, which are impossible to put into words. Presented works were created as part of art therapy classes, as well as during the individual explorations at home. "Art of the Excluded" aims not only at presenting

talents, but is also an attempt to change the social perception of people after mental crises. Artistic creativity is an important element of the recovery process, the first step towards professional activation and return to full participation in social life. Exhibition takes place at the Pod Ratuszem Gallery in Rzeszów and is open until February 16, admission free.



Chromatyczna Palnimetria, Łukasz Adamczyk

Opera Rara

The Opera Rara Festival in Kraków has been presenting rarely staged and forgotten operas since 2009. This year's edition will last from 2nd until 24th of February. The program includes, among others, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Mitridate", Jean-Baptiste Lully's "Alceste", Jean-Philippe Rameau's "Dardanus" and Henry Purcell's "The Fairy Queen". For details visit: operararakrakow.pl



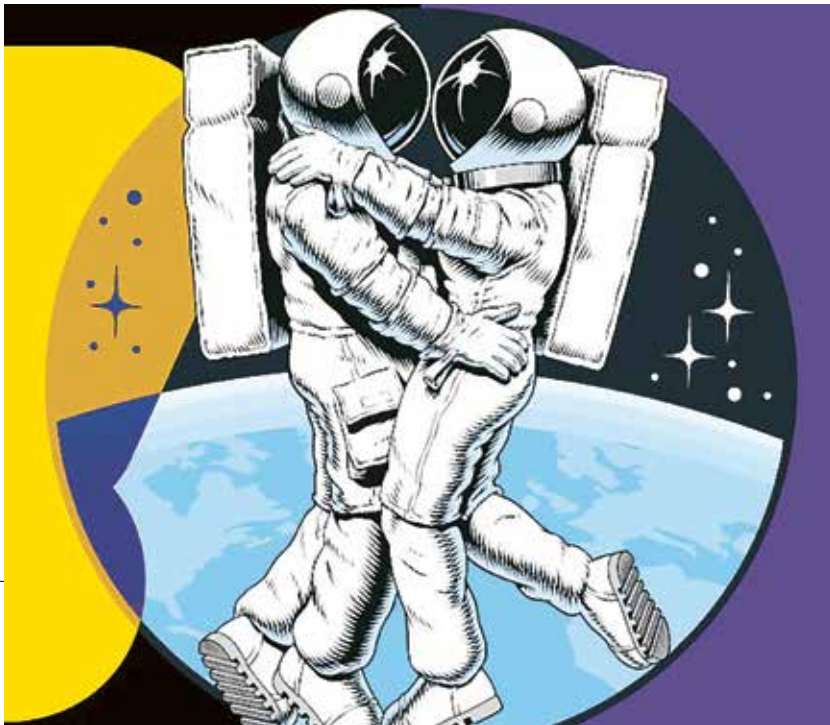
Jean-Philippe Rameau



photo credit: AMBEREXPO

Regional Flavor Festival

A new event on the culinary map of Poland – the first edition of the Regional Flavor Festival in Gdańsk will last from 1st till 3rd of March, connecting enthusiasts of fine cuisine, local food and beverage producers, and restaurateurs. A combination of a market and a food court will give an opportunity to discover regional specialties, purchase products and taste dishes prepared on site. The program includes, among others, culinary shows, workshops, live cooking, meeting with culinary influencers and multiple attractions for children such as educational games. The Regional Flavor Festival will take place at the AMBEREXPO Exhibition and Congress Center, admission free.



Valentine's Day Under Stars

The Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw invites for a series of special shows in Planetarium on the occasion of Valentine's Day. The program includes "Abba Under Stars", "The Love Constellation" and "Odyssey Across the Sky" – all with the possibility of displaying special personalized dedication on the Planetarium dome. Shows will take place during two evenings on February 13 and 14. Tickets available online.



photo credit: cmwl.pl

The Work That Textile Does

The temporary exhibition at the Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź presents its collection of the artistic textiles – the historical and the contemporary, initiating dialogue on textiles, work and effort across geographies, mediums and generations – from craft to conceptual art. Set in the post-industrial space, it invites reflection on the labour of textile-making,

the relationship between conceptual work and practice, and the role of textiles as art pieces and functional objects. The exhibition is part of the project “Interweaving Structures: Fabric as Material, Method and Message”, run by the Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź, the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen, and the Doctoral School of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. “The Work That Textile Does” exhibition is open until July 27.



photo credit: wikipedia

Polish tribute to David Lynch

The beginning of the year shook the international filmmaking community with the news about passing of one of the most eccentric and fascinating creators in modern cinema – David Lynch. The director of the legendary “Twin Peaks” and widely acclaimed “Blue Velvet”, “Wild at Heart” or “Mulholland Drive”, had close connections to Poland, especially with the EnergaCAMERIMAGE International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography and its originator and director - Marek Żydowicz, with whom he remained friends for over two decades. After director’s passing, Poland received a very special gift – 13 containers filled with artifacts connected to “Twin Peaks” and Lynch’s oeuvre. All of them will be presented in the first and only museum in the world dedicated to his work, which will be created in Toruń as part of the European Film Center CAMERIMAGE.

The home of pioneer scientist

The biographical Maria Skłodowska-Curie Museum was opened in 1967 at 16 Freta Street in Warsaw – in the place of birth of the first female Nobel Prize winner and the only woman awarded by The Swedish Academy twice (Physics in 1903 and Chemistry in 1911). The museum's collection includes, among others, memorabilia, instruments from the laboratory,



photo credit: Fryderyk Nowak/ Maria Skłodowska-Curie Museum

notes and correspondence, photographs, documents, personal belongings, as well as sculptures by famous Polish artists, stamps, medals and banknotes commemorating the scientist. Museum presents the permanent

exhibition and temporary projects. The current permanent exposition is available to visitors only until 3rd of March, and afterwards will be replaced by a brand new permanent exhibition “Who are You Maria?”.



photo credit: Globalworth

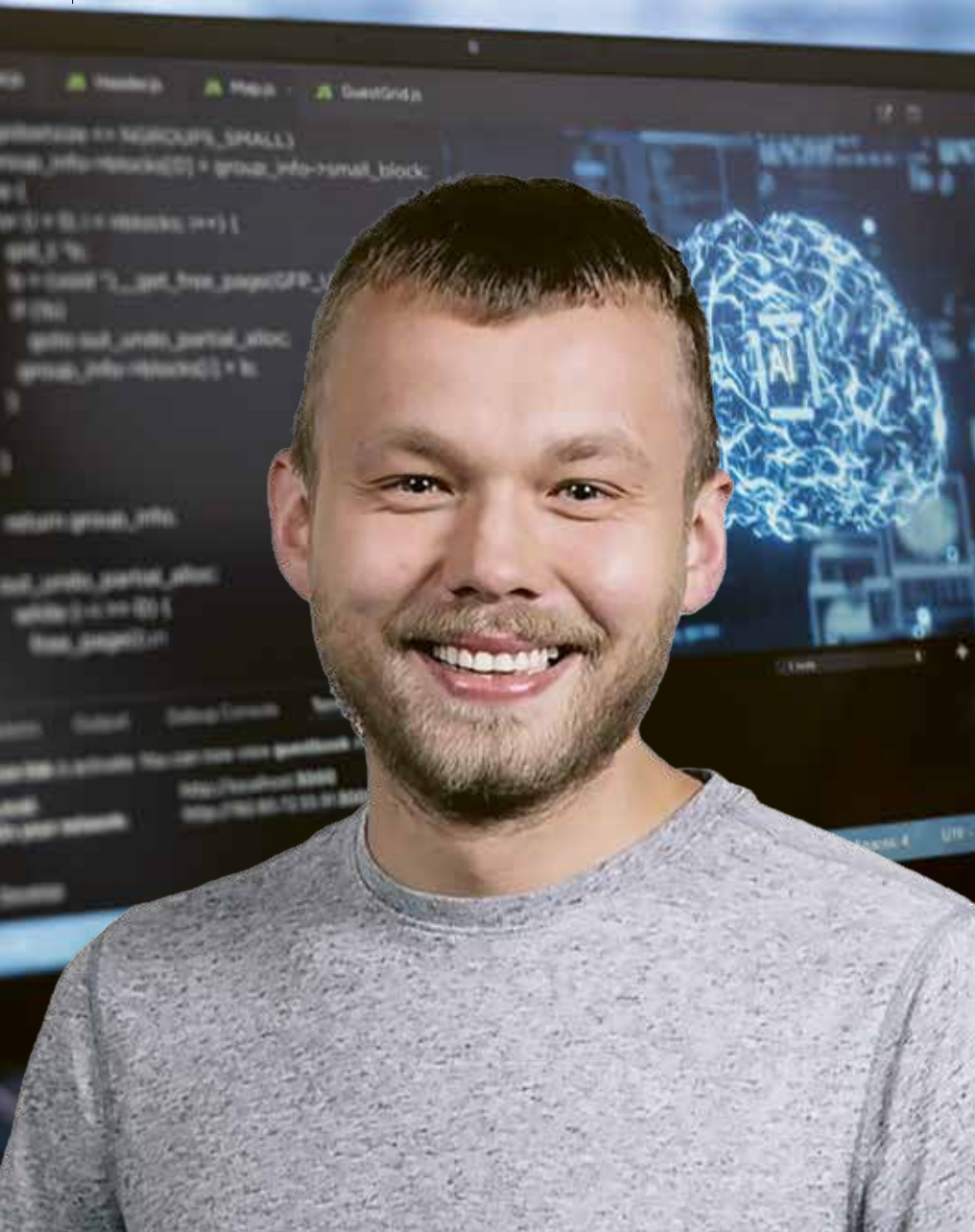
Concerts in the sky

In the heart of Warsaw, on the 28th floor of the Spectrum Tower a new concert hall will open for the audience, offering unique experiences combining music with a breathtaking view of the city skyline. The Sky Hall by Svitlo Concert is the highest located concert hall in the world and with only 150 seats guarantees an intimate atmosphere in the spectacular setting. The inaugural concert “Music of Billie Eilish and Lana Del Rey in candle light” will take place on February 11. For full program and tickets visit: skyhall.svitloconcert.pl

Marek Gizmajer

WOJCIECH ZAREMBA

Polish Mind Behind ChatGPT



Wojciech Zaremba lives in San Francisco but was born in 1988 in Kluczbork. In high school, he won competitions in math, IT, chemistry, and physics. At the age of 16, he built a lab in his cellar, and at 19, he won a silver medal at the 48th International Mathematical Olympiad in Vietnam as Poland's representative. He soon began studying math and IT at the University of Warsaw and École Polytechnique in Paris, completing internships at NVIDIA, Google Brain, and Facebook Artificial Intelligence Research. During his time at Google, he co-authored work on adversarial attacks against neural networks, which later became a distinct field of research. In 2012, he earned master's degrees in both math and IT and started doctoral studies at New York University.

In 2015, he was one of the founders of OpenAI, now the world's most famous research lab specializing in artificial intelligence (AI). Other co-founders, who contributed a total of one billion dollars, included Sam Altman, Greg Brockman, Reid Hoffman, Peter Thiel, and Elon Musk. However, OpenAI was primarily the work of three brilliant minds: Elon Musk (now the richest man on Earth and founder of PayPal, SpaceX, Tesla, and Neuralink), Sam Altman (entrepreneur, investor, and OpenAI CEO), and 25-year-old Wojciech Zaremba.

In 2015, Wojciech received the Google Ph.D. Fellowship award, and in 2016, he obtained a Ph.D. from New York University after com-

pleting his doctoral studies in just 2.5 years—half the typical duration. His dissertation, “Learning Algorithms from Data,” focused on matching neural network capabilities to algorithmic computing power. Training neural networks to represent programmable algorithms later became an independent research field. That same year, he moved to San Francisco.

In 2017, he was listed among the most skilled young Poles in “30 Under 30” by the Polish edition of Forbes. The following year, Elon Musk left OpenAI to avoid a potential conflict of interest with Tesla, which was also developing AI. Zaremba, however, continued playing a key role at OpenAI, leading research in robotics, artificial intelligence, and natural language processing (Codex project), which ultimately led to the creation of ChatGPT.

In an interview with Forbes, he said: “Artificial intelligence has the potential to change practically every aspect of our lives, similar to electricity. Before its invention, it was hard to imagine its applications. Some thought it could only illuminate rooms, but no one expected it would lead to the creation of radio or computers. Today, electricity is everywhere, and the same will happen with AI.”

In 2019, he helped establish OpenAI LP, a commercial company aimed at advancing General Artificial Intelligence (AGI). That same year, he was included in MIT Technology Review’s “35 In-

novators Under 35” for applying machine learning to train robots. In 2022, he won the Leaders of the Future award from Forbes.

Undoubtedly, OpenAI’s most famous project, co-authored by Zaremba, is ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), an AI-powered chatbot capable of generating texts on any topic with natural language fluency. It is most effective in American English but also functions in numerous other languages and dialects with varying accuracy. It generates human-like responses, allowing users to refine and steer conversations toward a desired length, format, style, or level of detail. It can compose essays, reports, stories, and fairy tales. It can also write and debug code, compose music, answer test questions, generate ideas, write poems and songs, translate and summarize texts, emulate Linux, simulate chat rooms, and play simple games like tic-tac-toe. Since May 2024, it has been capable of analyzing and generating images and sound.

ChatGPT was launched on November 30, 2022, and by January 2023, it had become the fastest-growing consumer software application in history, reaching over 100 million users in just two months and significantly increasing OpenAI’s valuation—now estimated at around \$90 billion. Its release triggered competition from rival AI chatbots, including Gemini (Google), Copilot (Microsoft), Llama (Meta), Grok (X, formerly Twitter),

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Claude (Anthropic), and Ernie (Baidu, also known as the “Chinese Google”). In May 2024, OpenAI partnered with Apple Inc., integrating ChatGPT with Apple Intelligence. By mid-July 2024, ChatGPT’s website ranked 11th among the world’s most-visited sites, with over 3 billion visits—on par with Amazon, WhatsApp, and Yahoo.

In December 2024, OpenAI released its most advanced version, ChatGPT o-1, designed to solve more complex problems by taking additional time to “think” before responding, improving analysis and strategy generation. The company also launched ChatGPT Pro, an o-1 model with enhanced voice functionality, available via a \$200 monthly subscription.

Zaremba published his first article, “Intriguing Properties of Neural Networks,” at just 23. To date, he has authored over 40 papers on machine learning and artificial intelligence, with thousands of citations. OpenAI now employs over a dozen Poles, forming one of the company’s largest national contingents.

In a Forbes interview, he emphasized: “OpenAI’s mission is to develop general artificial intelligence while ensuring AI remains beneficial, not destructive, to humanity. AI will be the most important invention of our time, as it will enable the mass production of goods and assist in programming, education, medicine, inventions, and all intellectual pursuits.”



DAVID KENNEDY is a Scottish business and financial journalist who has been living and working in Poland for 30 years. He is sharing his experiences of discovering Poland in the 1980s and perspective on the country, Polish people and culture today.

WHAT'S FOR YOU, WON'T GO BY YOU

What's the story behind your connection to Poland?

It started when I chose Slavonic and East European studies at the University of Glasgow. I began with Russian and I spent a year in Moscow. Then I chose Polish as a subsidiary language. It was in the 1980s, we had a lot of family friends who were Polish, and there was also John Paul II, still young and so influential. But honestly, having spent a

year in Moscow, I kind of thought that maybe Poland would be more similar to the Soviet Union, than Czechoslovakia.

Was it?

I took a trip here and travelled around the country. There were so many things that looked the same as Moscow, but they were somehow a little bit different. The trams were made at the same factory but getting on them – a very

different story. At the time in Russia if you didn't have the right change with you, you could put in the machine a full ruble and you were supposed to get your change back from the next people, who would come on the tram. You would sort of stand there and it was all very regulated. In Warsaw, you had to buy a ticket in a kiosk. When I tried to do that, a guy next to me, hearing a foreign accent, just gave one to me. I felt that was great. Then I visited Gdańsk, which I expected to look like on tv – black and white, gloomy with people looking miserable. It turned out to be beautiful. When we went on a boat to Westerplatte, we passed the shipyards. It was during the strikes and we saw the shipyard workers sitting on the roof of Stocznia Gdańska. We waved at them and they waved back at us. It was very nice – a completely different reality than I expected.

When did you decide to move to Poland?

After I got my degree, I went down to work in London and that's when I started meeting Poles. I was amazed by these people! Living in Earls Court, 4 or 5 sharing 2-bedroom flats, with friends and family members visiting - working, studying, learning English and having fun. That's how I met my wife. At the time I was thinking of going to work in Russia again. I had done some media work, but the early version of capitalism there was very shaky. At some point, I realized it wouldn't be the smartest choice. I had people approaching me with underhand business ideas and really didn't want to find myself on some kind of KGB wanted list. I came to Poland in 1993 again and moving here made perfect sense. So, a year later we were here for good.

And it's been 30 years...

I've been living here longer than in Scotland. I go back sometimes and we have 3 children so we've brought them

over to Scotland quite a lot. But even though I don't have a Polish passport, I would say I'm 100% Varsovian.

So, you don't miss anything?

The country I remember is different from how it developed. I left Scotland because there were no jobs that I could do. Today, there's a very dynamic economy there. The other thing is that back in the 1990s I couldn't even check how my football team was doing. The internet wasn't widespread, you could only listen to the radio. Now, you know everything and if you want to call someone, you just go to WhatsApp. On top of that – you have Dealz stores in Poland that bring over lots of Scottish delicacies. So, you don't feel quite so isolated.

Have you integrated some Scottish aspects into your family's daily life?

Our kids developed their Scottish history in their own way. They all speak English with a kind of Scottish accent. My oldest son identifies with the Scottish football team. The younger would support Poland playing against Scotland, but both of them are Glasgow Celtic fans and both would support Scotland playing England. /laugh/ My daughter enjoyed Scottish dancing and she even attended the Scottish Ball in Poland, which I have been involved in organizing since 2015. They all like shortbread, caramel wafers and Tunnocks tea cakes, which are marshmallows on biscuits. When the kids were little, we used to invite their friends and make tablet together. It's definitely one of the most delicious things from Scot-

land. It's a kind of crumbly caramel – so sweet, that if you bite into it, your teeth start dissolving. /laugh/

You mentioned changes in Scotland over the years. During this time, you've seen the transformation in Poland...

I've seen the incredible development, especially of Warsaw. 30 years ago, parts of the city were really ugly. Now you can see the city with the old buildings restored and new ones added in quite a tasteful way. People here have very high expectations of how their city should look. Maintaining the public spaces and common residential areas in Poland also works really well. It's clean, there's order and repairs are done if needed. The European money has been spent well. Since the 1990s also a lot has changed in the drivers' mentality. I remember the Wild West sort of approach, when I first came to Poland. It was kind of fun, actually. Today, drivers stop when you go onto a zebra crossing. They didn't do that before. My Ukrainian friends keep saying how polite and orderly Poles are on the road. Of course, there are other changes that aren't that good. I live in Sadyba and we used to have a fantastic small market here with fresh vegetables and fruit, great suppliers, friendly local atmosphere – good for the community. Now it's gone due to new residential development.

Scots have a particular sense of humor. Have you found Poles to be able to keep up with the banter?

In Scotland, if you go to a pub with friends, you better learn quickly and have a quick answer. If you're boasting too much, people

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Only here, the jokes have a lot of cultural references and they are specifically about things that happened in Poland – some of them are really inexplicable. So, to really enjoy it, you need to know a lot and be in this culture.

are going to burst your balloon very quickly. That kind of humor taught us to be slightly self-deprecating, being able to see the funny side of yourself. I guess you could compare it to the New York sense of humor. And people here appreciate that. Poles find it funny when something goes wrong and they also enjoy bursting the bubble. Only here, the jokes have a lot of cultural references and they are specifically about things that happened in Poland – some of them are really inexplicable. So, to really enjoy it, you need to know a lot and be in this culture.

So, you enjoy Stanisław Bareja's comedies...

I do! I saw and I experienced the absurdities of life under the communist regime. During my first trip to Poland, I stayed in a youth hostel in a convent. I was coming back from a jazz festival by taxi at night and the door turned out to be closed. I remember the taxi driver taking a bunch of keys from his glove compartment and opening the front door for me. In communist times there were only so many combinations of locks and keys, I guess. /laugh/ But the old comedies are not the only ones I enjoy. Machulski's "Killer" was really funny, with the legendary Rewiński as Siara and Arcadio Morales' "pekaesy". Brilliant.

What advice would you give to someone, who decided to move to Poland?

Learn the language. You'll think that you can get on without it, but you'll never fully integrate unless you know it.



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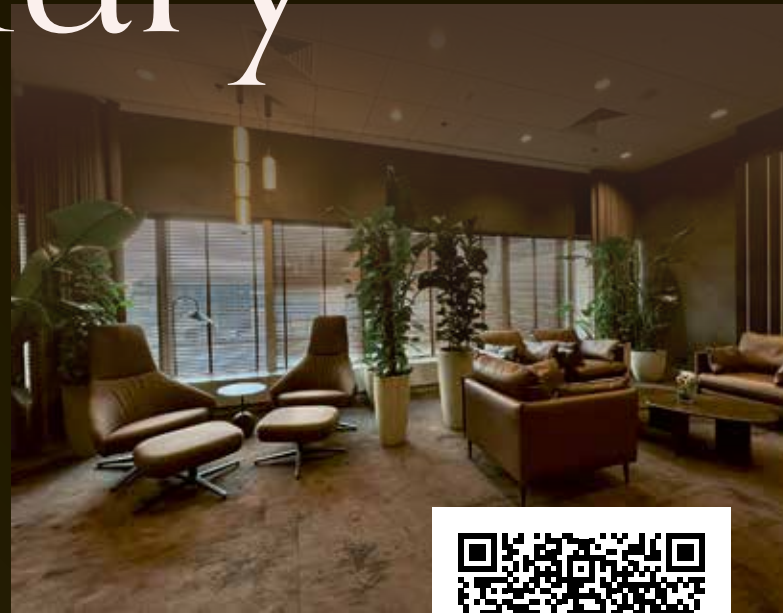


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