

## Polkowice aspires to become Poland's eco energy centre

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Polkowice is an unusual town where the impossible becomes possible. Is there another way to comment on the fact that this small mining commune has entered the race for the title of Poland's eco energy centre and won it?

"Polkowice as the eco energy capital of Poland? Why not, I thought when I heard that Poland's first Eco Energy Forum could be organised in the commune," says Mayor of Polkowice Wiesław Wabik. The mayor adds he immediately followed up the idea and when he heard that the commune was being taken into account as a venue for the forum he could not imagine it without Polkowice's participation. The Eco Energy Forum is a three-day event whose originator is Prof. Jerzy Buzek, president of the European Parliament. The forum is organised by the Polkowice commune and the Zielony Feniks foundation. Prof. Buzek is head of the programme council of the foundation and he assumed patronage over the forum. He has stressed on many occasions that Polkowice has proved to be the best partner for this undertaking.

"Why Polkowice? The local government here is really good. Without a good local government there would have been no success. Eco energy – energy generation based on renewable sources – has the best chance for development in smaller communes. This is why our meeting is held in Polkowice," Prof. Buzek said at a press conference during the Eco Energy Forum.

The forum was held in Polkowice on September 25-27. To sum it up, the organisers say it was a marathon of very interesting events – the rooms where conferences were held were filled to capacity, visitors flocked to see the Eco Source Eco Energy Fair while artistic events provided much joy to the residents of the town.

The unusual exhibition stand of the Polkowice commune attracted much interest from the visitors. It featured a bus shelter with a renewable energy lighting system and a solar lighting system for gardens. The message was clear – the town wants to use the opportunities created by eco energy. And the authorities delivered on their promise to use renewable energy in municipal infrastructure. The commune is now finalising formalities necessary to start the first such project

in the town – the construction of two bus shelters with solar lighting. “We have also completed a series of meetings with companies which carry out large eco energy projects. On our next infrastructure projects, we want to use the opportunities provided by eco energy in the area of heat generation for instance. We also hope for support from EU funds,” Wiesław Wabik says, adding that such programmes are not easy to implement. But this is another challenge for the commune.

“We, the residents of Polkowice, are the last to avoid a challenge. We have both feet on the ground and are reliable partners. This is definitely what stood behind the choice of Polkowice as the place which is becoming a symbol of dialogue on eco energy issues,” Wiesław Wabik says. “We would not have been entrusted with organising the forum if we had not been especially sensitive to environmental problems. We worked for years to become a leader in promoting a new quality of life in harmony with nature. Today I can see that this pays off.”

The Polkowice authorities are already thinking about another edition of the forum, which in the future may become a nationwide or even international event. The more so as the development of eco energy in Poland is only a question of time. “The state has to realise the need to launch a system of support for renewable energy generation because it is more expensive compared with traditional energy sources or nuclear power,” Prof. Buzek says. “One has to try and look for this support independently. From the European Union this support is ensured. One needs to write projects and fight for subsidies.”

Polkowice is a commune with a population of 26,000 located in Lower Silesia. It is called super town in Poland. The local population grows each year. The authorities give preference to industrial development. Polkowice recently won the title of Fair Play Commune 2009 for activities designed to support local business.