



## OUTCAN Guide | Life in Elblag, Poland

### LOCATION

**Country:** Poland

**Town:** Elblag

**Base:** Multinational Division-North East (MNC-NE) (NATO)

**Other info to Consider:**

- Security within the MNC-NE facility is very high. Members must undergo ID checks by an MP at the gate and once inside should display their pass at all times.
- Foreigners must register their stay in Poland within 48-hours of arrival if the stay is to exceed 14-days
- Family (non-dependants) can visit and stay 90 days **without visa** (Schengen Area).
- Elbląg is located in the Warmia and Masuria province. It is one of the largest cities in northern Poland. It is also an important centre of heavy industry (General Electric, FLSmidth MAAG Gear – Poland), food industry (Elbląg Brewery – part of the Żywiec Group), furniture industry (Meble Wójcik), tourism (Elbląg Canal with its famous canal locks).

### POPULATION

**Size:** 127,558

**Ethnicity:** over 97% Polish

### LANGUAGE(S)

**Official language:** Polish

**Prevalence of French or English speaking:** Very limited. Some establishments will have an English-speaking employee; however, English is not spoken freely and commonly. Limited to no French. The younger Polish generation will speak more English, and the older generation will mostly speak Polish, maybe German or Russian.

### COST OF LIVING

**Exchange rate to consider:** Polish Zloty (PLN). 1 CDN=2.96 PLN (February of 2024)

### QUALITY OF LIFE

**Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:**

- The climate is moderately continental, characterized by cold winters, with temperatures often below freezing, and mild or pleasantly warm summers.
- The warm season lasts for 3.7 months, from May 20 to September 9, with an average daily high temperature above 18c. The hottest month of the year at Elblag is July, with an average high of 23c and low of 13c.
- The cold season lasts for 3.7 months, from November 18 to March 10, with an average daily high temperature below 5c. The coldest month of the year at Elblag is January, with an average low of -4c and high of 1c.

**Laws and Culture:**

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences.

- It is illegal to consume alcohol in public places. If you are found intoxicated in a public area, you may be detained and could be taken to a sobering-up centre, where you may need to spend the night. You will be responsible for paying the cost of the stay.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.02 percent. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines and jail sentences.
- If local authorities consider you a citizen of Poland, they may refuse you access to Canadian consular services.
- Riding a bike under the influence of alcohol is illegal and subject to detention and fines.
- Poland is a predominantly Catholic country, with around 90% of Polish people identifying as Roman Catholics. This means that Catholic values and the Catholic Church influence social, artistic, and political life. Close to 1% of the Polish population is Eastern Orthodox.
- The Polish culture values collectivism over individualism, though this is changing these days. Community is very important to Polish people, which has both its advantages and disadvantages.

#### **Safety and Security:**

- You must carry an international driving permit. It must be obtained prior to arrival in Poland.
- Foreigners may be required to pay traffic violation fines on the spot.
- Confrontations, which at times become violent, may occur between opposing fans at soccer matches. Exercise caution if attending a soccer match or if staying in the vicinity of sporting venues.
- The overall risk is low, since violent crime is not present in Elblag, while opportunistic crimes like theft, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are frequent as in any other tourist place.

#### **Level of isolation:**

- There are 2 Canadian families posted to this location.
- May feel very isolated due to the language barrier.
- This posting location is being cancelled as of the summer of 2025.

### **HOUSING**

- Approximately 700 new apartments and houses have been built in Elblag and the surrounding area. These are available for either sale or rent. The apartments are in the range of 45-86 sqm and have underground parking. They are within walking distance to the center of Elblag and to MNC-NE.
- Houses are generally of a good standard, equipped with a completed fitted kitchen, patio and/or balcony, storage room and secure parking
- Help with finding suitable accommodation is available through MNC-NE.
- It is imperative that members do not secure any type of housing without obtaining prior approval from CFSU(E) Housing Officer.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

**Are there employment opportunities for spouses?** Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment on the economy is **not** a realistic option.

- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, families should plan to be single income for the duration of the posting.
- Employment is extremely limited. Families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting. [CFMWS](#) | [MFS](#) | [OUTCAN Europe](#) | [CFMWS](#)

**Op Tempo:** The op tempo will vary greatly depending on position. TD is possible.

### **HEALTH CARE**

**Access:** Satisfactory medical care is available in Poland.

- Highly accessible via private clinic (almost no wait times), public access very similar to Canada, incl. wait times.
- English services are available, French is very limited.
- At the hospitals, English is very limited. It is recommended to bring a translator and use a mobile phone translator.
- Private medical clinics do have English speaking doctors, though it must be specified when making the appointment.
- Pharmacies, also known as Apteka's provide adequate medicines and are easy to navigate, but do not expect any English to be spoken. Be prepared to bring a translator device.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP [PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)](http://pshcp-msh.ca).

**Special needs:**

- Depending on language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.
- It may be a wait before finding an appropriate match and at times may not be possible based on availability of English/French speaking providers or resources.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and / or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

**Consideration for pregnancy / birth:** Health care for pregnancy and birth is available on the economy, private care.

**Dental:** Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses.

## **SCHOOLING**

- There are no international schools in the region.
- Dependent Education has conducted a search and has been unable to find an education facility in Elblag that meets the parameters of the Canadian Armed Forces.
- An education recce is underway to investigate the possibility of creating a list of compatible schools for Elblag using schools in Gdansk which is approximately an hour's travel one way from Elblag by train.
- Dependent Education has determined that postings for families with school age children to this location would be considered as a prohibited posting by CEM. This would include any children who would be starting school throughout the duration of the posting.

**Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:**

- The Curriculum varies depending on choice of school.
- None of them offers Canadian history or geography at the elementary level.

**Resources for special need children:**

- Access to Special needs services is depending on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and school prior to any commitments.

## **CHILDCARE**

**Things to Consider:**

- Local childcare is available, no guarantee that staff will be English or French-speaking.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Things to Consider:**

- You must carry an international driving permit. It must be obtained prior to arrival in Poland.
- Airports:
- The nearest airport to Elbląg is Gdansk (GDN) Airport which is 66.1 km away. Other nearby airports include Kaliningrad (KGD) (111.2 km).

### **Public Transport:**

- Very accessible public transportation throughout the city.

## **RESOURCES AND AMENITIES**

### **Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?**

- No physical centre. Families in Poland are supported by the Remote Team:

[MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com)

### **Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:**

- Not at post, MFS(E) SW for dependants only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for member and family are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The Padre is located at SHAPE, Belgium.

**Communications (e.g. Quality of Internet connection):** Very good service & very reasonable prices.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Access to sports or other leisure activities:**

- MNC-NE personnel will have access to gym facilities (weight room, exercise equipment, pool), albeit situated a short walking distance from the HQ.
- Plenty of recreational activities and venues are available in this area for the whole family.

### **Availability of playgrounds:**

- Yes, many – though they are not at the same safety standard to Canadian playgrounds.

## **RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- **Are common law relationships recognized?** Yes, but not supported.
- **Are same sex couples recognized?** Yes, but not legally supported. Same sex relationships are legal but same sex marriage or civil unions are not recognized.
- **Medications that are illegal in the country:**
- Use without a prescription, narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal. Cannabis is illegal.
- CBD is legal in Poland if it is derived from hemp with less than 0.2% THC level. Companies growing, selling or processing hemp need appropriate permits from the authorities. Consumers need to be properly informed about the CBD content in the products, as well as about their use.
- THC products are illegal.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- **European Commission Country Reports (2023)**  
[https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports\\_en](https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en)
- **Canadian Travel Advisories**  
<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/poland>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from US)**  
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/poland/>

- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**  
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/poland>

**For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below**

- MFS(E) Social Worker: [MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com)
- CAF Social Worker: [GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca](mailto:GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca)
- MFS(E) Team: [MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com)
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, [MFS.Europe@cfmws.com](mailto:MFS.Europe@cfmws.com)