



Finnish entrepreneurs in Poland 12-16.05.2006

Friday 12.05.2006 – first touch to the Polish culture

We five North Karelian travelers saw each other at the airport of Joensuu on 7 a.m. The start for the visit to other FEM – Female Entrepreneurs on the Baltic Sea region - partner country began with laugh and in good mood. At the airport of Helsinki-Vantaa we had a little time to change money from EUR to PLN and just before going to the plain we also met the rest of our traveler group also the three entrepreneurs from Päijät-Häme region. So did start the networking trip.

Because of the delay of the flight to Warsaw we got to the capital of Poland 40 minutes late of schedule. Catching the taxi for eight persons and getting in time to the railway station was quite hectic experience but we managed to catch the right train to Lebork. After a half an hour wondering we settled down and started to enjoy the beautiful views from the windows. All in all the first experience with Polish train trip was quite pleasant and informing; the differences between modern Finish trains and old Polish ones are visible but not so shocking one could think. And actually when comparing the train food, the Polish one wins.

In Lebork we were according to the timetable and the minibus reserved beforehand was already waiting for us with its helpful and friendly driver. During the about half an hour ride to Łeba along the road which has in both sites of it very beautiful trees of 'buk' and 'topola', we heard some facts about the small town with 4 000 inhabitants: The town is an old fishing town and nowadays most of the inhabitants get their living from tourism; actually during the summer season the amount of people in the small city rises from 4 000 up to 200 000. There are also still two fishing factories in the town. Because of the history the women of the town have always had very significant role in the routines of families. We were told that most of the enterprises in the town are either owned or managed by women and e.g. the mayor of the town is woman. This comes from the fact that in the past the men were on the sea and women took care of all in home and in the town. Though the other highest decision makers in the town are men.

In Łeba our hostess Hanna, owner of Hanna's guest house, with her husband (the great cook) and daughter (pretty waitress) and also Krystyna, the leader of FEM in Łeba, were already waiting for us. The long but interesting day ended to very fulfilling and tasty Polish supper and getting know Hanna and Krystyna and their jobs.

Contact: Hanna Guest House, przymorze@poczta.onet.pl, www.maxmedia.pl/hanna
Przymorze minibus services, przymorze@poczta.onet.pl, www.przymorze.pti.pl,
www.maxmedia.pl/przymorze

Saturday 13.05.2006 – Visits to the hotels etc. in Łeba

The day started with breakfast together in Hanna guest house. At 9 o'clock Joanna, the FEM Poland country lead, came with the Magic train and driver to take us all to visits to local tourism and accommodation enterprises.

The first visiting place, Mazowsze Hotel, was more like Finnish rehabilitation center than a hotel. It is owned by a husband and wife and most of the workers (70 %) are women. The offered services are related to treatment connected movement of legs and arms and spine after operation: Muscle stimulation, laser therapy, hydro massage, ultra sound treatment, freeze treatment, light treatment, original massage and magnet therapy.



You can imagine how surprised and pleased we were when in the end of the visit the owner gave us their program for year 2006 in Finnish. How many Finnish hotel or rehabilitation center can or would like to do the same in Polish?

Contact: resepcja@zwmazowsze.pl, www.zwmazowsze.pl

The second place, Wodnik Hotel, was very luxurious with its decoration of wood, stone and sand. There are 2000 beds in the hotel and about 40 employees. In hotel there is also a spa and beauty center with services like hair cutting, different kind of massages, solarium, aroma therapy and sea breeze machine, sauna and Spanish quality make-up and cosmetic services and products. To this wholeness belongs also a restaurant for 270 people. Most of the customers of the restaurants are German groups, especially after the season. During the season about 50 % of customers are foreigners. In this restaurant famous for its best fish kitchen in the town, there is almost every weekend some kind of happening from weddings to family celebrations. One special customer group is 'Green school' children also children from polluted regions of Poland. In Green school the children have normal lessons e.g. about healthy environment and food and beside the normal school work they also have some extra experiences e.g. eating in luxurious restaurants like in Wodnik Hotel. Green school lasts from 10 days up to 2 weeks and at the moment they are very popular in the area.

Contact: wodnik@wodnik.leba.pl, www.wodnik.leba.pl

The third visiting place, Lech Hotel was quite big and cozy with 35 rooms and 14 small cottages. In the hotel there was also a night club with two billiard tables and leather couches and conference room-gallery with fire place and different kind of paintings, wooden sculptures and clay works. There is also a beauty center with gym, solarium, water massage and sauna in the hotel and swimming pool, volley ball and basket ball fields in the hotel area. In this family business they have paid attention also to the small things e.g. setting the towels to the beds. The teenage daughter of the family is also a head of the teenage organization of Łeba.

Contact: biuro@lech.org.pl

The fourth hotel, Angela, is typical family business, started in 1990. It has as an only hotel in town the official categorized pension of three stars. Hotel is mainly for quest groups and in the hotel restaurant there is organized different kind of family celebrations. There are 24 non-smoking rooms and 3 apartments in the hotel, solarium, billiard table and beautiful garden with different kind of plants and fountain. The impression was clean and quite stylish but the rooms were quite full of furniture.

Contact: angela@leba.pl

The fifth visiting place Neptun Hotel was most luxurious and designed and furnished with really good taste and thought. Neptun Hotel situates near the sea. The white sand beach and sea view from the balconies of the hotel rooms impressed us all as well as the stylish, Germanic decoration of the old castle hotel. The manager of the hotel, stylish lady in her 60's, introduced with pleasure and warm kindness the examples of differently designed, furnished and painted rooms. Every little detail seemed to be thought and carried out with good quality both in surroundings and in service. Originally the castle was built in 1903 and it has been renewed a couple of times. The hotel with beds for 70 persons has also a swimming pool and restaurant with fire place. There is about 40 employees and during the season extra help when needed. 70 % of the customers come from abroad e.g. from German, USA and Austria. And the price of the double room with sea view isn't so expensive when comparing to Finnish prices – about 100 €/night/two persons.

Contact: rezerwacja@neptunhotel.pl, hotel@neptun.2com.pl

The second last place, Guest House Bosman is also a family business – the wife takes care most of the guest house business with the help of three children (and fourth coming) who also helps the husband with his bus company. The guest house has 22 rooms for together 60 people. Every room is decorated differently with sea theme and the House has also solarium, gym and sauna, small restaurant for normal home meals and in the garden barbecue and also a playing area for children. The conference room is being built. Bosman is open the whole year but the most hectic time is naturally during the summer season. This Guest House has quite a lot of customers of Green school children groups but also German and Italian tourists.

Contact: mariafrankowska@wp.pl,

Before late lunch the last visiting place was Camping Rafael, owned by the mayor of Łeba. Mayor and her husband have started the enterprise on 1991, the husband has built up all the 10 two-floor semi-detached houses. In the area there are also 150 caravan places, café-restaurant, reception building and shower-kitchen building. There are about 30 employees in this classified four stars' camping enterprise. From May to June the customers are 100 % from abroad, in summer season mainly Polish and again in autumn foreigners.

Contact: rafalklinski@wp.pl, www.campingrafael.pl

All the visiting places were very interesting and different from each other. Every one of them has their own target groups and every one represented different level of quality of accommodation services in Łeba so they aren't competitors for each other which is the main thing when taking into consideration the small size and the numerous amount of the accommodation and restaurant services of the town. In Finnish companies there seems to be still something to learn among friendly service and hospitality when comparing them to these Polish ones.

Before lunch we had some time to think all the information and experiences we got during the visits. We had to admit that after all the delicacies we got in every visiting place the lunch of three dishes felt too much, especially because the dinner offered by the Mayor was ahead in the evening.

After lunch the magic train took us to the local Tourist Information center LOT (contact: lottleba@neostrada.pl) and to FEM center of Łeba (contact: Fem_leba@o2.pl). The paintings of local women painting groups were showed to us and we met about twenty women entrepreneurs and actives of the town from the different lines of business. The local women had arranged also some program for us and some of them had brought their products with them to show and sell them to us. The exchange of enterprise knowledge and culture was active and talkative.

The evening got beautiful and convenient ending in the family restaurant-bar „POD STRZECHĄ” where the Mayor offered traditional Polish dinner. When we got back to the Hanna guest house were we more than pleased and happy for the contents of the day.

Sunday 14.05.2006 – Moving sands' beach and traveling to Szczecin

Right after the breakfast we traveled with the Magic train to the shore and traveled with the so called small pirate boat to the area of Słowiński National Park to the east of the center of Łeba. We had a nice walk to the Moving sands' beach – the unique and famous sight made by nature. The pictures tell it best.



After getting know the marvelous tourism sight of Łeba and having lunch in nature we traveled back to the Hanna guest house to get our luggage and started the about four hours minibus traveling to the next visiting place, the city of Szczecin.

Monday 15.05.2006 – Visit to textile warehouse shop and meeting entrepreneurs

The morning started with meeting our Polish FEM partner Anna Difort-Dura who helped to organize our visit to Poland. Our first visiting place was big textile warehouse shop Wisan II Ltd owned by an over middle aged man who clearly enjoyed his business and profession. The entrepreneur imports the textile e.g. from Asia and the range of table cloth, furnishings, cloth and other textiles was huge, beautiful, high quality and quite advantageous when comparing to the Finnish prices. The entrepreneur was interested to export the textiles to Finland also based on the orders via Internet. This textile warehouse and shop enterprise has no competitors in city of Szczecin – so the situation is that kind of many entrepreneurs only can dream of.

Contact information: Eugeniusz Ciołek, wisan@wisan.szczecin.pl, www.wisan.szczecin.pl

Our other visiting place was the Szczecin Institute of Economic Analyses Diagnoses and Forecasts (*contact:* Przemysław Wojnarowski, vice president, p.wojnarowski@iadipg.pl) where we were introduced to the work of Northern Chamber of Commerce and entrepreneurs from the city and the areas near of it.

The Northern Chamber of Commerce is the biggest regional chamber in Poland with over 680 members from Western Pomeranian Region, Warsaw and even from Germany. The Chamber publishes Enterprise catalogue in three languages; the catalogue of year 2005 consists information of about 500 companies and on year 2006 the number will reach 700. The services the Chamber offers e.g. to Finnish enterprises coming to Polish markets are translating services, contacts to their member enterprises and co-operation partners, marketing help, meeting arrangements with Polish partners and information services related to Polish business culture, EU funding and cost of running a business activity in Poland – the services depends on if you are a member or not. The member fee is 50 zł/month also about 14 €/month for 10 employees.

Contact: Marcin Rabczyński, specialist for Polish-German contacts/Northern Chamber of Commerce, mr@izba.info, www.izba.info

The entrepreneurs we met were from the line of children's and bigger sized women clothing, tourism, technical solution for business protection, furnishings, marketing and small handicraft:

Lucky

- children's clothes and underwear
- woman entrepreneur from the coast area, 15 women employee
- in Poland there isn't so much markets for children products according age-distribution
- co-operate with Danish company Heidi
- Internet shop

Baltour

- 18 years old tourism office mainly for incoming tourism
- from boarder of Germany, working in whole Poland
- have already some contacts to Scandinavian, 600 000 Scandinavian tourists per year
- *Contact:* Edward Krygier, managing director, reisebuero@baltour.internetdsl.pl, www.baltour.internetdsl.pl



Nord-Pol

- Tourist office for incoming and outgoing tourism
- Danmark and German markets, mostly individuals, 90 % of customers German
- 12 apartments for individuals, health care treatments
- *Contact:* Jolanta Krygier, entrepreneur, biuro@nordpol.pl, www.nordpol.pl

Perfex

- Clothes for bigger sized women, size 48-64
- Enterprise since 1981, concentrated in 1990
- Woman entrepreneur (husband died five years ago)
- "Best quality in this business"
- Doesn't export yet, works in whole Poland
- Needs some more help for entrepreneurship
- *Contact:* Alexandra Niezychowska-Stankiewicz, entrepreneur, biuro@perfex.pl, www.perfex.pl

Design 'Binnen'

- New furnishings enterprise
- Young woman entrepreneur
- Would like to import e.g. products for home decoration from Finland
- *Contact:* www.binnen.pl, info@binnen.pl

Komandos

- Security and security uniforms and other textile for sport etc., mainly textile for men
- www.komandos-sz.pl, ade@komandos-sz.pl
- The marketing director Adrianna Gogiel invited to visit to their company
- *Contact:* Ms Adrianna Gogiel, marketing director, ada@komandos-sz.pl, www.komandos-sz.pl

Association of 'European ladies up 40's'

- The woman knows Swedish but not English
- *Contact:* tunbietka@wp.pl

FEM center in Debno, Joanna Stasiek

- In Debno 20 000 inhabitants, agro tourism area with forests and lakes
- *Contact:* asiq.stasiek@wp.pl, www.feminfo.net

FEM Marianowo Center

- In Marianowo (about 60 km from Szczecin) 3 200 inhabitants, 2 agro tourism enterprises, with lake and forests, monastery of women
- Rural area women are in the activity of FEM center – small handicrafts with problem of selling their products
- Organizes e.g. markets and other selling happenings
- *Contact:* ug@marianowo.pl, www.feminfo.net

After networking we had a lunch in local restaurant and from there we hurried to the railway station and to the train to Warszawa. The 6 hours train traveling gave us good time to go through the happenings and meetings during the past three days so when we got the capital of Poland, we were again ready to learn more about the large and interesting country and about its history that our taxi driver knew perfectly.



Tuesday 16.05.2006 – Back to Finland

The last traveling day Tuesday was full of waiting to get back to home but also some sense of sadness because of the feeling that we had saw only part of the wonders and unique things of the Poland. In the plane to Helsinki we recalled with warm our hostesses and all the entrepreneurs and other people we met during our short but versatile visit. Every one of us had the feeling that 'I want to go to Poland again' and 'I can't wait to tell about the trip to others'.

With all the new information, experience and contacts we gained we felt and still feel like winners – winners of prejudice, language problems and cultural differences. Traveling really widen your world!

OBSERVATIONS

by Satu Montanari, Hilikka Perttola and Katariina Eskelinen

Poland seems to be very rich country in plantation and also the buildings looked quite new and in good renewed condition despite the history of the country. Also the central situation of Poland is very good opportunity to this country with many kind of experience and know-how.

The fast economic growth and strong tradition of Hansa trade were clearly seen: The supply of products and services is huge as well as the amount of small shops and commercial centers. E.g. in one shoe shop there was bigger and better quality of selection than in whole Finland. Many big international enterprises have already found their way to Poland, e.g. Jysk, MacDonald and Nordea. It seems that it has been quite easy to Poland to join to the group of developers even though the country has many respected old traditions. So when does the Finland and Finnish entrepreneurs wake up and use the huge possibilities Poland is offering?

In Łeba the houses are restored and new ones built, and the beautiful and flower rich gardens are taken care of with patience and skills. The furnishings and equipment of e.g. beauty saloons is even more modern than in Finland. One special thing Satu paid attention to was the fitting of the trousers; she noticed that every Polish women and men has trousers that fitted her/him perfectly. She wonders if the export of Finnish formulating could be a strategic competitive weapon... In all the handicraft skills and supply were various from amber jewels to "cross sting" work and from sculpture to paintings.

Our hostesses were devoted to us and they had organized a lot of different kind of visits and meetings. They didn't leave but took care of us all the time with happiness and enthusiasm. All the enterprises we visited were also prepared to take us in and they offered us not just information and insight to their business but also the great Polish hospitality in the form of friendliness and different kind of cakes, fruits and other delicacy. Every one of the people we met made us feel warmly welcome and we felt like being at home.