

# Just Transition

## Żyrardów – regeneration and a city reinvented



Photo: archive of Żyrardów Town Hall

### A brief case presentation of Żyrardów

For more than 150 years, Żyrardów was best known as the ‘Polish capital of linseed’ – a European powerhouse of the textile industry and a town in which the rhythm and life was intertwined with that of the linseed textile mills. The history of Żyrardów is inherently correlated with the establishment of Łódź, the development of the textile industry in the areas of the Kingdom of Poland in the 19th century, and the subsequent history of towns founded and developed thanks to a manufacturing monoculture, which was known as a ‘light industry’, predominantly employing women.

Throughout the history of Żyrardów, the town has distinguished itself thanks to the urban and architectural solutions adopted by its founders when establishing the settlement. Żyrardów was built based on the ‘garden city’ concept, a model ideal city. The characteristic red brick buildings of Żyrardów were built in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. These included multi-family houses for

workers, foremen and factory managers. In addition to the above, numerous social and cultural facilities were built during this period to serve the needs of the town's inhabitants, including a day care centre for children, a hospital, a pharmacy and an infirmary, a home for older people, a bathhouse and a laundry service, a residence for factory officials, four schools, a gymnasium, a library, a folk house, a representative villa for factory owners, and a weaving school. This period also saw the construction of several churches, including two Catholic and one Protestant. All of these structures were set within an area of urban greenery, including a stunning park. By the end of the 19th century, Żyrardów was not only the largest producer of linseed (flax) in Europe and Russia, but also a modern town, unique on a global level. This historic site, encompassing the central part of the town and with an area of around 70 hectares, is Europe's only fully preserved urban and architectural complex in an industrial town at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Ultimately, the industrial monoculture negatively impacted the local labour market and consequently resulted in the collapse of the town's economic development. Żyrardów entered the current century with a negative image as a poverty-stricken factory town with rampant social and economic problems. The scale of the problems – technical, financial and social – were so immense that much focus was placed on the popular option to adapt Żyrardów's plentiful post-industrial urban resources. Initial discussions were held in 2000, when Żyrardów became a member of the Forum for Revitalisation Association. Additionally, as the first town in Mazovia and one of the first in Poland to do so, Żyrardów adopted a Local Revitalisation Programme (LRP) in 2004.

The programme became a driving force for development, and over time it was updated and adapted to reflect the changing legal and economic realities. The preservation, revitalisation and promotion of the local industrial heritage have been harnessed for the socio-economic development of the city. The entire plan constitutes a historic milestone of change and has elevated the city following a period of crisis and structural degradation.



*Photo: archive of Żyrardów Town Hall*

## 1. The here and now – the baseline situation of the Żyrardów case

Żyrardów, a town of 40,000 inhabitants that is located 45 kilometres from Warsaw and 90 kilometres from Łódź, is the seat of Żyrardów County. Its total area is 1,433 hectares. Important transport routes running through Żyrardów and the vicinity of the town include:

- TIR transit route – state road No 50, from western to eastern Poland
- provincial road No 719 Warsaw-Skierniewice
- Warsaw-Katowice expressway – 9 kilometres away
- railway line from northern to southern Poland
- A2 motorway junction – 7 kilometres from the city
- Warsaw Chopin Airport – approx. a 30-minute drive away
- Warsaw Modlin Airport – approx. a one-hour drive away.

A significant part of Bolimów Landscape Park, a valuable touristic area of great natural beauty, is located within the boundaries of Żyrardów County.

Textiles remained the foundation of Żyrardów's development until the end of the 20th century; over the years the town's growth depended heavily on the economic standing of the linen textile mills. The communist era was characterised by a post-war boom and relative prosperity. The Żyrardowskie Zakłady Przemysłu Lniarskiego linen mill employed more than 50 per cent of the local workforce and retained its standing as an international industrial centre with high-quality products, which were exported to countries such as France, Greece, Venezuela and England. However, the decline of the textile industry towards the turn of the century triggered an economic crisis and contributed to Żyrardów's overall degradation. Due to the economic difficulties that hit the town following reforms in 1989, Żyrardów's factories were unable to generate the necessary growth, which resulted in individual branches declaring bankruptcy. In 1992, the decision was made to liquidate the linen mills. The local tradition of linen and textile production was continued by the company Żyrardów. Fabryka Lnu (Żyrardów Linen Factory), which was established in 1999 and survived until 2012. The operation of the Żyrardowskie Zakłady Przemysłu Lniarskiego ended in a protracted bankruptcy process, which, above all, adversely affected the local labour market.

The ensuing unemployment resulted in an onslaught of difficulties: a significant weakening of social ties and a decline in the local inhabitants' activity and in their identification with the city, as well as an exodus of primarily young and educated residents to the capital. This resulted in a prolonged stagnation, which on the one hand reduced the city's economic potential, but on the other made it possible to preserve the original buildings of the Factory Settlement (in Polish, Osada Fabryczna) in their entirety, along with its unique technical relics. Nearly all of the buildings have retained their original functions.

## 2. Where do the actions lead, and to what end?

In March 2004 the Local Revitalisation Plan, the mission of which was the comprehensive spatial, economic and social renewal of the city area designated for revitalisation, was prepared and adopted. This included both the city centre with its historical Factory Settlement buildings and the post-industrial area, as well as some of the most degraded residential districts. Whilst defining the areas and the scope of revitalisation, the following factors were taken into account:

- high levels of poverty and exclusion
- unfavourable demographic trends
- high levels of crime and delinquency
- the degradation level of technical infrastructure and buildings
- comparatively low housing stock value

as well as:

- high, long-term unemployment rate
- low educational levels, a clear skills deficit and high drop-out rates
- low business activity rate
- low levels of energy efficiency in buildings.

With the adoption of the LRP, the city was able to attract external funding and, as early as 2004, submitted projects to the Integrated Regional Development Planning (IRDP) for eight planned pilot projects, which were carried out between 2005 and 2008. European Union structural funds were obtained for the reconstruction and renovation of two vital streets, three primary schools and the three-stage restoration of Dittrich Park. The total value of the projects implemented as part of this phase was PLN 13.5 million, 75 per cent of which came from the European Union and 10 per cent from the state budget. These projects were impactful in terms of the gradual improvement of the negative image of the city (shaped over the years in the local and national media). Thus, an opportunity arose to develop tourism, including cultural tourism, and to showcase the town's hitherto forgotten post-industrial heritage.

In the subsequent years, the city strategically undertook further actions related to the revitalisation process, including regular updates of the initial plan adopted in 2004 – the first in 2009, the next in 2017, and the last in 2021, which was given the name Communal Revitalisation Programme of the City of Żyrardów until 2030.

Since 2004, the city authorities (regardless of the various internal democratic changes) have consistently carried out activities related to the implementation of plans for the redevelopment of the post-industrial urban fabric. In 2016, the Ministry of Development announced the competition Model Urban Revitalisation, co-financed by the Cohesion

Fund under the Operational Programme on Technical Assistance 2014-2020. Żyrardów entered this competition and became one of the 20 cities selected to implement model revitalisation solutions in Poland. The city received 90 per cent funding, worth PLN 1.6 million, for the submitted project entitled Revitalization of the City of Żyrardów as a driving force of socio-economic changes. This was an interdisciplinary project, including the preparation of analyses, activation programmes for residents, NGOs and other entities, training and workshops for various social groups, the development of construction projects, the implementation of a model project, and promotional activities. Thus, thanks to the project's high level of importance, many ready-made materials that were foundations for the implementation of planned tasks in subsequent years were created. Special attention should be paid to the Education and Participation Programme, which was divided into two main parts. The first was dedicated to participatory and activation initiatives to be introduced in connection with preparing the city for the municipal revitalisation programme and spatial development project formulation, including the preparation of social organisations for the implementation of revitalisation projects. The second part was prepared in order to introduce cyclical lessons regarding revitalisation processes in primary schools located in Żyrardów. Another specific element of this project was the development of a Local Revitalisation Fund. The result of this was a handbook entitled *A Practical Guide for Stakeholders in the Revitalisation Process of the City of Żyrardów. Planning, Financing and Implementation of Projects*. This handbook was compiled as a compendium of knowledge on the possibilities for financing revitalisation processes in Żyrardów. It contains step-by-step instructions on how to obtain financing, as well as examples of funded activities. The handbook is primarily intended for property owners, including housing communities.



*Photo: archive of Żyrardów Town Hall*

### **3. Who is implementing it and with what funds? What is the adopted action strategy for Żyrardów?**

In order to effectively achieve all intended objectives, the Revitalisation and Development Department was established within Żyrardów City Hall; it was charged with coordinating the revitalisation programme, and it also provides progress updates on the city's development. The mayor coordinates the revitalisation process, while cooperating with various institutions and entities at the stages of development, implementation and monitoring of the Revitalisation Programme of the City of Żyrardów. The city, in accordance with the adopted revitalisation plans, also evaluates and finances the planned tasks as detailed in the source documents (Revitalisation Plan) with the use of available resources, which can include:

- the budget of the City of Żyrardów (as the main, most important source)
- European Union Structural Funds (programme periods)
- budgets of housing cooperatives
- budgets of property owners
- the budgets of the National and Provincial Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
- operational programmes of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage
- loans and credits
- municipal and corporate bonds
- shares and capital infusions
- derivatives (hedging instruments).

A key challenge is to proficiently combine planned projects from so many diverse sources.

### **4. How has this been implemented? Key projects, decisions and events**

The most important externally funded projects are listed below.

- The project Renovation of the Monument Buildings of the Merchant Club and the Bowling Alley in Żyrardów and Their Adaptation for Cultural and Artistic Purposes, carried out from 2009 to 2011 with support from European funds, which resulted in the renovation, modernisation and adaptation of the two historical buildings, along with their immediate surroundings; the renovation of the Merchant Club (Resursa) and the Bowling Alley has contributed to the restoration of their original cultural and artistic functions and to the creation of a unique regional cultural centre.
- The EU project INDUSTRIAL MAZOVIA, Żyrardów Technological Wonders – an Exhibition of Textile Machinery, implemented in 2014, which included the purchase of original textile mill machinery – equipment of the former linen mills in Żyrardów: Zakłady Lniarskie – and the curation of an exhibition.

- The project Restoration and Adaptation of Historic Factory Halls for the Needs of the Museum of Linen in Żyrardów, which was completed in 2015.
- The Integrated Revitalisation Project of the Factory Settlement Centre in Żyrardów, dedicated to social and economic activation through the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazovian Voivodeship 2014-2020. The total value of the project was north of PLN 6.6 million, of which more than PLN 4.9 million (75 per cent) was obtained from EU funding. The City of Żyrardów received an additional PLN 1 million (15 per cent) of support from the state budget, thus allowing the town to reduce its own contribution. The project's main objective was the socio-economic revitalisation of a marginalised area of the City of Żyrardów by introducing new socio-economic functions, and it oversaw the following activities: Nowy Świat (New World) – a social and economic regeneration of the area of the former linen mill, including the construction of a street with accompanying infrastructure; a modification of the communal urban space by the creation of a green area with social and recreational functions; and a renovation of the historical mill library and its adaption for the needs of the disabled, as well as the development of the quarter for cultural and educational purposes.
- The Revitalisation of the Historic Żyrardów Nursery, co-financed by the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazovian Voivodeship 2014-2020. The total value of the project was PLN 4.2 million, with European Funds co-financing PLN 2.7 million and the City of Żyrardów contributing PLN 1.5 million. The Municipal Kindergarten No. 9 edifice, surrounded by greenery, was built in 1875 as a nursery for the children of linen mill workers, and the building has continued to perform its original functions for over 140 years.
- The project Revitalisation of the 19th Century Factory Settlement (pl. Osada Fabryczna) in Żyrardów as a Means of Preservation of European Cultural Heritage, co-financed by the central government's Local Investment Fund; the total cost of the project is PLN 11 million, including a grant of PLN 5.5 million.
- The Restoration of the 19th Century Building of the Former Factory School in Żyrardów – financed by the Government Fund 'Polish Deal': Strategic Investment Programme with the total cost of the project at over PLN 5 million.

Other important projects include:

- Improvement of the Quality of Life of Inhabitants Through the Development of Green Areas in the City of Żyrardów (stages I and II) The Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment for the period 2014-2020 (OP I&E) – for the implementation of these projects, the city received funding in the amount of over PLN 13 million (in the years 2017-2021) and over PLN 8 million (in the years 2019-2022);
- Houses Drenched in History – a Renovation Programme Aimed at the Improvement of the Technical Condition of Residential Buildings in the Revitalisation Area in Żyrardów (the Regional Operational Programme for the Mazowieckie Voivodeship for 2014-2020, total cost PLN 13.3 million); and

- Service Centre for Inhabitants and Modern Public Library – Adaptation of the Historic Kantor Building (the Regional Operational Programme for the Mazowieckie Voivodeship for 2014-2020 , revitalisation loan JESSICA2, funding of PLN 20 million).

The above examples of projects underline the overall impact of the 2004 decision to focus on rebuilding and renovating the urban fabric by revitalising Żyrardów's largest resource, the Factory Settlement (pl. Osada Fabryczna). This in turn made it possible to create a tourist destination, to use and adapt post-industrial resources for new functions, to form an attractive location for investors, and to create new jobs. A Revitalisation Committee was established to watch over the implementation of the objectives, i.e. a forum for cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders and the town's authorities, which has an advisory and consultative function for the mayor of the City of Żyrardów.

Another extremely important step is the preparation of the document 'Historic Monument Management Plan: Żyrardów 19th Century Factory Settlement', which is a strategic document for the town's management and indicates the ultimate goal of the revitalisation efforts: 'the former Factory Settlement in Żyrardów is to be a comfortable, potentially high-end residential area, where public spaces, greenery, services and cultural offerings create comfortable living conditions, and the historic backdrop provides for a unique atmosphere and identity'. The 'Historic Monument Management Plan', as a strategic document, indicates and prioritises objectives and actions related to the protection of important values (historical, artistic and scientific). In addition, it lays out the necessary actions that need to be undertaken in order to place the Factory Settlement Complex in Żyrardów on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a historic industrial landscape asset, illustrating important phenomena in world history in the field of industrialisation and the formation of 19th-century industrial society, with particular emphasis on the fact that the stratification and hierarchy of the society of that time period were clearly reflected in the urban structure and buildings of the Settlement.



Photo: archive of Żyrardów Town Hall

## 5. Is this the end? What next?

The city officials decided to concurrently undertake a number of activities to support and promote cultural and industrial heritage and, in addition to the aforementioned participation in the Forum for Revitalisation Association, began to take part in the European Heritage Days, in which they have actively participated for a number of years. Subsequently, the town decided to join the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH).

Żyrardów's presence on the ERIH and participation in the organisation of the European Industrial Heritage Weekend provides the city with new opportunities for promotion on a Europe-wide scale and to cooperate with other towns of a kindred nature and with similar tourism potential. At the same time, a number of other promotional activities have been undertaken that have changed the city's image and present it not only as a tourist destination, but also as a good place to live, with vast development potential. As a result of these activities, Żyrardów, or rather the Factory Settlement in Żyrardów, was awarded the prestigious title, Best Tourist Product of 2010. Additionally, in 2011, the Historical Complex of the Factory Settlement in Żyrardów won the title of Best European Tourist Destination, and information about the town's most important assets was widely presented in the publication Best European Tourist Destination in Poland EDEN 2009-2013.

Another vital step for the development and promotion of the City of Żyrardów was to undertake steps to obtain the status of a historical monument. As a result of these efforts, on 2 February 2012 the President of the Republic of Poland awarded Żyrardów this title. 'Żyrardów – 19th-century Factory Settlement was recognised as a historical monument due to its artistic and cultural values and the authenticity of the historical urban and architectural layout of the factory settlement, which is a testimony to the magnificence of the linen industry in the lands of the Kingdom of Poland, innovative urban planning thought, and one of the largest 19th-century spinning centres in Europe'. Preparations and efforts are currently underway to place the historic Factory Settlement on the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Photo: Fotoforce via Adobe Stock

## 6. What does this mean for the Bełchatów region transition process?

The industrial areas operating in connection with the Bełchatów Power Plant and lignite mine, still in use, cover a total area of almost 10,000 hectares. However, the largest infrastructure concentrations are located in Rogowiec and Wola Grzymalina, both areas in dire need of long-term development plans. The implementation scale of the revitalisation plan in Żyrardów indicates why such processes should be planned in advance. A proper, effectively implemented plan guarantees the interest of investors, who provide an additional developmental impetus.

As a result of the revitalisation project implementation in Żyrardów, investor interest in post-industrial buildings has increased (e.g. Green Development purchased the largest building of a former linseed factory line, Nowa Przędzalnia Lnu, which was adapted into lofts and a shopping mall. The resulting Lofts de Girard, known also as Penthouse de Girard, created a unique proposition on the local market. In the project's first stage, 178 lofts were created, while in the second, 16 exclusive two-storey penthouses are now being built).

There has also been an increase in tourist interest in the 19th century Factory Settlement. What is more, the inhabitants' perception of their city is changing. The quest for preserving, revitalising and promoting the local industrial heritage has become a driver of the city's socio-economic as well as cultural development. According to the Polish Supreme Audit Office report following an audit of the Revitalisation of Degraded Town Areas, the revitalised area of Żyrardów has noted an increase in business activity from 55 in 2003, to 65 in the period 2004-2008, to 90 in the period 2009-2015.

Managing the revitalisation process in degraded urban areas requires comprehensive and coordinated action. An example of a highly interesting project that fits in with Żyrardów's development strategies, including heritage protection, is the three-stage project Reduction of Air Pollution Emissions in Municipalities of the South-Western Part of the Warsaw Functional Area Through the Construction of an Integrated Bicycle Route System, financed from the funds of the the Regional Operational Programme for the Mazowieckie Voivodeship for 2014-2020. The project is being implemented as part of a partnership agreement between the Municipality of Michałowice and the Municipalities of Brwinów, Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Nadarzyn, Pruszków and Żyrardów. The initiative calls for the construction and reconstruction of existing transport cycle routes along with the accompanying infrastructure in six communes, covering 36 kilometres of routes. The project will extend the existing route network by 80 per cent. The plan foresees a functional connection with at least 30 public utility facilities.

**Prepared by:** Dr Maciej Kozakiewicz and Jolanta Pacura for the project Bełchatów 5.0. Activating Social Potential for Regional Transition.

**English translation:** Przemek Stępień

## Sources:

1. Bogusław Szmygin, Anna Fortuna-Marek, Andrzej Siwek: Plan Zarządzania Pomnikiem Historii Żyrardów Dziewiętnastowieczna Osada Fabryczna Opracowanie [en. Historical Monument Management Plan: Żyrardów 19th-Century Factory Settlement], prepared by: KN ICOMOS Lublin – Krakow – Rzeszow 2017
2. Report on the State of the City of Żyrardów for 2021, City of Żyrardów
3. Magdalena Siwirska, Włączenie Terenów Poprzemysłowych w Strukturę Funkcjonalno-Przestrzenną Miasta– na Przykładzie Żyrardowa [en. Incorporating Industrial Areas into the Functional and Spatial Structure of a City – the Case Study of Żyrardów], "Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście" 1(29), 2016 ISSN 2543-9421
4. Rewitalizacja Zdegradowanych Obszarów Miast [en. Revitalisation of Degraded Urban Areas]: Supreme Audit Office, Department of Infrastructure KIN.410.006.00.2015 Record No. 153/2016/P/15/037/KIN
5. Strategy for Sustainable Development of Żyrardów until 2025 – Annex No. 1 to Resolution No. XIX/136/16 of the Żyrardów Town Council, dated 28 January 2016
6. Revitalisation Programme of the City of Żyrardów until 2020 (updated February 2017) Resolution No. XXXIX/262/17 of the Żyrardów Town Council of 8 February 2017
7. Communal Revitalisation Programme of the City of Żyrardów until 2030, Annex to Resolution No. XXXIV/289/21 of the Żyrardów Town Council of 28 January 2021
8. Monika Paluch, Dziedzictwo przemysłowe Żyrardowa jako część potencjału turystyki kulturowej Mazowsza Zachodniego [en. The Industrial Heritage of Żyrardów as Part of the Cultural Tourism Potential of Western Mazovia], Turystyka Kulturowa, [www.turystykakulturowa.org](http://www.turystykakulturowa.org) No. 6/2014 (June 2014)
9. Assumptions of the Revitalisation Programme of Żyrardów, City of Żyrardów
10. Local Development Plan of the City of Żyrardów, Annex No. 1 to Resolution No. XXII/191/04 of the Żyrardów City Council of 24 June 2004
11. <https://www.Żyrardów.pl/>
12. <http://rewitalizacja.Żyrardów.pl/>
13. <https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/strony/o-funduszach/rewitalizacja/modelowa-rewitalizacja/Żyrardów/>

## Funded by



'The RegENERate project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union.'

