



PODLASKIE THE NATURAL PLACE TO DO BUSINESS



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PODLASKIE

THE NATURAL PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

Poland is one of the greatest examples of economic success in the recent history of the world. Its uninterrupted economic growth of more than 25 years is the best measure of the country's achievement. Poland's success story is also a story of Podlaskie Voivodeship, its potential and unique qualities. Thanks to them, the region is an excellent place to live, study, work and invest.

Many of Podlaskie's qualities are absolutely unique: its strategic geographical location at the crossroads of European and Asian trading routes, the highest level of security in Poland, great conditions for talent development, an impressive number of deep-tech start-ups, and the cleanest air in Poland. Podlaskie is a place where the world of nature and the world of business meet in perfect harmony. It is the home of ambitious people, whose ideas conquer international markets. Podlaskie is where they run their global businesses, as well as where they find peace of mind and inspiration that flows straight from the heart of primeval nature. All of this takes place in a unique atmosphere of kindness and hospitality that the inhabitants of the region have been associated with for centuries.

Podlaskie is the natural place to do business.



A GATEWAY BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA

Podlaskie Voivodeship is crossed by important road routes: the Via Baltica, that links the Baltic States to the trans-European transport network, and the Via Carpatia, which links Gdańsk and Klaipeda with South-Eastern Europe. When the modernisation of the Via Baltica and Via Carpatia sections that run through Podlaskie is completed in 2023 and 2025 respectively, the network of expressways in the region will be over 400 kilometres long. In addition to road infrastructure, the Rail Baltica – a fast railway line from Berlin to Helsinki through Warsaw – is being developed.

Thanks to its strategic location, Podlaskie is also an important place on the New Silk Road, as it is here that rail shipments cross the border of the European Union.





Trans-Siberian Railway

New Silk Road

STRATEGIC LOCATION

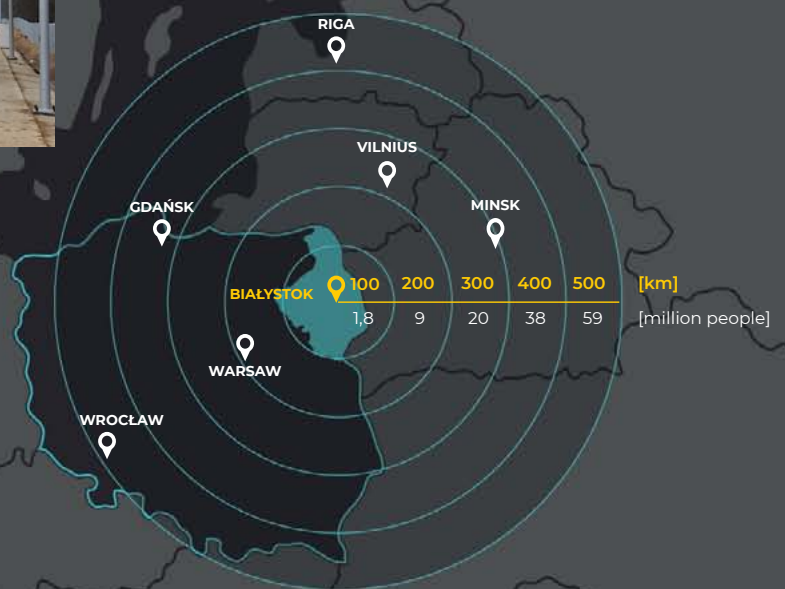
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A LOGISTICS HUB FOR EASTERN EUROPE

Podlaskie is an ideal place for logistics centres. Over twenty million people live within 300 kilometres of the centre of the region, an area which also includes the capital cities of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland. The markets of Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Ukraine and Russia are also close by. This borderland region, however, has many more advantages.

Podlaskie has three road and three railway border crossings to Belarus. The latter will be used more and more intensively for trade between the European Union

and the countries of the Far East, including China, Japan and South Korea. In recent years, the number of rail shipments between Chinese provinces and Europe has been growing by over 100% annually. It is estimated that railways only cater to a few per cent of the total trade between Europe and China, with a value of over 20 billion dollars, but their share will grow steadily. In addition to railways, intermodal terminals will play an increasingly significant role.





Three modern trans-shipment centres located in the region will soon reach a total capacity of over 300,000 TEU per year. Chryzanów and Sokółka support both broad-gauge and standard-gauge tracks, which streamlines the shipment of goods across the border to Belarus. Due to its excellent location, the terminal in Łapy offers direct railway connections to ports on the Baltic Sea: Gdańsk, Gdynia, and the port in Elbląg, the importance of which will increase after the navigation canal across the Vistula Spit is completed.



3 intermodal
terminals



300 000 TEU
the capacity of terminals
in Podlasie



20 million people
within 300 km of the centre
of the region



6 border
crossings
with Belarus

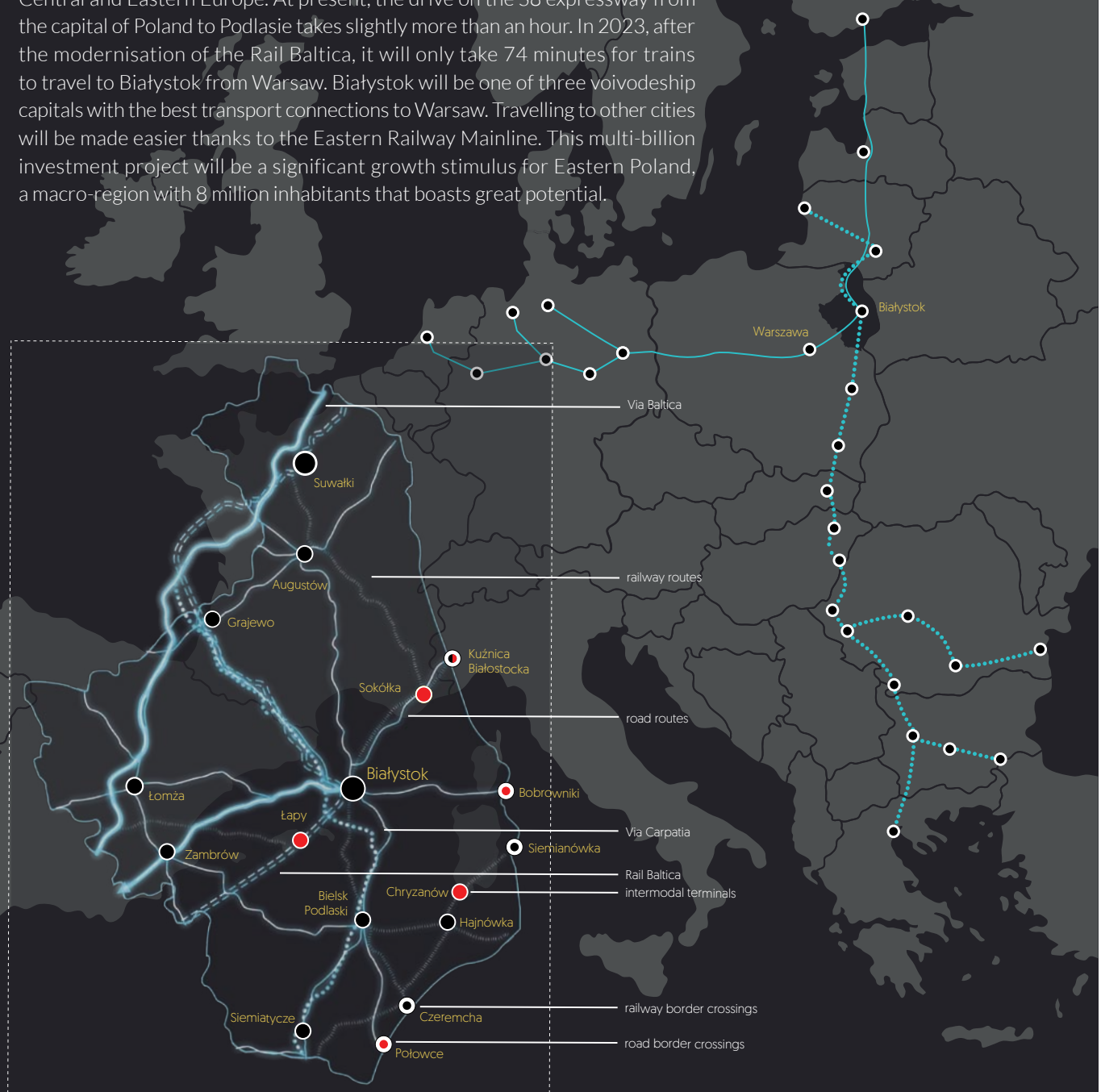
STRATEGIC LOCATION

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WARSAW

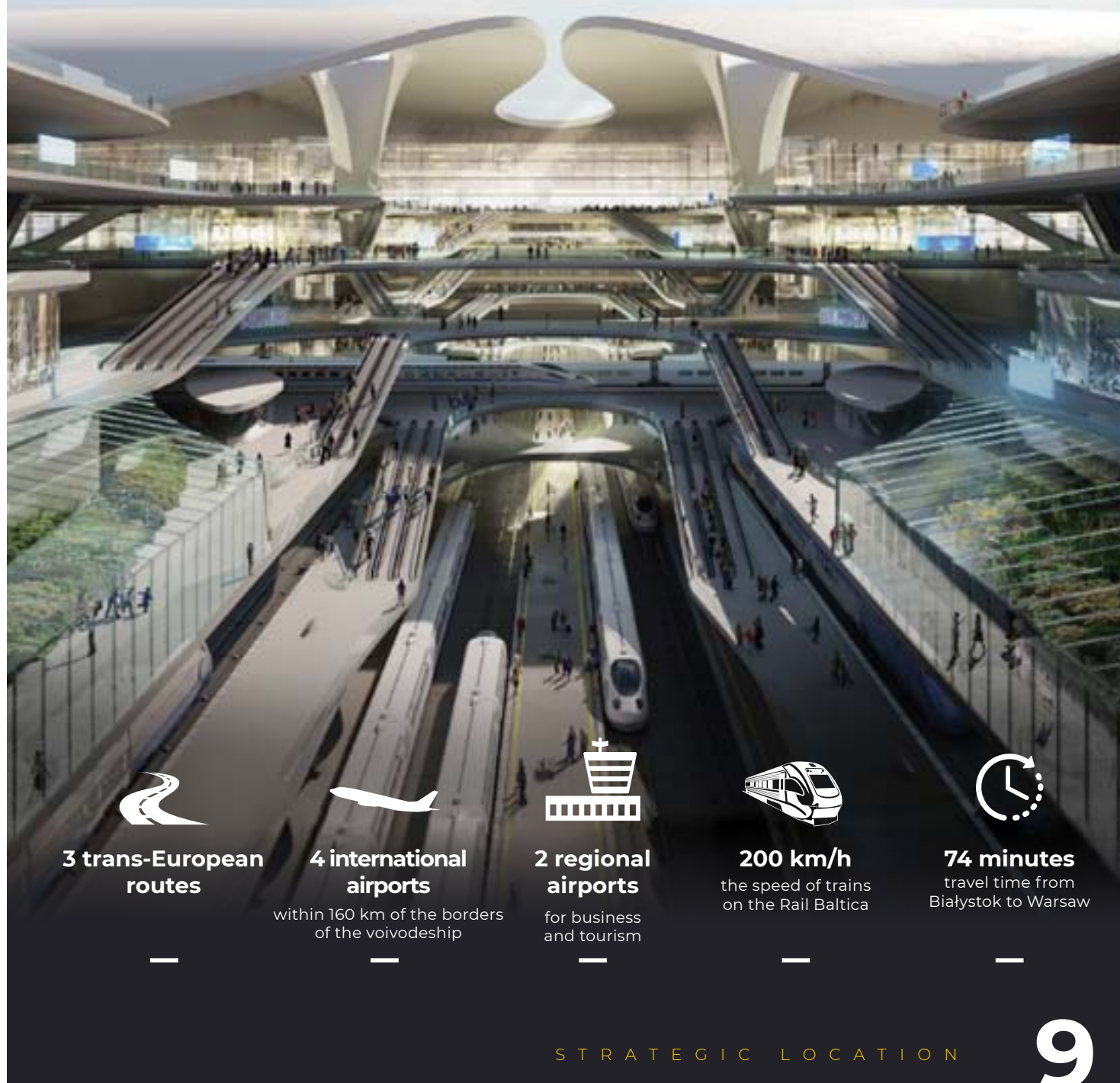
AN HOUR AWAY

As a result of infrastructural investments, Podlaskie is getting closer and closer to Warsaw, a metropolis of two million people and the business centre of Central and Eastern Europe. At present, the drive on the S8 expressway from the capital of Poland to Podlasie takes slightly more than an hour. In 2023, after the modernisation of the Rail Baltica, it will only take 74 minutes for trains to travel to Białystok from Warsaw. Białystok will be one of three voivodeship capitals with the best transport connections to Warsaw. Travelling to other cities will be made easier thanks to the Eastern Railway Mainline. This multi-billion investment project will be a significant growth stimulus for Eastern Poland, a macro-region with 8 million inhabitants that boasts great potential.



The Solidarity Transport Hub Poland (STH), a huge multi-modal hub near Warsaw, integrating road, rail and air transport, will have an even more significant impact on Podlaskie. The STH will be completed by 2030 and will service several dozen million travellers a year. New railway lines are being designed as part of the project, one of which will connect Łomża and Warsaw, making it possible to travel between the cities in 75 minutes. The travel time from Warsaw to Suwałki will also become shorter, at 2.5 hours, which is nearly half the current time.

The STH will be the largest, but not the only airport to serve Podlaskie. Thanks to its excellent location, the region has access to domestic and international airports. The central and southern parts of the region are in the catchment area of Chopin airport in Warsaw and Warsaw-Modlin Airport. The northern part of the voivodeship uses Olsztyn-Mazury Airport and the airport in Vilnius, Lithuania. The smaller regional airports in Białystok and Suwałki mainly serve tourist and business traffic.



3 trans-European routes



4 international airports

within 160 km of the borders of the voivodeship



2 regional airports

for business and tourism



200 km/h

the speed of trains on the Rail Baltica



74 minutes

travel time from Białystok to Warsaw

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

Thirty thousand students at public and private universities, over one hundred different academic majors, nine thousand graduates every year... Podlaskie helps to develop a well-qualified workforce for a modern economy.



The regional universities in Białystok, Łomża and Suwałki have excellent laboratories and experienced academic staff, who specialise in fields related to biotechnology, automation and robotics, material engineering, mechatronic engineering, medical analytics and physics, as well as physics of computer games and robots.

Vocational schools train over 25,000 students, who hone their skills in different trades, the operation of advanced industrial devices, and software development. This is in response to increasing demand from the country's growing economy.



The largest academic centre of the region is the city of Białystok, with its oldest and most highly esteemed universities. Białystok University of Technology is the largest technical university in Podlasie. It collaborates with scientific centres from all over the world and its graduates go on to establish internationally successful start-ups, such as Photon Entertainment and Elastic Cloud Solutions.

The academic staff of Białystok University have achieved epic accomplishments, such as their participation in direct detection of gravity waves, awarded with the Nobel Prize in Physics.

The Medical University is carrying out unique research programmes on personalised medicine and diseases of affluence. It is there that the first Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Medicine in Central and Eastern Europe was established.

A vibrant academic community is a huge asset that impacts the development of the region.

AMBITIOUS EMPLOYEES

Since 2018, Poland has belonged to the world's most developed economies. It is one of the first countries from Central and Eastern Europe to join an elite group that includes, among others, Japan, France, Germany and the United States. The growth dynamics of Polish GDP are some of the highest in Europe and Poland has long surpassed the EU average. This is thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of Poles and their ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Modern economies are productive economies. Poland is a global leader with respect to improvement in productivity. Over the past 9 years, or since 2010,

Polish efficiency has grown by nearly 24%. According to OECD estimates, in the years 1995-2017, workforce productivity growth in Poland was one of the most spectacular worldwide, with only South Korea and Ireland achieving better results.

While Polish productivity is getting ever closer to the EU average, wages still remain lower. Labour costs in Poland are among the lowest in the European Union, at slightly more than a third of the EU average. In Podlaskie Voivodeship they are at 90% of the country average, boosting the region's competitiveness.





average GDP growth
in Poland, 1996-2018



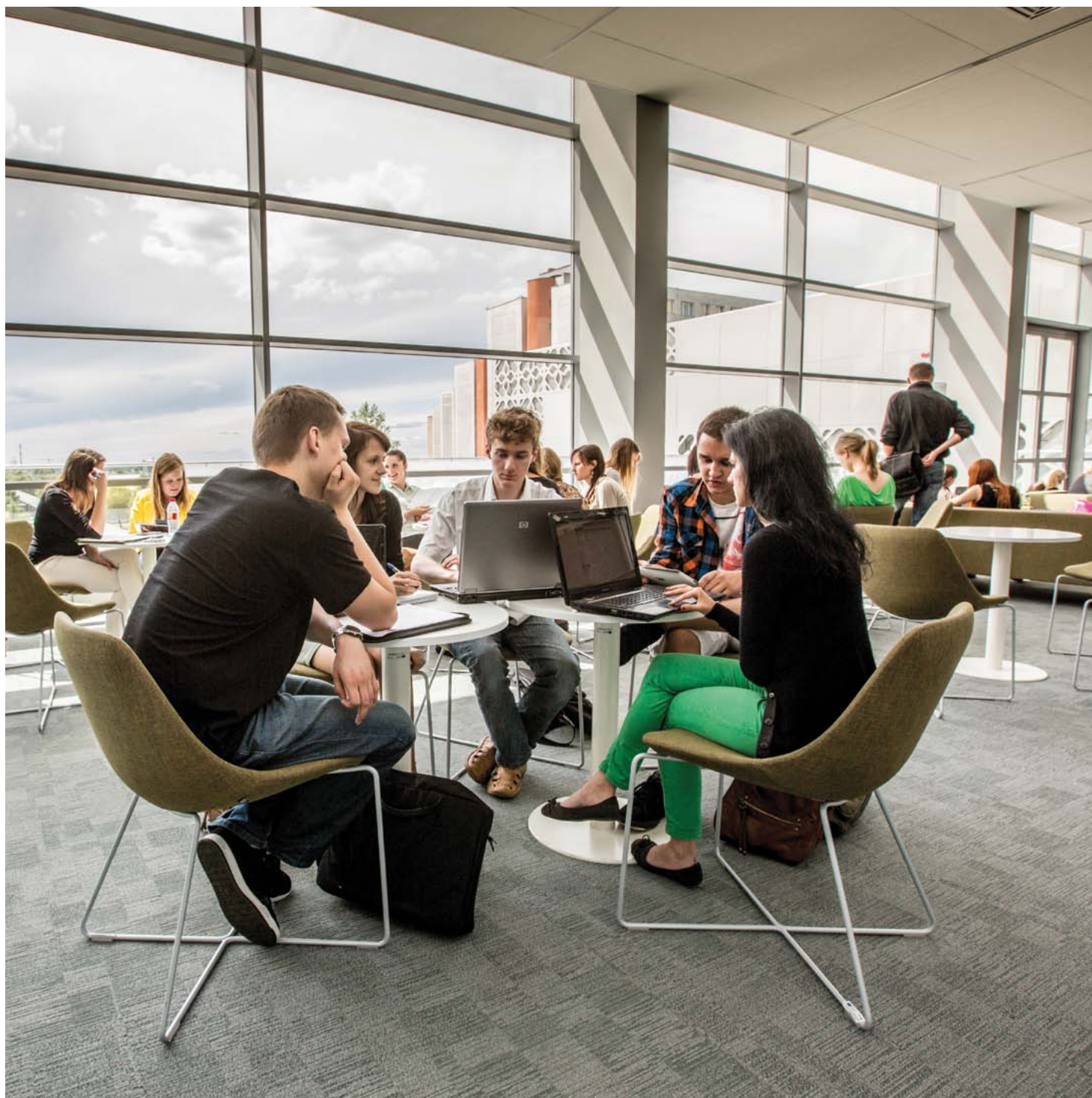
average GDP growth
in the EU, 1996-2018



EMPLOYEES OF THE FUTURE

Poles are among the youngest European nations. This is a great asset in the day and age of ageing societies. Poland averages four working-age persons per each senior citizen over 65, which is a much better result than the EU average. Only the smaller nations of Luxembourg, Ireland, Slovakia and Cyprus surpass Poland in this respect. Population ageing is a problem of highly developed countries. In Poland, however, this process is progressing more slowly, especially when compared with Finland, Italy or Germany.





Poland's demographics are aided by migration, chiefly from the countries of Eastern Europe. Poland is like a magnet that attracts young people, who pursue their ambitions here. Over the past 30 years, Poland has become an indisputable leader in this part of the continent. In real terms, we are making twice as much money as in 1989, the unemployment is the lowest in years and we live significantly longer. More and more young Poles are obtaining higher education. According to the OECD, 44% of people aged 25-34 complete higher education, which is over 10% more than a decade earlier. The high share of university graduates is especially noticeable in the sphere of production.

Poland is one of the global leaders in this respect. The same can be said of English knowledge, with Poland being in 11th place globally and 9th place in Europe in the EF English Proficiency Index ranking. A record number of people are also learning German, with 13% of Poles declaring they speak it, which is the best result among the Central European countries.

Beyond the economy, our well-being is also improving. Polls show that, along with the Finns, Austrians, Danes and Swedes, we are one of the happiest nations in the European Union.


A TECHNOPOLIS IN PODLASIE

Podlaskie Voivodeship's untainted natural environment is one of its greatest assets. Clean forests, rivers, lakes and meadows are a great setting for the development of the green economy and agri-food sector. Dairy from Podlasie is a synonym of excellent quality, and the creameries that produce it are among the most modern in Europe.

Podlaskie is Europe's 'Dairy Valley'. The region boasts the highest milk production and processing levels in Poland, with giants such as Mlekovita, Mlekpól and Piątnica operating here. Every fourth bottle of milk consumed in Polish households comes from Podlasie.

The success of the dairy industry in Podlaskie is not only based on natural resources but also on huge investments in modern technologies and continuous quality improvement.





Numerous lakes in the northern part of the voivodeship have contributed to the development of the yacht-building industry in Podlasie. At its heart is the town of Augustów, where the two largest shipyards, Ślepsk and Balt-Yacht, are located. Hundreds of luxury yachts sailing around the world have been built there. They are products for the most demanding clients who value Polish quality. Yachting components, such as hardware and ship wheels, made by Kotniz in Białystok, are held in high regard. Thanks to their exceptional quality, they have been called 'jewellery for yachts'. It comes as no surprise, then, that the majority of yachting products from the region are exported. Thanks to the Podlasie shipyards, Poland, along with the US, is a global leader in the construction of yachts in the nine-metre category.

A TECHNOPOLIS IN PODLASIE

Easy access to raw materials has made it possible for the wood and furniture industries to flourish in Podlasie. The furniture sector has been growing in Poland for many years, and most of its production is sold abroad. Poland is currently the fourth largest furniture exporter in the world, with its industry leaders, such as Pfleiderer Grajewo, IKEA Industry Poland, and Fabryka Mebli Forte, operating from Podlaskie Voivodeship.

Modern, modular multi-family houses and prefabricated houses have become a speciality of Podlasie. Made by Unihouse and Danwood, two companies based in Bielsk Podlaski, they have been spectacularly successful on the Nordic and German markets. The significance of the construction industry in the region is underscored by the presence of the Polish Construction Cluster, which brings together over 400 companies from all over the country.

The metal and machine-building industry is something of a phenomenon in Podlaskie. Its dynamic growth and international expansion are supported by the Metal Processing Cluster, which consists of several dozen regional companies, including Metal-Fach and Samasz – producers of agricultural machines and devices. These brands, well-known and valued in Poland, have won many accolades and are taking foreign markets by storm. Pronar is a case in point: its trailers are in second place with respect to registrations in Germany, while its plate wheels are in the global top three. Modern technologies, professional employees, and high research and development expenditure have contributed to the success of these companies.



The name "Podlasie Silicon Forest" is increasingly being used to describe Podlaskie Voivodeship in connection with the dynamic growth of the IT sector in the region. At its heart is the city of Białystok, with a rapidly growing number of companies offering state-of-the-art solutions.

They include many promising start-ups, which acquire clients all over the world. Their development is facilitated by a favourable scientific and research ecosystem. Its cornerstones are Białystok University of Technology and the science and technology parks in Białystok and Suwałki. Investment in broadband internet infrastructure, which is currently available to 90% of the inhabitants of the voivodeship, is not to be underestimated either.

Currently, IT companies in Podlaskie employ over 4,000 software developers, and the whole IT sector has over 10,000 employees.



A POTENTIAL UNICORN

Devices to make everyday life easier for the disabled, robots that teach logical thinking, space technologies, unique bicycles... The young people of Podlasie will surprise you with their creativity as they conquer demanding markets and compete against the best rivals in the world.

Podlaskie Voivodeship is increasingly important as far as Polish start-ups are concerned. According to the *Startup Poland* report, over 70% of Białystok innovators in 2019 operated in the deep-tech sector, which involves the most advanced technologies. They focus on ground-breaking technology projects, laboratory research, and prototyping. Robotics, electronics, productivity boosting solutions, ERP, CRM, Industry 4.0 and edu-tech are among the fortes of the companies in the region. Some 10% of all Polish start-ups in these sectors are located in Białystok, and the number of innovative companies per capita is one of the highest in Poland. The excellent talent that is available in Białystok motivated Instapage, an American start-up, to develop its business in parallel in California and Podlasie. But there are many more examples of creativity in Podlasie.



> 70%

start-ups in the deep-tech area
/ the highest percentage in Poland



9%

of all Polish start-ups in the areas
of robotics / electronics, and productivity

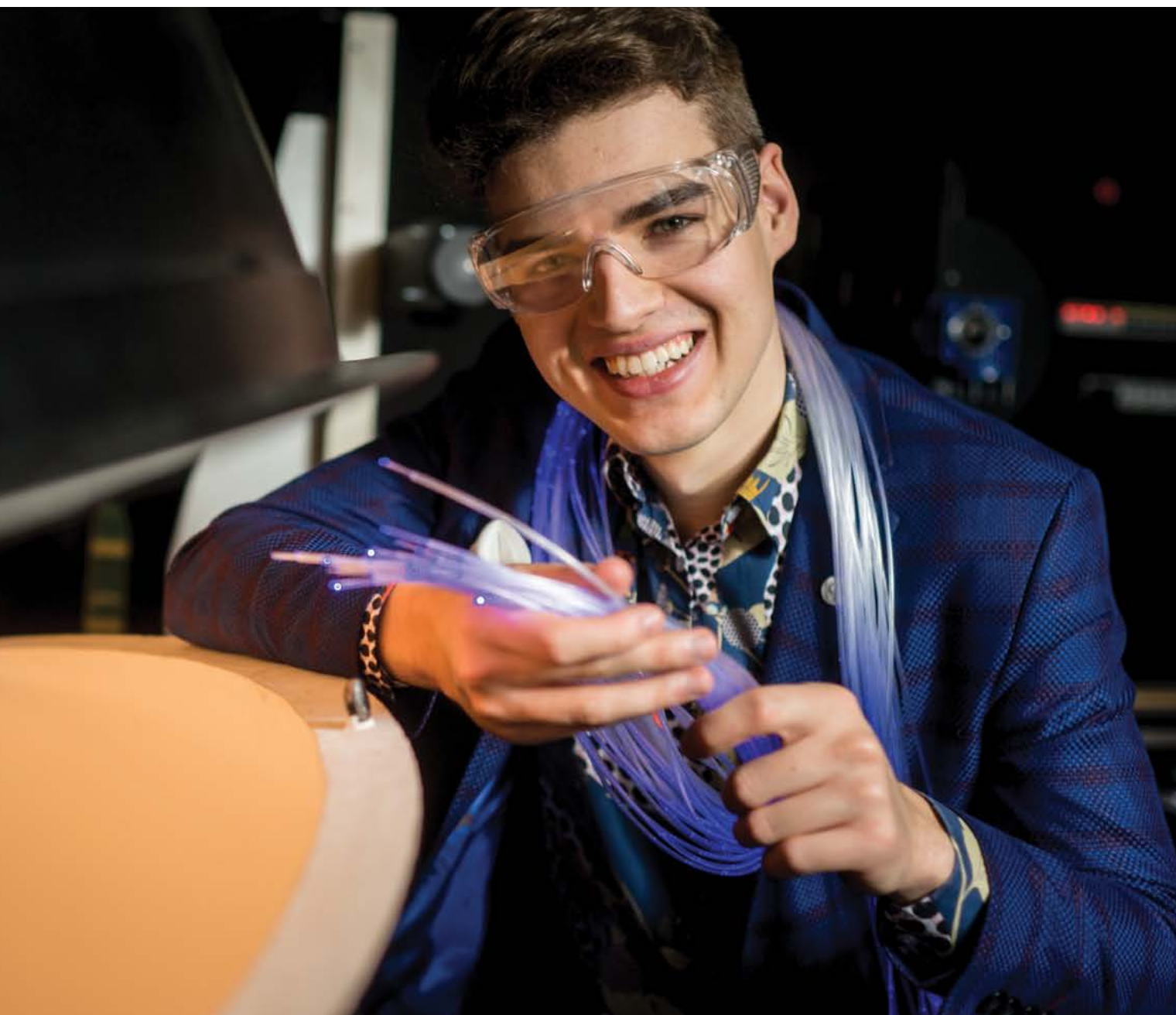


4th place

in terms of start-up
concentration

20

A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR TECHNOLOGY



Petros Psyllos is one of the most gifted European inventors. His interests include artificial intelligence, robotics, and cognitive science. But first and foremost, he is an inventor whose work may revolutionise the lives of the disabled. An artificial eye for the blind, a glove that facilitates communication for people with mutism, and brainwave device control are only some of the projects developed by this young resident of Białystok. His achievements resulted in *Forbes* including him on the list of the 30 best European innovators.

Photon Entertainment is a start-up established by Białystok University of Technology graduates, who decided to teach children how to think creatively and logically. The role of the teacher is played by Photon – the most modern educational robot on the market, which develops in parallel with the child. Thanks to its numerous sensors, it is able to see, hear, perceive touch, tell darkness from light, and measure distance. The challenges it gives to children help them learn the basics of programming and discover the world of new technologies. In 2018, Photon Entertainment was recognised as the best start-up in Central and Eastern Europe.

A POTENTIAL UNICORN

Photon came to the Earth from deep space. Students of the Mechanical Faculty at Białystok University of Technology, who specialise in the construction of Mars rovers, have focused their attention in precisely the opposite direction. Their designs are so good that they won the University Rover Challenge in the United States three times. Since 2011, they have continuously been among the top ten Mars rover design teams in the world.

Other start-ups from Podlasie take their users to a digital world. RiftCat is one of them. Their Virtual Reality gaming platform is used by several hundred thousand people. RiftCat collaborates with giants such as HTC and Huawei. Elastic Cloud Solutions has

been equally successful. Their internet solutions are enjoyed by over 200,000 users from several dozen countries. They are the winner of the prestigious Best Intranet Design 2018 Award from the Nielsen Norman Group.

TenderHut creates innovative programming solutions and applications. The company has its software development centres in the largest cities in Poland, and abroad in Zurich, London, Berlin, Dublin, Paris, New York, Stockholm and Copenhagen. In the 2019 *Financial Times* 1000 ranking, TenderHut was ranked 23rd among the 1,000 fastest-growing European companies.



The creativity of the inhabitants of Podlaskie is by no means limited to the IT sector. Many of them are inspired by the cultural and natural heritage of the region. A case in point is Adam Zdanowicz, a world champion in the design of custom bicycles. His electrically powered bicycle with a 3D-printed frame won the 2019 "bicycle Oscar" at a global bicycle exhibition in Las Vegas. It is no wonder, then, that his bicycles are used by Polish and international music stars, including Slash of Guns N' Roses fame. These are bikes made for individualists. Each and every one of the bicycles is different, but the one thing they have in common is that they always make an impression.



AN ECOSYSTEM OF BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

Cooperation between scientific centres and industry is boosted by the science and technology parks in Białystok and Suwałki, which play host to a number of high-tech and ICT start-ups.

The Białystok Science and Technology Park includes a Technology Incubator for start-ups and companies that are less than three years old. The incubator offers office space rental at preferential rates, access to modern infrastructure, marketing support, and professional training and advisory services.

An important part of the Białystok Science and Technology Park is the Technology Centre, which includes scientific laboratories, training rooms, and an office section with office space for rent.





The goal of the Poland-East Science and Technology Park is to create a hub in Suwałki connecting science and business in order to enable technology transfer and facilitate the pursuit of innovative forms of business and investment. The Park comprises numerous laboratories, including chemical, medical and renewable energy, as well as an exhibition centre and office space. It is a place that promotes the flow of knowledge between science and business.

A PLACE OPEN TO INVESTMENT

Poland is one of the highlights on the economic map of the world. Poland was the only country in the European Union to have maintained stable growth during the 2007-2009 economic crisis.

Impressive GDP growth has changed Poland tremendously. From what used to be one of the poorest countries in Europe, Poland has now become a major EU economy. According to an Ernst & Young report, in 2018 there were 272 projects in Poland to develop manufacturing/service entities, thereby creating jobs. This means that nearly 20% of all such projects in Central and Eastern Europe were

located in Poland. Manufacturing, business services, transport and logistics, and the chemical industry are most popular among investors.

Investors consider Europe to be the best place in the world for new investment projects, which has helped our country to maintain its high position year after year. The rate of return from Foreign Direct Investment in Poland is one of the highest in the European Union. It is in excess of 9%, which is significantly higher than the EU average of 3.6%. Podlaskie Voivodeship benefits from the growing global attractiveness of Poland. High expenditure



on road and rail infrastructure, an excellent location at the crossroads of European transport routes, and its human resources are some of its chief assets. It is a great place for investment in different sectors of economy, from transport and logistics to the wood industry, machine building, and ICT.

Land plots available for investment in Podlaskie Voivodeship are in attractive locations, comprehensively equipped with technical infrastructure, and well-prepared for investment projects. Both domestic and foreign investors can count on the assistance of the Investors Assistance and Business Promotion Office at the Podlaskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office. The Centre has an up-to-date database of land earmarked for investment, and it assists companies that are interested in starting their operations in the region.

Companies that invest in Podlaskie Voivodeship are eligible to tax breaks of up to 70% of their expenses. This is the highest state aid available

to investors anywhere in Poland. Companies may benefit from this assistance for up to 15 years. The decision to award aid is made by the Suwałki Special Economic Zone, which covers the entire area of the voivodeship.

The zone manages plots of land earmarked for investment, and provides assistance on issues related to state aid. In the zone, there are technologically advanced production plants in the metal, wood, plastics, electronics, construction, and food industries. The total value of investment in the Suwałki Special Economic Zone amounts to about EUR 1 billion.

A sub-zone of the Tarnobrzeg Special Economic Zone is also located in Podlaskie Voivodeship, encompassing investment areas in the municipality of Łapy, near the city of Białystok. They are equipped with the necessary infrastructure, ensuring excellent conditions for investors in the logistics and production sectors.





EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION

A transparent market and efficient public administration are Poland's important assets. Poland ranked 41st of 180 countries in the Amnesty International Corruption Perceptions Index, ahead of most other Central and Eastern European countries. Poland did even better in the Global Real Estate Transparency Index, where Poland's property market was ranked 20th in the world, ahead of such countries as Norway, Austria, and all other Central and Eastern European countries. One of the reasons behind this high position is the quality of the information made available to investors.

Thanks to a rapid development of e-services, many administrative procedures can be done online. This is confirmed by the United Nations' E-Government Development Index (EGDI), where Poland ranked 33rd in the world and is among those countries with the highest EGDI. Administrative procedures that can be done online include, among others, establishing a company and filing tax returns.

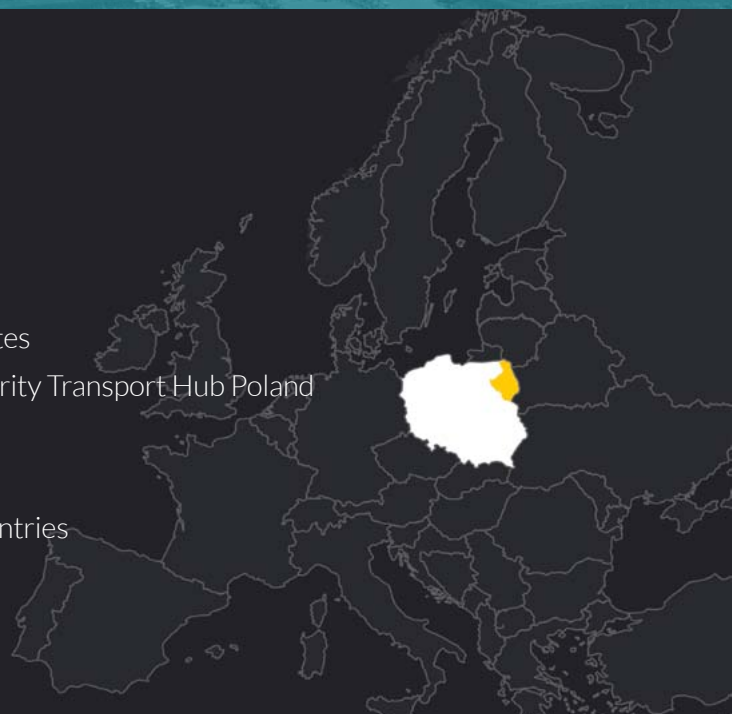
E-administration is a forte of Podlaskie Voivodeship. As much as 96% of local government bodies use electronic documents, which is the best result in Poland.



A GREAT PLACE TO INVEST...

STRATEGIC LOCATION

- at the crossroads of European road and rail routes
- excellent connections to Warsaw and the Solidarity Transport Hub Poland
- access to international markets
- external EU border
- gateway to Eastern Europe and the Nordic Countries



HUMAN RESOURCES

- high-quality universities and vocational schools
- rapidly growing labour productivity
- competitive labour costs
- skilled employees

2.



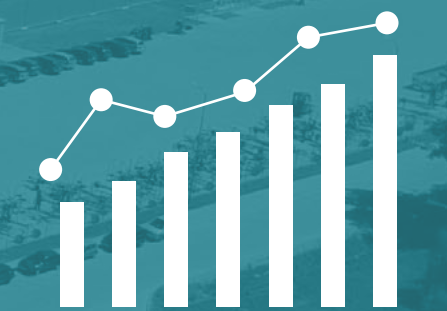
MODERN ECONOMY

3.

- industry developed in harmony with nature
- innovative Industry 4.0 technologies
- dynamic start-ups
- symbiosis between science and business

OFFER FOR INVESTORS

- well-prepared investment sites
- high tax breaks
- efficient administration
- high economic growth



BEST PLACE TO LIVE

5.

- four national parks
- a multicultural society
- kind and welcoming residents
- a wealth of tourist attractions



A GREAT PLACE TO INVEST...

"The first decision was to decide in which country to make this huge investment. And the decision to pick Poland was quite easy. Ikea has a long business relations with Poland, more than 50 years. And today Ikea Industry in Poland is the largest production country within Ikea Industry. [...]"

Next choice was to decide in which region to place the investment. And we took several aspects into account. The first one was that we need to be close to our suppliers, and the most important raw material for us is the wood. [...] So we put high demands on the wood suppliers. In this area we can purchase wood from sources that we have good control over.

Another aspect was the railway net. Here we can get supplies by train, and we can dispatch our finished goods to our customers by train and of course it's much more cost conscious to use train than to use the road trucks on roads [...].

And I would say at last, but not least, was the very good cooperation and support we got from local communities here and the authorities. They've been very supportive and positive from the beginning and of course they wanted to develop this area [...]."

Ulrika Garbe

Managing Director of IKEA Industry Poland
Orla Branch, 2014-2016



A large owl with prominent ear tufts is perched on a thick, moss-covered tree branch. The owl has brown and white mottled feathers and is looking directly at the camera. The tree trunk is heavily covered in vibrant green moss, with several small, light-colored mushrooms growing from it. The background is a dense forest with green foliage and tree trunks, creating a lush, natural setting.

NATURE THAT ENTHRALS

Podlaskie is a sanctuary for wild nature. The region boasts the oldest primeval forest in Europe, imposing wild river marshes, and some of the most beautiful lakes in Poland in four unique national parks. Jointly, they cover an area of 900 km² but each of them tells a different story.

The oldest and most famous is Białowieża National Park – a place which makes a trip back to prehistory possible. In the park, visitors can experience what a true deciduous primeval forest, which covered most of Europe hundreds of years ago, is like. In addition to wolves and lynxes, the forest has the largest population of European bison (also known as wisent) living in the wild. The European bison has become a symbol of the park, and indeed the whole region.

Biebrza National Park – the largest Polish national park – is known for its marshes, swamps and peat bogs. The pristine character of the Biebrza Valley means it has become a perfect breeding and nesting ground for hundreds of bird species, including ruffs, cranes, and greater spotted eagles. The virgin nature of the Biebrza Valley can be admired thanks to a network of charming tourist trails.

Narew National Park is called 'the Polish Amazonia'. It is famous for its unique system of swamps, marshes, channels and old riverbeds of the river Narew. The few rivers in the world that are similar to the Narew include: the Amazon in South America, the Okavango in Africa, the Saskatchewan in Canada and the Ob in Siberia.

Lake Wigry, one of the largest and most impressive Polish lakes, is at the heart of Wigry National Park. It is surrounded by dozens of smaller but equally enchanting lakes, which are a reminder of the postglacial character of the region. Thanks to them, the park is a Mecca for fans of water tourism: sailors and canoeists.

In addition to the national parks, this largest conservation area in Poland is further complimented by three landscape parks (that of the Narew Valley, Knyszyńska Forest, and Suwalski) and 40 nature reserves.



CULTURE THAT INSPIRES

The Podlaskie Voivodeship was for centuries a frontier country, a meeting place for different cultures, nationalities and religions. This heritage has been preserved to this day. It is reflected in the architecture, religious beliefs, unique cuisine, and traditions handed down from generation to generation. Important Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Muslim and Judaist religious sites can be found in the region, including the former Camaldolese monastery by Lake Wigry, the Holy Mountain of Grabarka – a key site for Eastern Orthodox believers, the oldest Polish mosque in Kruszyniany, and the second largest Great Synagogue in Poland, located in Tykocin.



The diversity of cultures and nationalities, which include Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians and Tatars, has brought about the legendary openness and hospitality of the inhabitants of the region. In addition to Polish, many of them speak two or three other mother tongues: Belarusian, Lithuanian or Russian.

As a result of the multinational character of Podlaskie Voivodeship, its inhabitants are open to dialogue with other cultures. Tourists and guests from all over the world are received with open arms, and become enchanted by the warmth of the people of Podlasie, encouraging them to return many times in the future.



DRIVEN BY NATURE

Podlaskie is a paradise for tourists. It is a place that hums with the purest energy derived straight from wild nature. Slightly more than an hour's drive from Warsaw, a different world unfolds, allowing you to breathe deeply and feel part of nature.





Shinrin-yoku, or “forest bathing”, is a practice that originated in Japan, where as early as the 1980s walking in the woods was promoted to prevent and treat diseases of affluence. It has been gaining popularity worldwide ever since. Is there a better place for this sort of therapy than walks in the extensive woodlands of the region, such as Białowieska, Augustowska and Knyszyńska Forests?

Enthusiasts of more active forms of leisure will also have plenty to choose from. The longest stretch of the Green Velo Eastern Bicycle Route is in Podlaskie. The project links five voivodeships of Eastern Poland. Nearly 600 km of the route is in Podlaskie Voivodeship, allowing you to discover uniquely beautiful places and gain unforgettable experiences.

Lake Wigry, the Czarna Hańcza River, and the Augustowski Canal are magnets for fans of water sports. When in the region, you should definitely try sailing on Lake Wigry, one of the most bewitching Polish lakes, canoeing down the Czarna Hańcza, one of the cleanest Polish rivers, and going down the Augustowski Canal, a marvel of engineering located in Augustowska Forest.

A THRIVING CAPITAL

The capital city of Podlaskie Voivodeship is Białystok, a city of nearly 300,000 inhabitants, one of the ten largest cities in Poland and one of the cities with the best quality of life.

Over the past twenty years, the number of residents of Białystok has grown by 5%. This is a good result, as most other Polish cities saw negative figures in the same period. The statistics are reflected in the opinions of residents. In a 2016 European Commission ranking, Białystok

was evaluated the highest of all Polish cities. 96% of its residents said they were satisfied with the quality of life in the region's capital, appreciating the green spaces, the development of sports infrastructure, and easy access to services. A rich cultural offer is also important. Thanks to its excellent programme, the Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic – European Art Centre in Białystok is considered a leading artistic centre in Eastern Poland.



Białystok is a significant academic centre – every tenth inhabitant of the city is a student. University graduates have the opportunity to develop their professional careers locally, in modern sectors of the economy such as IT and life sciences. The ecosystem of science and business has created an environment in which creativity thrives, as do globally successful start-ups.

Białystok and the entire region have all it takes to become a bridge between the West and the East.

This is the premise behind the establishment of a new event, organised in Białystok by the Podlaskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office: the Podlaskie Economic Forum is an international conference focusing on the development of Eastern Poland and changes happening in the global economy. The forum is a venue for an exchange of opinions between businesspeople, politicians, diplomats, scientists, and anyone who is interested in the contemporary economy.



Published by

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Graphic design:

Alter Studio

Print: ZAPOL sp.j.

Number of copies: 500

ISBN: 978-83-957428-0-4





Podlaskie