

Polska



Business services booming

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Business services booming in Poland

Poland is the most attractive European destination for advanced business service centers. Such centers now employ 150,000 people in this country and are expected to create a further 100,000 jobs over the next five years.

Sixty new business service centers have opened here since the beginning of 2014, creating a combined 20,000-plus new jobs, according to the Association of Business Service Leaders in Poland (ABSL), which represents companies providing business services in Poland. Today Poland is home to 532 foreign-owned business service centers, up from 200 in 2007 and just several dozen in 2002, the association said in a report released during its annual convention in the southern city of Cracow in June. According to Marek Grodziński, vice-president of the Association of Business Service Leaders and head of the Capgemini European network of business process outsourcing centers, further forecasts are more than optimistic. "By 2020, the sector may have up to 250,000 employees," said Grodziński. "These are quality jobs that offer opportunities for career development and promotion in the international structures of large companies. They are also the driving force behind the Polish economy as a whole."

Investors who have opened business service centers in Poland during the last 18 months include General Motors, FedEx, Mars, Owens-Illinois, Toyota and UPS. Jacek Levernes, president of the Association of Business Service Leaders and a member of the HP Europe Executive Management Board, says this year the business services sector has again accounted for the largest portion of foreign direct investment midwived by the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency (PAIilZ). "A total of 356 investors in this sector from around the world are operating in Poland at the moment," says Levernes.

"Poland is turning into a recognizable, international brand thanks to this sector."

Over the past several years, Poland has become a key investment destination for the largest global players. Most investors in this sector are drawn to Cracow, where foreign-owned business service centers have a total of 35,700 employees. Warsaw is second with 27,000 employees and Wrocław is third with 23,700. The Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia Tricity area is next with 13,700, followed by Łódź with 13,100, the Katowice metropolitan area with 11,200, and Poznań with 9,000. Like last year, Tholons, which offers businesses advice on global outsourcing and investments, has named Cracow the ninth best outsourcing destination in the world and the best in Europe. This, according to Levernes, shows that a country's investment appeal is to a large extent determined by its level of economic and political stability. "In the face of the latest developments in Ukraine, Poland is regarded as a safe and attractive investment destination in the region, allowing the country to attract increasingly advanced projects," says Levernes.

Of the 150,000 workers employed by Poland's business services sector, IT specialists constitute the largest group and account for a third of the total. Finance and accounting are responsible for 22 percent of jobs and 13 percent of employees work in the financial sector, including banking, insurance and investment services. Nine out of 10 centers provide services to customers from Western Europe and 45 percent to clients from North America. This international profile gives such specialists access to know-how and best business practices developed by global corporations.

Salaries no longer solely depend on language skills, and the focus is gradually shifting toward technical skills and professional experience. Scandinavian languages are now the biggest asset, according to Agnieszka Dzierań, business development manager at recruitment company Antal International. "Competence in Russian, Spanish and other Romance languages is valuable as well," says Dzierań. "German and French are still the most sought-after languages. Other than that, employers are increasingly interested in expertise possessed by candidates for jobs."

Poland's high position on the European market for business service centers is confirmed by Poland as the Destination for Business Services Centers, a new publication by consulting firm KPMG. According to KPMG, Poland is offering the most attractive business service center destinations in Europe. The main draws for investors include qualified and motivated staff, the country's improving infrastructure, and its economic and political stability. With its 1.6 million university students, Poland ranks fourth in this respect in Europe, after Germany, Britain and France. Last year, 450,000 students graduated from university-level schools in Poland. At the same time, Poland ranked 10th in the Global Index of Cognitive Skills and Educational Attainment 2014 and

sixth in the English Proficiency Index 2014, a global league table that rates fluency in English among the public. Employees at foreign-owned business service centers in Poland speak a total of 40 languages. According to KPMG, labor costs for investors are much higher in Poland than in India, Bulgaria and Romania, which is why many foreign investors come to Poland to build advanced business service centers. This trend is evidenced by over a dozen international clusters of research and development centers across Poland that employ technical specialists. Poland is also home to a growing number of new global business centers that handle advanced business processes such as tax management for multinational corporations and supervise business services provided to organizations by internal shared services centers and business process outsourcing companies. Jerzy Kalinowski, a partner at KPMG responsible for the company's strategy and operations in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe, says Poland benefits from advanced business service centers because they create well-paid jobs for qualified staff.

Source: The Warsaw Voice



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