

# Kapitał

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## Polskę i Niemcy łączą szczególne więzy gospodarcze

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Ile tylko możliwe – Niemcy i Polska razem – rozmowa z ambasadorem Republiki Federalnej Niemiec w Polsce, Rolfem Wilhelmem Nikel

Przekształcamy Poczta Polska w wielką firmę logistyczną – mówi Tomasz Dąbrowski, członek zarządu Poczty Polskiej S.A.

Wojciech Błoński, wójt gminy Długołęka – przedsiębiorca, sportowiec, radny, ale przede wszystkim społecznik

## Europa Forum, or how to develop the cooperation of Polish and German businesses

Interview with Claus Frank, President of the Polish-German Economic Circle Europa Forum in Wrocław

**Europa Forum has been operating under its current name from the beginning of the 21st century, although the idea behind the creation of this institution was conceived much earlier?**

Yes, already in 1996, an association of entrepreneurs under the name of European Economic Circle was established at the General Consulate of Germany in Wrocław, and in 1998 it received the patronage of the General Consulate of Germany in Wrocław and the Marshal's Office of the Lower Silesian Province. On 30 January 2003, the statute was adopted for the association in accordance with Polish law, which constitutes the basis for its operation until this day. Three months later, on 31 March 2003, the association was officially registered under the name of EUROPA FORUM. Thus, a platform was created for cooperation and development of enterprises from Poland and Germany. Among other things, our members are offered the possibility of participating in thematic meetings and cultural events organised, initiating business contacts, mutual exchange of experiences and information, as well as presentation of their businesses during the cyclical meetings of EUROPA FORUM and on our bilingual website. We also help businesses from Germany to take first investments steps in the Lower Silesian region through specific and practical support. The activity of EUROPA FORUM, with the support from our partners, contributes also to the economic development of Lower Silesia and supports cultural development in the region.

**What were the beginnings of this cooperation?**

The meetings of the Economic Circle as it was known at the time from the very beginning attracted great interest from German and Polish businesses. We held regular meetings, at the beginning at the General Consulate of Germany in Wrocław, in time, as our institution grew, in other convenient locations. The participation in the meetings provided companies with the opportunity for exchanging their experiences and information on important topical issues. Poland was not a member of the European Union at the time. Businesses interested in investing in Poland had such an opportunity thanks to the cooperation platform created, initiation of new business contacts, exchange of experiences and discussions on matters that were important during that period, such as e.g. privatisation, customs duties, taxes, social costs.

At the beginning, it was mainly businesses with German capital that were members of the Economic Circle, in time there were more and more Polish firms. Subjects of meetings answered the needs of businesses. This is what is happening also now. We organise meetings for entrepreneurs with experts, scientists, during which current topics are discussed, concerning the economic situation, the labour market, economic forecasts, new technologies, or changes in the legal system. Our activity, however, does not only have an economic dimension, but also a social one. We participate in various cultural events, concerts, vernissages together. This favours integration between members and has a beneficial impact on the development of business contacts.

**Who are the members of Europa Forum?**

As I have already mentioned, our members are companies with German and Polish capital, recently we have also been joined by a company with a share of American capital - Hewlett Packard Enterprise. Our members represent the most important sectors of the economy, including IT, metal industry, construction industry, logistic industry, automotive industry, hotel and catering industry, manufacturing industry, financial sector, or services. We hold regular meetings, every month, this makes it possible for us to build close relationships, promotes building mutual trust, and then is translated into development of business contacts. We continue to cooperate with business environment institutions in Lower Silesia and in Germany and we expand the list of partners for cooperation. Recently we have initiated cooperation with the Office of the European Parliament based in Wrocław, as a result the next meeting of EUROPA FORUM is organised in cooperation with partners from that institution. A valuable initiative of EUROPA FORUM is the possibility of organising meetings directly in our members' firms. This is an excellent opportunity to know one another better and see how the given enterprise operates, what the production process in the given industry looks like. It is also an excellent opportunity to initiate a new business contact. We also regularly organise economic missions for entrepreneurs. So far, we have organised a mission among other things to Kaliningrad in Russia, Tbilisi in Georgia, Lviv in Ukraine, Minsk in Belarus, and Chisinau in Moldova. This year's trip of the entrepreneurs is planned for July to



Belgrade. The programme of the economic mission is very varied, it includes both business and cultural aspects. The participants have the opportunity to visit businesses and economic institutions in the given country, they learn about the local customs, culture, and cuisine, they initiate business contacts. I would also like to emphasise that EUROPA FORUM is a neutral institution, we are not connected with any political party. We focus on economic, cultural and social activity. Through our activities, we create a favourable climate for the development of business contacts. In the last two years, we welcomed 21 new member companies in EUROPA FORUM. We continue to increase the attractiveness of our activities and we enrich the offer. We have recently modified the formula of our monthly meetings, introducing a moderated discussion during which participants of the meeting share their business experience on the given subject. The participants liked this way of holding a debate and we will definitely use this solution during following meetings.

We are open to cooperation with new businesses. We would like to invite you wholeheartedly to our Office at pl. Solny 4 in Wrocław.

**Thank you very much for talking to us, Ryszard Żabiński**



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