

POL-Agent Co.Ltd. in the gleam of diamonds

Another year POL-Agent Co.Ltd. having its Head Office in Szczecin and Branch Office in Gdynia, Gdańsk and Świnoujście has become “Forbes Diamonds” laureate in the outcome of the best Polish companies ranking as published by Polish edition of “Forbes” magazine. It was in 2010 that POL-Agent first got the said distinction, the second having been awarded this year. The “Diamonds” awards gala for the distribution has been held in Business & Pleasure Park Hotel in Szczecin.

The first awards were awarded in recognition of 2006-2008 financial results, second for the years 2007-2009 so that in either case they refer to the results earned within the years when the companies functioned under the stress of 2008-2009 world financial crisis that failed to leave Poland untouched. As underlines **Jerzy Barski**, POL-Agent’s Management Board Chairman, it was within that time that the Company did undertake measures aimed at representing its customers’ interest in the best possible way, oriented not only at taking care the customers’ time and comfort but also of the safety of their operations.

Jerzy Barski continues: At that time TSL market in Poland had greatly diverged from EU standards. We were joining the Union with the regulations that were poorly adapted to the European standards of cargo service, especially in what concerned customs and tax regulations. Even now, despite great improvements having been made, one has to surmount many bureaucratic barriers within the network of Ministry of Finance subordinate agencies. According to our calculations Polish Company has to wait from 85 to 115 days for VAT refund on its imports. 0% VAT rate on imports via Polish ports does still pose problems. The rate is valid for 20 days only for containers and 60 days for break bulk cargo where the storage of cargo is involved. Where the cargo is stored for longer periods the importers are facing problems. That is why both part of Polish importers and the businesses from within EU are still reluctant to praise the new customs and tax regulations as have been implemented in respect of cargo handling in Poland. They both fear the risk the interpretation of the relevant regulations may be amended to their disadvantage.

In June 2009, after having made various preparations and perfected its internal structure, POL-Agent did obtain the AEO (Authorized Economic Operator) status enabling the Company to offer its customers simplified customs clearance procedures as applicable to any cargo it may be entrusted with. Since January 2011, the Company has also been making use of the Tax representative powers as vested in it by virtue of the respective decision by the Minister of Finance. The latter powers entitle the Company’s customers to settle the VAT levied on imported cargo by means of the tax return as lodged for the same reporting period as that in which the relevant tax liability has arisen. Both abovementioned facilities as resulting in simplified procedures while dealings with tax and customs authorities, have not only contributed to make the Company’s offer competitive in relation to those presented by reputable European logistics operators but also helped to stabilize the Company’s present customer base and to attract new trading partners. This, in turn, has resulted in sharp growth in Company sales, whether in global terms or as per employee, and in improved financial ratios.

The rules applicable to both the valuation of the companies and assessing the respective changes in their values have been worked out by the analysts from Dun@Bradstreet Poland credit agency in collaboration with “Forbes” editorial staff. The financial data have been derived both from the official corporate information presented by the companies (as per relevant requirements of Polish law) and from the information gathered by the said credit information agency. The above information has been compiled to form the data base encompassing the companies having got good credit rating i.e. that are financially viable (as measured by EBIT and ROA ratios), have good liquidity ratios and have no arrears. The companies having met all the above requirements

have also had to show the positive values of both financial results and equity for the last 4 years. In addition the sources of income of the would-be laureates have been verified as to eliminate the cases where the sharp jump in value resulted from extraordinary events such as merger of companies following the respective shareholders' decision. Within the above ranking POL –Agent Co.Ltd., listed in the category of companies having yearly sales ranging from 50 to 250 mil zloties, has placed itself both among the most dynamic companies in West Pomeranian region and among the best companies in Poland.

POL-Agent has been on the market since 1990 . Since 2006 the Company has been member of C.Steinweg Group of Rotterdam , one of leading logistics operators worldwide, having 52 offices in 26 countries on all continents. The Group business does include but is not limited to chartering of ships, complex forwarding services, transshipments as well as processing , conditioning, packaging and warehousing cargo of any nature. Within the scope of its diversified business POL-Agent does offer, among others, the following services :

- Shipping agency services in Polish ports;
- Booking both conventional and containerized cargo to/from any port of the world;
- Carriage of cargo onboard both RO-RO ships and Ferries to Scandinavian ports;
- Both domestic and international forwarding services in respect of export,import or transit cargo;
- Handling Overweight & Oversize cargo;
- Customs agency services;
- Warehousing and distribution of cargo.

In order to be able to effectively carry out the above services POL-Agent does maintain close cooperation with nearly all terminals located in Polish ports: in both Szczecin/Świnoujście area and that of Gdynia/Gdańsk. The Company does also dispose of the warehousing network covering a.o. both central and southern part of Poland. The Company's plans do provide for extension of its storing and logistics network over the Western part of the country.

Other item within the Company's business objects is arranging the ferry traffic i.e. booking the space onboard ferries for the customers' lorries and/or road trailers with the respective freight dues(ferry ticket payment) being credited by the Company. The Company's offer in this field of activity does cover most ferry routes in the Baltic area mainly those to Scandinavian ports. This year the Company does plan to handle abt. 30 thousand lorries.

POL-Agent Co.Ltd. act also as agents for Euroafrica Shipping Lines Cyprus Ltd. , the latter offering two container vessel sailings from Gdynia to Hull within the joint shipping service with McAndrews Company Limited. Our Company is also representing the Euroafrica interests on the shipping route linking Europe to West Africa ports. Since 2009 the Company has also been sub-agents to Polish United Baltic Corporation in respect of CMA/CGM container vessels calling Szczecin. To complete the description of the “ agency “ leg within the Company's business, one has to add that apart from being engaged in liner agency , the Company is also acting as tramp agents in favor of vessels calling Polish ports. It has been servicing abt. 200 tramp vessels every year.

Jerzy Barski has also drawn attention to the fact that POL-Agent is being perceived as “ neutral” trading partner in the sense that it offers cooperation with and contracts to many forwarding and logistics companies that otherwise are close competitors in their daily business.