

# LUBLIN'S LONG GAME

ROSE DYKINS FINDS OUT ABOUT THE INVENTIVE  
POLISH CITY'S PLANS TO BECOME A  
NEXT-GENERATION AUTOMOTIVE HUB

**I'VE NEVER MET AN** "innovation broker" before. But here at Lublin Science and Technology Park, one of them, Ilona, is about to drive me around in a scarlet two-seater Renault Twizy – while another, Arkadiusz, waits patiently for his turn beside the car's dedicated solar-powered charging point.

"We try to propagate an innovative lifestyle here," says Arkadiusz. "We want to give start-ups the chance to use this electric car, and to hopefully develop some new technologies." ►



Dr Ilona Dabrowska and Arkadiusz Malek are part of a team of innovation brokers working for Lublin's Science and Technology Park, a base for start-ups to get their ideas off the ground. "We create a flow of knowledge between business and science," Ilona says. "To help entrepreneurs co-operate with universities and scientists in the city." Ilona exudes enthusiasm and positivity, while Arkadiusz has a dry sense of humour, and a fascination for anything with four wheels.

After a spin in the electric Twizy, we tour the monolithic Science and Technology Park on foot, which has a low-lying, secretive, feel to it – like a tech billionaire's lair. Home to start-ups and small companies from across Poland and the Ukraine, its sparse, glass-paned corridors and austere concrete walls have a "work-in-progress" vibe that mirrors the start-up mentality – the "move fast and break things" mantra seems fitting with the décor's sense of impermanence. Everyone I meet there buzzes with busyness, as if each minute of their working day should be spent propelling themselves forward.

It reflects the sense of momentum you feel in Lublin as a whole. The city's innovative start-up hub works in tandem with the city's five state universities – including the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, internationally revered for its medical department – and the Euro-Park Mielec Special Economic Zone, to create and develop technologies and get them to market.

The Special Economic Zone is just a few minutes' drive from the Lublin Science and Technology park, so Arkadiusz offers me a tour. We cruise around the rapidly expanding 116 hectares of warehouses and nondescript factories, the majority of which are the birthplace of hard-working (albeit not particularly sexy) products; the unsung heroes of industry – medical cleansing equipment, printing cartridges, aluminium extraction tools, door mechanisms, and motor parts for machinery are among the 20 or so resident firms here.

One condition, is that every company in Lublin's Special Economic Zone needs to use the space for more than just manufacturing – there needs to be an element of inventiveness to their Lublin base, with some research and development of their product or process. That's what makes it a "special" economic zone.

In return, companies can access the ingenuity of Lublin's universities and its Science and Technology Park, plus enjoy a tempting tax break of 50-70 per cent (depending on their size). And, take advantage of its location on the Eastern fringe of Europe. "A lot of western companies have opened sister companies here to develop their products and sell in the Polish and Eastern European markets," Arkadiusz explains. "We are a very attractive place for investing in production, because of our well-qualified, educated workforce, and our very attractive location. We have a very good connection with the Ukraine, so it's the best place for distribution on the Eastern side. Lublin is only 150km from the border with Ukraine, and 200km from Belarus."

#### FUTURE TECH HUB

Moving forward, Lublin has its sights set on one burgeoning industry in particular. The Internet of Things (IoT), where devices are able to "talk", by being embedded with sensors that send and receive data, is becoming more mainstream than to household products



**Clockwise from bottom left:** Lublin's Old Town (pictured twice); Etam Cru's *Dream Catcher* mural at Lublin's dedicated urban art gallery, Brain Damage; bronze goat on Ulica Krakowskie Przedmiescie; the fountains of Litewski square



“LUBLIN HAS SET ITS SIGHTS ON ONE BURGEONING INDUSTRY – THE INTERNET OF THINGS”

like Amazon's Alexa (the voice-activated system that operates various household devices) and Samsung's smart-fridges (that order groceries when you're running low). Research advisory company Gartner estimates that by 2020, the global IoT market will be worth US\$263 billion.

Lublin has been integrating IoT into public infrastructure, including its bike rental scheme and its traffic lights – the latter have cameras and sensors that monitor the movement of traffic to help manage congestion and improve safety. In particular, Lublin is turning its IoT know-how to the automotive industry – the city is one of six designated European hubs for IoT automotive innovation (see below).

In terms of lifestyle, Lublin is pleasant and historically-rich, with an atmosphere comparable to Krakow (only without the crowds and the stag dos.) A finalist for European Capital of Culture 2016, Lublin narrowly lost out to Wroclaw. "We lost, but Lublin decided not to give up, and continued improving its culture," says Ilona. "We've made some social upgrades to make our public spaces more

## MADE IN LUBLIN

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE BRIGHT IDEAS TO COME OUT OF LUBLIN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARK

#### HD AIR STUDIO

If you've ever flown a drone, you'll know how wind can wreak havoc with filming. Enter HD Air Studio, who've built an array of gimbals for stabilising cameras installed in drones.

[hdairstudio.com](http://hdairstudio.com)



#### PREDICTAIL

This clever start-up created software that analyses data from industrial robots and machinery that are part of continuous production cycles – such as forklifts and wind turbines – monitoring changes in their behaviour that may indicate a future fault. This reduces downtime for repair, and the costs incurred.

[predictail.com](http://predictail.com)



#### INFINUM 3D

Despite the hype, the 3D printing revolution is yet to take off. However, Infinum 3D has come up with a credible industrial 3D printer that makes car parts, such as fan belts and bonnets. It's also IoT-compatible.





“IN TEN YEARS, WE’LL USE THE INTERNET OF THINGS IN THE SAME WAY THAT WE USE USE PHONES FOR SIX HOURS EACH DAY. IT’S THE FUTURE”

friendly and useful for people. So, just because we were losing out, doesn’t mean we lost!”

There’s a firm feeling of renewal in the city – a good example being the Perla Brewery complex. A hard-hat, torch-lit underground tour of this former monastery is a memorable experience. The vaults of the monastery’s crypt were transformed into an operating brewery from 1846-2001, even continuing throughout the Second World War.

Reopened as a subterranean museum in 2014, these caverns now contain abstract, luminous art installations, and exhibits that really bring the old brewery’s stories to life. Back above ground, the sprawling former factory has been cleverly re-purposed. It now has a sleek restaurant, a cobbled courtyard where locals come for a drink, attractive apartments for tourists, residences for former and current

factory employees (Perla’s new factory opened in 2004, four kilometres south of Lublin’s centre, but its headquarters remain here) and various spaces for events, including an open-air cinema, and summer and winter pop-up socials around its neighbouring lake – a big hit with Lublin’s students. The Old Perla Brewery complex feels bang on-trend. It’s a successful interpretation of what visitors really want to experience in a new city: somewhere that integrates them into city life, showing a destination’s past and present in an inventive way.

Lublin’s pretty walled Old Town (Stare Miasto) is also a lure, while its cobbled main promenade, Ulica Krakowskie Przedmiescie, is lined with gelato spots, hip coffee carts and well-kept Neoclassical buildings. A trail of mini knee-high dancing fountains leads you on to an army of considerably bigger ones one Litewski square. Completed earlier this year, Lublin’s “multimedia” fountains have become a big draw in evenings and at weekends. The frothing pillars of white water move in a precise yet unpredictable sequence, illuminated by changing coloured lights as they stretch towards the sky.

Lublin is on the move. Just as it has kept up the momentum with its cultural upgrades in recent years, it’s continuing to cultivate ingenuity at a rapid rate. It may have a low profile compared to Poland’s other cities, but the investment potential of this European tech hub is unlikely to remain a well-kept secret for long. ■

## WHERE TO STAY IN LUBLIN



### HOTEL WIENIAWSKI

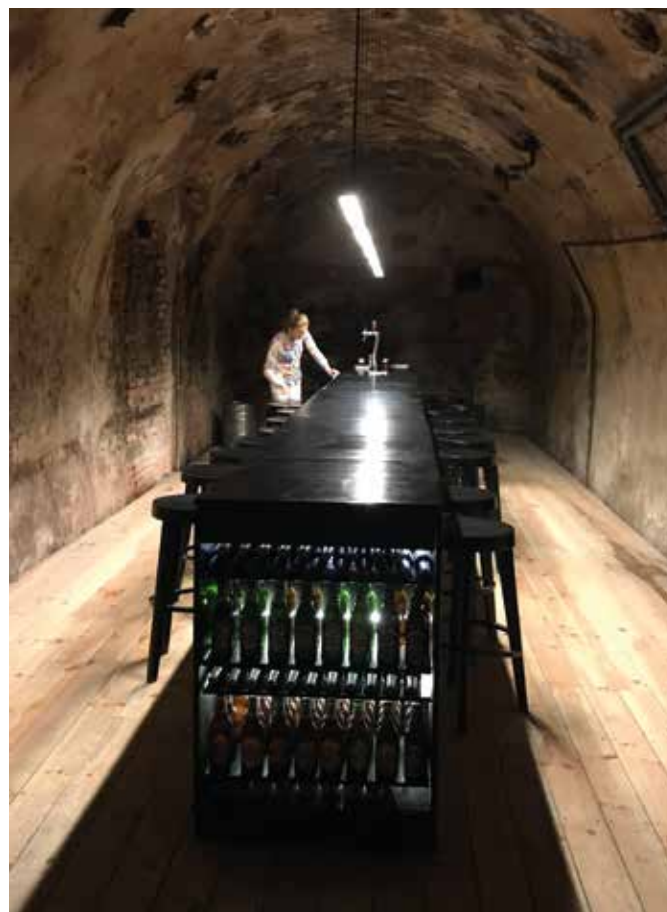
Set just off Krakowskie Przedmiescie, this new hotel is a short walk from Old Town. The 49 rooms have warm, modern décor, a good workspace and fast, free wifi. Staff are friendly and helpful, providing a takeaway breakfast to catch early morning flights.

[hotelwieniawski.pl](http://hotelwieniawski.pl)

### PERLA APARTMENTS

Light, streamlined and contemporary, Perla Brewery’s seven apartments feature vintage posters, Scandi-style furnishings and kitchenettes with espresso makers. Lublin’s Old Town is a five-minute stroll away.

[perla.pl](http://perla.pl)



Above: Perla Brewery Top right: Lublin Science and Technology Park



## MAKING MOTORS TALK

MICHAL PUKACZ OF THE POLISH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER OF THE INTERNET OF THINGS TELLS *ELEVATE* ABOUT PLANS TO REVOLUTIONISE THE WAY WE USE OUR CARS

### WHY FOCUS ON THE INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT)?

It’s the future. In ten years, we’ll use IoT in the same way that we use phones for six hours each day. It’s going to be everywhere.

### AND WHY POLAND?

Now is a good time to have a start-up in Poland. We have money from the government to fund all sort of programmes, along with funding from venture capitalists and seed funds. Right now, everybody wants to create a start-up; it’s the new buzz-word in Poland. But, there is more money than ideas.

### AND HOW IS LUBLIN GETTING IN ON THIS?

Here in Lublin, we’re going to be part of a Connected Car Hub – one of five automotive IoT hubs in Europe – where everybody can meet, present their ideas and get them on the market. [The others are in the Czech Republic, Denmark, France and Spain.]

### HOW ARE YOU FUNDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF IOT IN LUBLIN?

We’ve been given €5 million, 75 per cent of which will go towards start-ups and SMEs. And this autumn, we launched a programme focusing on IoT in the automotive industry, an open call for ideas for new products.

### WERE YOU SEEKING IDEAS FROM INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES, OR JUST POLISH ONES?

Although our role was to focus on Poland, international applicants are able to apply. The pre-acceleration run will take place here, at the Lublin Science and Technology Park, and the best ideas from Poland will go over to Madrid for the final acceleration programme.

### WHAT CAN START-UPS AND SMES GAIN BY APPLYING?

The winners will get to present their ideas to leading auto companies – Volkswagen, Mercedes, Citroen. And, most likely bring them to market.

We then offer equity-free money, in the form of a grant from the European Union, as well as the use of the Lublin Science and Technology Park’s network; we can help them find more money on the market and put them in touch with seed funds.

So, it could be a year or two before some of these IoT automotive concepts appear on the market.

Visit [iofthings.pl](http://iofthings.pl);  
[impactconnectedcar.fundingbox.com](http://impactconnectedcar.fundingbox.com)