



PRESS RELEASE

Solaris – 20 years

Bolechowo, 22.03.2016

It has been precisely twenty years today since the first low-floor city bus of Solaris left the factory in Bolechowo near Poznań. Back then the company was made up by barely 36 people; now the headcount has risen to 2500. 56 vehicles rolled out of the factory in the first year of operation; today their number has reached 14,000. Within two decades Solaris has turned into a large, mature enterprise that has contributed a lot to the history of the Polish automotive industry. Colourful, modern buses, trolleybuses and trams drive around the streets of hundreds of cities worldwide.

1996-2001

A dream of a factory come true

On 22nd of March 1996 the first city bus left the Bolechowo factory gate was. Only recently established by Krzysztof and Solange Olszewski, Neoplan Polska won an order for the supply of 72 buses for the city of Poznań. Engineer Krzysztof Olszewski had been running the Sales Bureau of Neoplan since 1994. He was the one to introduce low-floor buses to the Polish market which, in the 1990s, was thirsting for modernity and which developed at an astonishing pace. Within the next five years since the production of the first Neoplan, everything happened very fast. First orders started trickling in from all around Poland, which led to an employment hike by nearly 15 times. The company took over the domestic bus market at lightning speed. Nearly 700 vehicles had left the Bolechowo plant by 2001. The ever-expanding range of products on offer was one of the fundamental competitive advantages of the firm, although Solaris won by far also in terms of technical possibilities and its excellent business sense. Towards the end of the 20th century the Olszewskis built their own, ultramodern bus. They devised a completely novel bodyframe made of stainless steel that would perfectly face up to the challenging road and climatic conditions in Poland. As the firm celebrated the premiere of the Solaris Urbino in 1999, it also entered a path of accelerated development. Designed and manufactured in Bolechowo, the new bus turned out to be a great success and quickly became a top seller in Poland. One year from that premiere, Solaris buses rolled onto the streets of Europe, first in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and soon later they had their debut in Germany. Foreign customers approached the Polish novelty cautiously, though with growing interest.

2001-2006

Private brand gains strength

The company entered the new millennium under a new brand: Solaris Bus & Coach. Ever since, the firm has been owned solely by the Olszewski family, and the factory in Bolechowo has produced only Solaris vehicles. The following years brought about numerous contracts, including some large ones of strategic significance for the company's development. While until 2001 the firm had sold merely 7 buses to customers abroad, by the end of 2005 over one thousand Solaris buses were running in seventeen European countries. 260 buses were ordered by the public transport operator of Berlin in 2003 and it is this very tender that is considered one of the most important in Solaris' history. The contract paved the way of the bus manufacturer to Europe. The reliable and modern Urbino buses have been conquering streets, city by city and town by town, in the West ever since. The western market no longer doubted it was worth investing in Polish technology. The buses from

Poznań have performed well also on the highly exacting Swiss market which, due to its extreme requirements is considered a litmus paper test in terms of quality. Solange and Krzysztof Olszewski have been consistently increasing the low-floor bus family of Urbino, complementing the portfolio with buses of various lengths, but also with even more innovative items. It was in that period that Solaris made its first step on the path towards electric mobility, presenting the low-floor and emission-free trolleybus Trollino; the firm also launched production of a new, green propulsion type, fuelled with CNG. Thanks to the incredible flexibility regarding customer wishes and thanks to its broad range of products, the Polish producer managed to become one of the chief players on the European bus market within barely a decade since the launch of production.

2006-2011

Time of innovation – accelerated development

Buses started rolling off the assembly line in Bolechowo one after the other, going in various directions in Europe. While production was speeding up, engineers in Bolechowo started taking their first steps on the visionary path marked out by Krzysztof Olszewski. In 2006 Solaris showed its first hybrid bus Solaris Urbino Hybrid to the world, accurately sensing the demands of contemporary cities. During the debut of the vehicle Krzysztof Olszewski called out *Diesel has died. Long live electricity!* Environmental-friendly public transport has become the apple of the eye of Solaris and it is the development of this very area that the producer has been dedicating more and more attention to. Three years later Solaris caused a lot of commotion while presenting its first tram, the Tramino. However, in order to set out new trends in public transport, one has to look into the future – in 2011 the first Polish, completely electric bus left the plant in Bolechowo, turning into a challenge issued by Solaris to competitors. At that point the company was already considered one of the pioneering and most creative brands in its market sector. European journalists wrote that nobody else in Europe could equal Solaris in terms of innovation and pace of product development. By 2011 the Urbino and its characteristic asymmetrical front windscreen had made it onto 21 markets, finding its way also to distant regions, such as Dubai or the La Reunion island near Madagascar. During the time of the biggest financial crisis at the beginning of the 21 century Solaris delivered over 1000 vehicles in one year. Meanwhile, the Olszewski family was dubbed “Kings of Buses” by the Polish press.

2011-2016

Towards sustainable growth

While Solaris engineers kept racking their brains for new and even more innovative solutions, the producer was breaking new delivery records. Equipped with various loading systems and battery types, the innovative, noiseless Urbino electric was winning popularity in more and more European cities. The Olszewskis have been always sure that environmental-friendly drives are the future of city transport, and that life quality in cities depends on the implementation of the idea of sustainable growth. Apart from developing battery vehicles, Solaris was also working intensely on the generational change of the Urbino. In 2014, exactly one decade after the premiere of the Urbino predecessor, the company revealed a completely new construction – a bus that has garnered rave reviews in the industry. The futuristic look of the new Urbino is just as eye-catching as the technology. In twenty years Solaris has grown into a mature and socially responsible enterprise. The firm also runs its own foundation – the Green Dachshund Foundation – and it has opened a nursery for the children of its employees; it also supports vocational education by sponsoring vocational training programmes. In cooperation with the university Solaris educates experts within the dual studies framework. The firm also organises trainings for drivers of its buses, to facilitate the most effective use of all possibilities offered by the vehicles and care for the safety of passengers and our environment. Within two decades Solaris has become a symbol of Polish success. The factories located near Poznań have manufactured over 14,000 buses and trams which are running in nearly 600 cities. Turning yet another page of its history, Solaris constantly looks ahead into the future.

Additional information

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About our company

Solaris Bus & Coach sp. z o.o. is a leading producer of city and intercity buses in Europe. It focuses on the development of low-emission and zero-emission vehicles, i. e. electric and hydrogen buses as well as trolleybuses. Over 25,000 Solaris vehicles have been delivered so far and they ply the streets in 850 towns and cities across 33 countries located

throughout Europe as well as beyond it. Solaris is part of the Spanish CAF Group (Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles) S.A. From conception, to the design and manufacturing phases, all Solaris buses are produced in Poland. All activities undertaken by the company are in line with its mission, which is reflected in the brand's promise: to change the image of public transport. Solaris also actively partners with public transport operators and provides them with comprehensive support in their transition to zero-emission mobility. Solaris products have been repeatedly awarded for quality and innovation. The Urbino 18 hydrogen bus has won the prestigious 'Bus of the Year 2025' title.