

Business in Masuria? **Naturally!**



The Great Masurian Lakes 2020 was founded in 2015, based on the belief that „together we can do more“. With the combined forces of local governments around the Great Masurian Lakes, we have been able to make significant changes in the entire region. Working together, we can not only create good conditions for living, rest and business, but also take care of the natural environment of Masuria, which in the 21st century is the greatest treasure of the region.

Looking for innovative solutions, in accordance with the philosophy of sustainable development, we can invest in infrastructure that is better for the environment, and simultaneously awaken ecological awareness in the people living in Masuria.

The aim of the Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020 is the rapid development of business and tourism, but only when it protects the most important feature of the region – its unique natural heritage.

Masuria is a region with great opportunities recognised by both the authorities and investors. The tourist season that lasts all year round, the spa character of Masurian towns and the high quality of the residents' life are the vision that guides local government officials and is implemented through joint ventures.



MASURIA - A MIRACLE OF NATURE

The Land of the Great Masurian Lakes is unique not only in Poland, but also in Europe. There are few places on the entire continent with such an extensive and rich natural complex of more than two and a half thousand lakes, connected with each other by rivers and canals. The Great Masurian Lakes Trail leads from Ruciane-Nida in the south to Węgorzewo in the north. Its length is as much as 111 km in a straight line. It leads through Mikołajki, Orzysz, Ryn, Giżycko and many smaller, charming towns. Every year they host tourists from all over the world who look for a rest in the bosom of nature. Not everyone knows that the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes is not the work of nature itself. 10 thousand years ago it was formed as a result of the Baltic Glaciation. It was originally a sea that was divided into several smaller pools. However, the canals connecting the lakes are the result of human work.

The Great Masurian Lakes are a network of bodies of water with an area of nearly 500 km², forests that cover one third of the province - a land of diverse fauna and lush flora. 100 thousand ha is occupied by the Pisz Forest with the Masurian Landscape Park. The area of the forest includes, among others the Krutynia River, the Pisa River and the



Śniardwy Lake. The forest is located in the area of 16 communes and as many as 3 provinces, but its largest part is in the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes.

In order to protect numerous waterfowl, many reserves have been created here, of which as many as five are strict nature reserves. Particularly noteworthy are: the Łuknajno Lake protected area (it is the largest mute swan colony in Europe), the Czaplíniéc reserve (inhabited by the gray heron), and the Nietlickie Bagno Nature Reserve (the largest refuge for migratory cranes in Poland). The Lake Łuknajno protected area belongs to the international group of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The idea of sustainable development is shared by Masurian local governments and businesses. This is the only way to go with the times and save the natural heritage of the region at the same time.

Enterprises, organizations and the inhabitants of Masuria are aware that they are responsible not only for the present, but also the future, which they shape for others. This requires a new approach and a change in thinking. It will not happen overnight, but the process has begun and the trend of sustainable development is becoming more common.

Growing social awareness and the principle of corporate responsibility are starting to play an increasingly important role in Masuria. The way people think is shifting from one-dimensional to multi-dimensional, anticipating the impact of present actions on the future. There are a growing number of local enterprises that consciously implement the strategy of sustainable development, striving to increase revenues while maintaining social and environmental usefulness.

That is why Masurian entrepreneurs look for innovative solutions and feel part of the region, appre-

ciating its unique values. Thanks to this approach, they build a new quality of their brands, companies or persons in the eyes of a modern, conscious customer.

One thing is certain: our care for the natural environment of Masuria completely rules out heavy industry, which does not mean that large enterprises are not established here. What it means is that each new business must fit into the landscape of the region's values, its ecology and its character. The idea of sustainable development means that new facilities replace old factories. In Węgorzewo, for example, old POM plants were replaced by a modern Northman shipyard with a research and development centre, which produces sailing and motor yachts sold all over the world. It is created by passionate people who feel the sailing atmosphere, and test their prototypes on Masurian lakes. Today the world is a global village; remote management and work are becoming more and more popular. There are plenty of freelance professions that do not need big agglomerations. Lifestyle changes, we appreciate the luxury of being close to nature, and the company's success becomes as important as time for family, hobby or rest.



ECO PHILOSOPHY OF BUSINESS

Ecology is no longer an abstract concept from a social campaign, but it has become an everyday practice of Masurian business people. Large companies are adapting to growing environmental requirements and introducing new procedures. Small ones – such as agritourism facilities or food factories – build their business identity around this concept. Large enterprises implement sustainable development with respect for the environment, primarily focusing on minimizing damage.

“Our new powdered milk factory has a modern gas boiler house that does not pollute the air,” says Mar-



cin Piwowarczyk, director of the Mragowo branch of the Mlekpól Dairy Cooperative.

“Biogas plants and photovoltaic farms are our future. We have to invest in renewable energy – make money on it and at the same time pay off our decades-long debt to the environment. Unfortunately, we don’t talk enough about it and so people have a false idea about biogas plants. They associate them with stench while in fact everything runs in pipes underground and there is no unpleasant smell. However, the benefits for everyone are easily quantified – both for the investor and for the entire commune. It is a source of stable energy and a good way to recycle some of the waste,” says Jan Rzymowski, owner of a farm in Upały .

“The reference to the landscape and cultural context is important to us. We try to design structures that complement the space, not compete with it. Our projects are usually surrounded by unique landscape, which makes our work highly responsible. On the other hand, „feeling” this space increases our motivation and creative energy. The surroundings and the environment of Masuria are an inspiration that cannot be found anywhere else,” explains Karolina Czupryniak, owner of the Chiliart architectural studio.



Another example of a pro-ecological development is Solace House – a company in Ruciane-Nida, which builds innovative passive houses. The technology and architecture of the house allows generating the maximum amount of energy from solar panels with minimal heat loss. An energy-efficient house is not only an economically attractive solution for customers, but also a step towards independence from external sources of energy.

Ecophilosophy is also implemented by small hotel facilities, often connected with food factories. There you can taste local delicacies from the farms' own crops. For many people, „eco” is synonymous with „veg”, which leads to an increasing offer of plant-derived products. Siedlisko Sabinowo has a wide offer for vegans and vegetarians; its guests are treated with home-made bread, homemade

preserves and cakes, and the entire menu is prepared based on natural products without the use of preservatives. But the “eco” concept does not have to be related only to gastronomy and food processing. In the region there are a large number of places where hand production flourishes. For instance, Dzianie na Wygonie is a factory where beautiful items are knitted from yarns from around the world, certified strings and eco-materials.

As you can see, the ecophilosophy can be implemented in many ways. Most importantly, however, Masurian business people take responsibility not only for their actions, but also for their long-term consequences.





ECO-TOURISM IN MASURIA

Regardless of tastes, whims and preferences, tourists coming to Masuria expect an encounter with nature – both while practicing activity and tasting local dishes. They picture Masuria as a green asylum with clean air, silence and recreation in the bosom of nature. Instead of an amusement park – a forest, instead of a shopping centre – an eco-fair with organic food and handicraft, instead of a giant SPA complex, more often a Russian bath or winter swimming. That is why all funds allocated to the improvement of the region's tourism infrastructure are directed to investments that do not result in noise, exhaust gases and crowds of people. Campsites for canoeing enthusiasts are developing rapidly. Along the Krutynia River, the temperamental Dajna River or the winding Pisa River, increasingly comfortable leisure places are arranged and new, tasty culinary offers are created. The development strategy for the coming years includes the development of the areas adjacent to the rivers: Węgorapa, Sapina, Nidka, Dajna, Orzysz, and the Dejguny Canal. The expansion of the network of canoeing routes for these rivers and the canal by making them more passable, marking them, arranging places for tourist services, riverside hostels, or leisure and recreation facilities, as well as the construction of new bridges, piers, ports, or strengthening of the banks, will make resting in the natural surroundings more attractive and minimize the negative impact on the same. A huge investment of the communes and the Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020 is also the revitalization of the Great Masurian Lakes Trail.

Key investments of the Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020

- New footbridge and modernization of the promenade in Mikołajki
- Construction of the Guzianka II sluice in Ruciane-Nida along with the reconstruction of the old sluice
- Reconstruction of the quay in Ryn and Ruciane-Nida
- Reconstruction of the old fortifications at the mouth of the Pisa River and the Pisa yacht port
- New passage over the canal in Giżycko and modernization of the port
- Reconstruction and strengthening of all canals on the Great Masurian Lakes Trail





Waterways are not the only attractive routes in Warmia and Masuria. Cycling enthusiasts can find numerous and equally interesting trails here too. A treat for cyclists is the Masurian Bicycle Loop – a project of the Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020. It surrounds large lakes and is over 300 km long. The entire trail was mapped out, taking into account the existing monuments and attractions. The project promises to be spectacular – the creators of the route provide exceptional sightsee-



ing opportunities, which is why they have erected as many as 10 observation towers along the route, as well as rest and recreational shelters and toilets. Additionally, 18 Cyclist Service Points will make cycling most comfortable while rental companies and service centres will provide necessary equipment and repair services, making your trip safer. The Masurian Bicycle Loop connects with another great attraction of the region, the Green Velo Eastern Bicycle Trail. Currently, it is the longest route of this type in Poland, divided into 12 „bicycle kingdoms”. Three of them are located in the Warmian-Masurian Province, and the entire route is nearly 400 km long! Again, the preparation of the routes does not end with marking them; there are Cyclist Service Points here too, offering an opportunity to rest or have a meal.

Recreation and outdoor sports have been a priority of Masurian municipalities for years, which is why they invest in outdoor gyms and places where you can enjoy outdoor exercise. These are cities that develop in harmony with their surroundings; they are active and for the active at the same time – and they want to promote themselves this way.

Masuria wants to become a place where ecological recreation can be practiced all year round. An offer for cross-country skiers, ski slopes, ice sailing and snowkiting, angling venues, spa and wellness centres – these are the directions of sustainable tourism development in the region, satisfying the needs of both modern tourists and the natural environment.



ECO-AMBITION OF THE REGION

The pro-ecological attitude is no longer just a trend, a temporary fashion that will pass with the season, but an expression of responsibility for future generations. It is particularly important to protect natural resources and the environment of places untouched by civilization.

The Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020 has set many goals in its strategy for the coming years. These are ambitious plans, requiring considerable funds and a lot of commitment, but it is the highest priority of our times – to protect nature and restore its due status. This is already happening in Masuria.

Low-emission means of transport are a relief for the planet and the healthiest way of travelling. Hence the ambition of the region is to build hundreds of kilometres of routes for bicycle enthusiasts, as well as combine the existing routes and provide high-quality bicycle lanes at the entrance to cities.

Another important undertaking is the efficient production and use of electricity and heat, i.e. the development of the so-called green technologies, as well as increasing energy security.

In the coming years, numerous activities are planned under the Great Masurian Lakes 2030 Strategy.

Plans for the coming years:

- Mounting of photovoltaic installations on public buildings
- Numerous instances of lighting modernization for energy-saving
- Implementation of smart thermal energy management, e.g. through thermal modernization of buildings
- Modernization of central heating installations and replacement of windows in public buildings
- Increasing electromobility
- New charging stations for electric vehicles





CLEAN HARBOUR

Developing domestic tourism requires extensive environmental protection. Hence making natural resources available to visitors should go hand in hand with taking care of and protecting the former. In line with this idea, all existing sailing harbours should have systems for collecting waste from yachts, and also have a sufficient number of berths.

It is estimated that almost 14 000 vessels use the waterway of the Great Masurian Lakes in summer. That is why it is so important to equip ports with modern installations for collecting liquid and solid waste, toilets, water and electricity connections, to modernize sanitary facilities and provide laundry and drying rooms there, as well as supplementing IT infrastructure.

A similar offer should be available to tourists who move by land, who want to empty liquid waste tanks, draw water or electricity. They now have to find a campsite with campervan service that

will not require them to stay there 24 hours. In order to eliminate illegal dumping practices, it is planned to create a network of Campervan Service Points – generally accessible, ecological parking spaces for campervans or caravans with the so-called „service column” with water and electricity outlets and liquid waste inlets, as well as tourism-related infrastructure.

However, investment in infrastructure is not everything – education is important too. It is necessary to encourage tourists to change their habits and introduce new legal regulations – for example the obligation to seal tanks on yachts.

The planned measures to protect the Masurian waters include construction and reconstruction of sewage treatment plants, water supply networks, water treatment stations, a rainwater drainage system and small retention facilities.



INNOVATIVE MASURIA

Thanks to the civilization and technological advancement, and above all the fast internet, Masuria is much „closer to the world” than it used to be. It is appreciated by many investors from Poland and abroad who choose this region for their company headquarters. And although Masuria is still associated primarily with leisure, it is ever more often considered a great place for innovative businesses.

There are many international companies, such as Farmtrac with Indian capital, which produces tractors based on domestic technologies, or the German company Bruss Polska – a manufacturer of automotive components, awarded the Masurian Innovation Leader statuette. The Mrągowo Branch of Mlekpól Dairy Cooperative has built one of the largest powder milk factories in Europe, and the Northman Shipyard in Węgorzewo has invested in a research and development centre to increase the innovation level and competitiveness of yachts produced there.

In cooperation with the University of Warszawa, the Masurian Centre for Biodiversity and Education KUMAK is also being established. This is one of the key projects included in the Great Masurian Lakes 2020 Strategy, as part of which an interactive science centre will be created, presenting animals and plants as well as processes taking place in the surrounding environment. It will be an educational site used for environmental education and a facility for research into aquatic ecosystems, including water quality and natural methods of its purification.

The innovativeness of Masuria does not always have to be related to science and technology. Sometimes the combination of raw materials and design, as in the case of regional wood products, can be so innovative that it delights customers all over the world. Polish noble and exclusive Loftwood furniture, made of Masurian oak, finds many more buyers in the world than in Poland.

And finally, innovation is also a change in the way of thinking about business, the overarching goal of which, along with entering Poland’s corporate philosophy, was to generate the highest possible profit. Today, many Masurian business people declare that business is also their philosophy of life, a mission to provide customers with what is valuable, healthy and necessary. Profit is only due consideration, the equivalent of real value.

The need for innovation is also experienced by administration. The Digital Masuria project is a joint venture of communes located on the Great Masurian Lakes Trail. It assumes, for instance, a coherent model of electronic administration that enables efficient communication with the office, as well as providing Internet access in public places.

All this shows that innovation is not limited to agglomerations, glass skyscrapers or huge factories; it is about breaking the pattern, it is energy optimization and, more than anything else, a flash of human genius. The nature of Masuria is undoubtedly conducive to this.



 **Great Masurian
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Association

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