Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Guide to Cooperation Projects of Axis 4 Leader of Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013



Europejski Fundusz Rolny na rzecz Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich

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Guide to Cooperation Projects of Axis 4 Leader of Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013

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Glossary:

LAG – Local Action Group
LDS – Local Development Strategy
MARD – Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
ARMA – Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture
VA – Voivodeship Authorities
OM – Office of the Marshal or a voivodeship authority organisational unit
EC – European Commission
EU – European Union
RDP 2007-2013 – Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013
EAFRD – European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
AA – aid application
RP – request for payment

Dear Readers!

This *Guide to Cooperation Projects* you have just got hold of presents information on regulations and procedures relating to calculating budgets, cost eligibility, filing aid applications and requests for payment, and project selection criteria. It also provides practical tips on how to prepare the initial meeting of partners and a partnership agreement, and how to go about project monitoring. In addition, it includes examples of good practices from projects implemented under international or interregional projects.

Due to vast interest of beneficiaries of measure "Implementation of cooperation projects", implemented under Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013, in the previous edition of the measure, we decided to publish a new brochure that covers amendments to regulations introduced last year. It's clear arrangement will make it easier for you to get acquainted with all stages of a project – from the idea to preparations and to implementation.

We wish you a pleasant read, and we are convinced that the examples of projects we provide herein will inspire you to become actively involved in the measure and to take up other, also informal, forms of cooperation.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

1. Introduction

Cooperation is one of the seven basic principles on which the Leader method is based. Cooperation projects are a new challenge for Polish Local Action Groups because in programming period 2004-2006 Scheme II of Pilot Programme Leader+, implemented under Sectoral Operational Programme "Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food Sector and Rural Development, 2004-2006" did not provide the possibility to implement measure "Cooperation". It does not mean, however, that Polish LAGs did not cooperate with partners from Poland or abroad, but the cooperation usually took the form of study visits and was limited to exchanging experience. Such activity constitutes a good basis for starting real cooperation, which means implementing joint projects to achieve joint objectives.

Implementation of cooperation projects is a measure that is very different from other measures under RDP 2007-2013, as one project involves several partners and thus success depends on the actions they take.

Why try?

Cooperation can have significant influence on the quality of the strategy. It can result in its improvement by adding a new interterritorial or transnational dimension, it can allow looking at the area covered by the strategy from a different perspective, and to go beyond the local context in planning actions that serve achieving the strategy's objectives.

Thanks to cooperation we are able to:

1. Promote local products on a wider scale, help their manufacturers enter new markets,
2. Reduce production costs,

3. Make better use of local resources, e.g. develop agro-tourism,

4. Develop or restore local traditions in the area (e.g. disappearing occupations, handicraft).

Cooperation can also have a positive influence on consolidating (or changing) the image of the area covered by the strategy. By involving the local community in cooperation, it can enhance its identification with the area and development of local patriotism.

Cooperation is an opportunity to meet many people from different areas, thanks to which it is possible to look at certain problems from a different perspective, get acquainted with other ways of thinking about familiar matters and different reactions to analogous situations. It allows taking a fresh look at one's own area covered by the strategy and notice complementarity with the partner, i.e. to see that two seemingly different areas, which have nothing in common at a first glance, are a perfect match thanks to their diversity.

2. Cooperation projects under RDP 2007-2013

Basic information.

The **beneficiaries** of Measure 421 'Implementation of cooperation projects' are LAGs selected for the implementation of a Local Development Strategy under RDP 2007-2013.

Similar to Measure 431 'Running the Local Action Group, acquisition of skills and activation', also for Measure 421 'Implementation of cooperation projects' the **Implementing Authorities** are Voivodeship Authorities.

Project types.

Under the Measure, there are two types of projects: **interregional projects** (also known as interterritorial projects) and **international** projects (also called transnational projects).

"Interregional/interterritorial cooperation" stands for cooperation within one Member State, e.g. Poland, while "international/transnational

cooperation" stands for cooperation between territories in several Member States and in third countries.

"Territory" stands for a LAG area covered by an LDS.

Note: The term "interregional" must not be understood as referring to regions as "voivodeships" and interpreted as "inter-voivodeship". It is not necessary for cooperation projects to consist in cooperation between LAGs from different voivodeships. It is possible for LAGs from one voivodeship to jointly prepare or implement a cooperation project.

Operation types.

There are two types of operations under the measure:

- Operation that consists in preparing a cooperation project,
- Operation that consists in implementing a cooperation project.

In the framework of each operation, a separate aid application (AA) is filed and two separate aid agreements are concluded. Each operation ends with filing a separate request for a final payment.
Detailed rules of granting aid under the measure, taking into account the type of operation and resulting differences, will be described in Sub-chapters 2.1 "Preparation of cooperation projects" and 2.2 "Implementation of cooperation projects".

Fund limits under the measure.

The limit of funds under the measure for one LAG is calculated on the basis of the product of the number of inhabitants with permanent residence in the LAG area as at 31 December 2006.

The number of inhabitants is determined using statistical information published by the Bank Danych Regionalnych [Regional Data Bank] of the Central Statistical Office (GUS).[1]

[1] The information can be obtained from the following website:http://www.stat.gov.pl

There is a **limit on the aid**. It stands at **PLN 3 per one inhabitant who is a permanent resident of the LAG area as at 31 December 2006**. Under the limit, preparation of a cooperation project may not consume more than PLN 1.

Note: If a LAG uses only PLN 0.5 for cooperation project preparation, the remaining PLN 2.5 can be used for its implementation.

Note: The above amounts are given for one LAG. The actual entire budget of a cooperation project is a sum of contributions made by all project partners. A cooperation project should be perceived as a whole, in both financial terms and responsibility for the implementation of particular tasks of the project.

Example:
For the sake of simplification, the example assumes that partner LAGs make use of the entire available limit to implement their cooperation project. The partners are three LAGs whose LDS area covers:

LAG 1: 50,000 inhabitants, i.e. 50,000 x PLN 3 = PLN 150,000
LAG 2: 60,000 inhabitants, i.e. 60,000 x PLN 3 = PLN 180,000
LAG 3: 80,000 inhabitants, i.e. 80,000 x PLN 3 = PLN 240,000

In this case, the budget of the cooperation project may amount to a total of PLN 570,000.

Note: Aid limits refer solely to eligible costs of the project. Therefore, the total budget of a cooperation project whose eligible costs are PLN 570,000 may be higher as it may also include items that are not eligible costs, but are necessary for the sake of correctness and the possibility to implement the project at all.

Deadlines for submitting and examining AAs.

Aid applications must be submitted within the following deadlines:

- Until 30 June 2013 – in the case of preparing a cooperation project,
- Until 30 December 2013 – in the case of implementing a cooperation project.

The period for AA examination is:

- One month – in the case of preparing a cooperation project + 2 x 21 days for supplementing the application, if required,
- Two months – in the case of implementing a cooperation project + 2 x 21 days for supplementing the application, if required.

Aid applications for the preparation of a cooperation projects are filed to the Office of the Marshal (OM) competent for the headquarters of the LAG. Aid applications for the implementation of a cooperation projects are filed by the sole national LAG participating in project implementation that is authorised to act on behalf of the other LAGs participating in the project (coordinating LAG/national coordinating LAG), to the OM competent for the headquarters of the LAG.[2]

Note: According to the regulations in force, in case of the international cooperation project, only the national LAG being the coordinating LAG, may act on behalf of the other national LAGs participating in a project when it comes to applying for aid for an operation that consists in project implementation.

Therefore, if national LAGs participating in an international cooperation project authorised a national coordinating LAG to act on their behalf, the aid application must be accompanied by the authorisation.

In the case of operations that consist in implementing an interregional cooperation project, where all LAGs involved are national LAGs and one of them is always the coordinating LAG, such an authorisation is not necessary to be filed. In the case of an operation that consists in implementing an international cooperation project, the authorisation is required if more than one national LAG applies for aid.

[2] Applications can be filed personally, by an authorised person, or by registered mail sent from an establishment of a public post operator (Poczta Polska SA).

Note: It is very important to prepare the necessary documentation correctly and fill in the application form accurately. Filling in the application form, you must read the instructions carefully and attentively, follow all the instructions and remember to have authorised persons sign it in all necessary places. The time used for filling in the application form correctly will allow saving much time during its verification. It will translate into shorter examination time and will allow avoiding calls for removing irregularities or deficiencies that make application examination much longer.

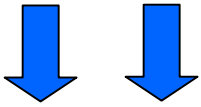
When an aid application receives a positive opinion, the Voivodeship Authorities (VA) set the deadline for concluding the aid agreement. The period will not be longer than 14 days from the date of receiving the notification.

2.1 Preparing the cooperation project

The amount of aid for a LAG for an operation that consists in preparing a cooperation project depends on the number of inhabitants who are permanent residents of the LDS area as at 31 December 2006.

Example of a LAG budget for preparing a cooperation project (depending on the number of LDS area inhabitants):

10,000 – 150,000 inhabitants / LDS



PLN 10,000 – 150,000 / LAG

Detailed rules of granting aid, including the access criteria, have been set forth by the Ordinance of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 25 June 2008 on detailed conditions and procedure of granting and paying financial aid under the Measure “Implementation of

cooperation projects" included in the Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013 (Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] of No 128, item 822, as amended).[3]

What conditions must be met to be granted aid for preparing a cooperation project?

Aid is granted for an operation that consists in preparing a cooperation project if the project meets the following criteria:

1. The project follows the LDS, but it must not necessarily be included in the Strategy;
2. The project is interterritorial or transnational (international);
3. The project assumes the participation of at least one LAG selected under the Leader axis (it is possible to cooperate with public-private partnerships other than Local Action Groups, but it is important that they must meet the criteria set forth in article 39, par. 2 of Regulation 1974/2006;
4. The cooperation project covers the implementation of a joint project;
5. The project does not assume financing using other public funds.

Criteria to be met by the operation:

6. The operation is implemented in up to two stages, i.e. up to two requests for payment (RP) will be filed;
7. The operation will be completed within 12 months from concluding the aid agreement, but not later than by 13 December 2013. Partners generally have 12 months for preparing the project, but if requests are filed in e.g. June 2013 (partners file their own requests for the part of the project they are responsible for), they only have 6 months, not 12 months, for preparing the project;
8. The request for a final payment covers at least 25% of the total planned aid amount.

[3] Ordinance of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 25 June 2008 on detailed conditions and procedure of granting and paying financial aid under the Measure "Implementation of cooperation projects" included in the Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013 (Dz. U. z 2008 r. Nr 128, poz. 822, z 2011 r. Nr 64, poz. 336 and Nr 261, poz. 1562).

Preparing a cooperation project – implementation scheme

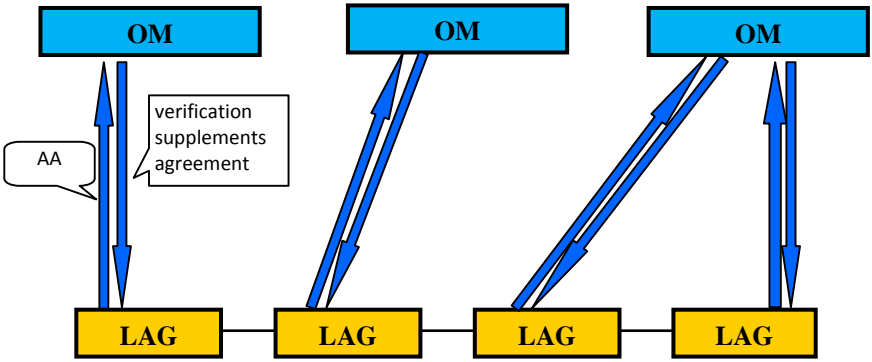


Fig. 1.

The Figure above shows the implementation scheme for an operation that consists in preparing a cooperation project. For the needs for this example, we assumed that the partners who will jointly prepare (and consequently also implement) cooperation projects are LAGs from three different voivodeships. The aid application is filed together with the necessary appendices, whose list is included in the application form. Information on which appendix is required in what situation can be found in the instructions.

Acronym

As early as at the stage of preparing the cooperation project, it is necessary to come up with an acronym of its title. An *acronym* is a word created from the first letters of each word in two or a series of words. An acronym can be created using the first letters of a phrase (letter or sound acronyms), e.g. LFA – **L**ess-**F**avoured **A**rea, NBP – **N**ational **B**ank of **P**oland, DST – **D**aylight **S**aving **T**ime, NATO – **N**orth **A**tlantic **T**reaty **O**rganisation, or LEADER – **L**iaison **E**ntre **A**ctions de **D**evelopment de L'**E**conomie **R**urale, or syllables (usually initial syllables) with which the words start (group/syllable acronym), e.g. Eurasia – **Eur**ope + **Asia**, Ponglish – **Po**lish/E**nglish** slang. An acronym can be composed of syllables from the

same word, usually the first and last ones, such as engy – **en**er**gy**. An acronym can also be created by combining two or three of the above strategies: R&D – **R**esearch **& D**evelopment, Radar – **Ra**dio **D**etection **a**nd **R**anging.

An acronym created for the needs of a specific project should be used consistently by all project partners. In the case of an international cooperation project, an acronym should be created based on the project's name in the language agreed on by partners, so that even translated into different languages the acronym does not change.



Fig. 2. Example of an acronym for a title of a project implemented by: Fundacja Kłodzka Wstęga Sudetów – LGD, Stowarzyszenie LGD "Qwsi", Stowarzyszenie LGD "Partnerstwo Ducha Gór".

Note: Creating a project title, you should bear in mind that it should form an easy to remember and distinctive acronym. Therefore, it is a good solution to first select a short word to characterise the project, and use it to create the full title, such as RAJD – **R**owerowe **A**trakcje **J**ednej **D**oliny [Bicycle Attractions of One Valley].

Future cooperation project coordinator

Similar to the acronym, LAGs being project partners should appoint the person responsible for project preparation at the stage of preparing the cooperation project. You should remember that at the stage of cooperation project implementation, the person will become the coordinator or national coordinator (depending whether the project will be interregional or international and if the coordinating LAG would be in Poland or abroad). Although the person's experience and qualifications will not be evaluated by the VA during aid application verification in the case of an operation that consists in preparing a cooperation project, appointing the person you should bear in mind that they will be evaluated

once you file an aid application for an operation – implementing of a cooperation project.

Once your aid application receives a positive opinion, the VA sign an aid agreement with the LAG that sets out, *inter alia*, LAG commitments and operation implementation conditions.

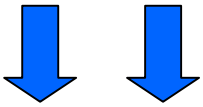
You should remember that amending the agreement requires a written form and the procedure is set out in the agreement.

2.2 Implementation of a cooperation project

Similar to preparing a cooperation project, the amount of aid for a LAG for an operation that consists in implementing a cooperation project depends on the number of inhabitants who are permanent residents of the LDS area as at 31 December 2006.

Example of a LAG budget (depending on the number of LDS area inhabitants):

10,000 – 150,000 inhabitants / LDS



PLN 30,000 – 450,000 / LAG

Note: These are the maximum aid amounts a LAG can receive for the implementation of a cooperation project if it does not use aid for preparing a cooperation project. If a part of the limit for a measure is used for project preparation (up to PLN 1 per inhabitant), the limit for project implementation is reduced by the amount used for preparation. See: explanations in the section entitled "Fund limits under the measure" in Chapter 2. "Cooperation projects under RDP 2007-2013".

What conditions must be met to be granted aid for implementing a cooperation project?

Aid is granted for an operation that consists in implementing a cooperation project if the project meets the following criteria:

1. The project is interterritorial or transnational (international);
2. The project assumes the participation of at least one LAG selected under the Leader axis (it is possible to cooperate with public-private partnerships other than Local Action Groups, but it is important that they meet the requirements laid down in Article 39 of Regulation 1974/2006);
3. The project takes into account the coordinating LAG's responsibility for its implementation;
4. The project covers the implementation of a joint project;
5. The project does not assume financing using other public funds;
6. The project complies with all LDSs implemented by national LAGs;
7. The project was assigned at least 60% of the maximum score in the framework of evaluating the project's compliance with cooperation project selection criteria;
8. A person coordinating and supervising the implementation, financing, promoting and monitoring of the cooperation project was appointed, or cooperation project coordinator, and if none of the national LAGs participating in the implementation of an international cooperation project is the coordinating LAG – also a person coordinating and supervising the implementation, financing, promoting and monitoring of the cooperation project from one of the national LAGs, or the national coordinator;
9. The project's objectives are measurable, defined in time and plausible during its implementation period;

Note:

Measureable stands for: possible to measure, express as a concrete figure (by product indicators) for the objective that assumes making tourist or leisure infrastructure available, e.g. the number of kilometres of bicycle trails built, or the number of new accommodation places for the objective that assumes making tourist facilities available, etc.

Defined in time stands for such formulation of objectives that it is possible to objectively determine the period of time in which they will be achieved, e.g. marking out and marking 15 km of a canoeing trail in 6 months,

organising two canoeing trips for students of upper secondary schools in a year, etc.

Plausible during its implementation period stands for such formulation of objectives that, taking into account the risks connected with project implementation, their achievement is plausible during the project implementation period. These should rather be short-term objectives adequate to financial and organisational possibilities of partners.

10. The project will be implemented in up to eight stages, and in up to four stages per year. It means that you can file up to four requests for payment in a year, and they do not have to be filed at regular intervals (such as once a quarter). It is possible to file three initial requests for payment at monthly intervals and the fourth request after six months from filing the third request, as the dates of filing requests for payment are closely connected with the dates of completing particular project stages. The dates of completing project stages depend, in turn, on the project's specific character;
11. The project will be implemented during a period that is not longer than 48 months, but not later than by 30 June 2015. It means that partners have generally up to 48 months for project implementation, but if they start by the end of the programming period, e.g. in December 2013, they will only have 18 months, not 48 months, to do that.

Coordinating LAG/national coordinating LAGs already mentioned above, the coordinating LAG is responsible for coordinating the cooperation project implementation. There are two kinds of coordinating LAGs depending on the type of a cooperation project. Firstly, there is the LAG that coordinates the entire international or interregional project. Secondly, if none of the Polish LAGs participating in a cooperation project coordinates the entire project because a foreign LAG does, Polish LAGs should select the national coordinating LAG. Based on the authorisation to act on behalf of other national LAGs participating in project implementation, the

coordinating LAG/national coordinating LAG files one aid application and it is the sole party applying for aid for the implementation of a cooperation project.



Photo 1. Implementation of a Polish-Swedish cooperation project "Polski i Szwedzki Szlak Lokalnego Produktu". "Podbabiogórze" LAG archive.

Implementation of a cooperation project – Implementation scheme for an interregional cooperation project

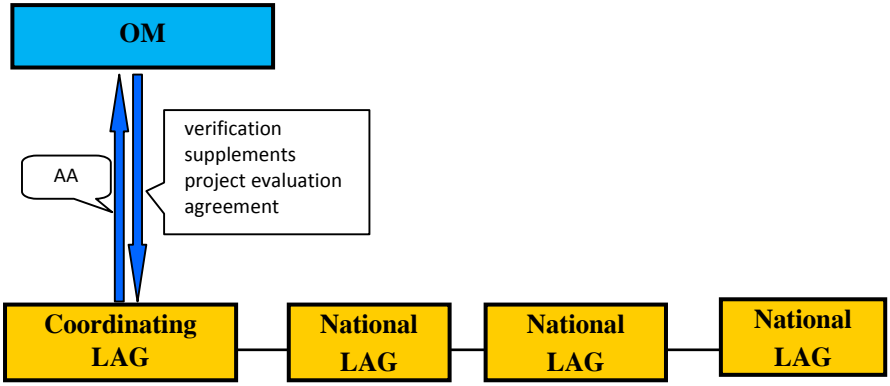


Fig. 3.

The Figure above shows the implementation scheme for an operation that consists in implementing an interregional cooperation project. The aid application is filed together with the necessary appendices, whose list is included in the application form. Information on which appendix is required in what situation can be found in the instructions.

In the case of an operation that consists in implementing a cooperation project, it is obligatory to provide, as an appendix to the AA, the agreement on joint

implementation of a cooperation project (partnership agreement) concluded with all cooperation project partners. The document will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 “Preparing the cooperation project – step by step”, Sub-chapter 3.6 “Signing a partnership agreement”.

Implementation of a cooperation project – Implementation scheme for an international cooperation project

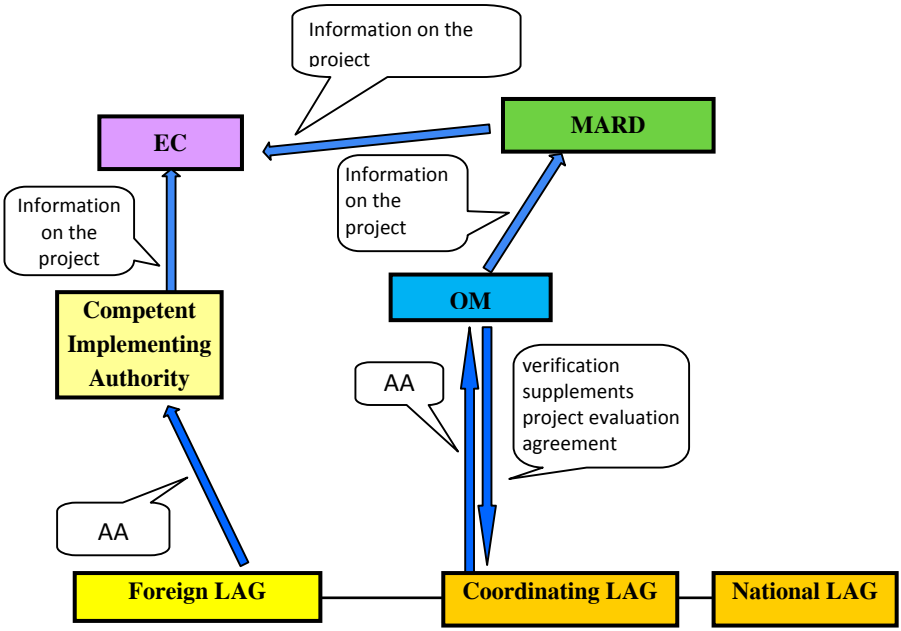


Fig. 4.

In the case of an international cooperation project, the implementation scheme is slightly more complicated than for an interregional project. Yet, it has no influence on the duration of AA examination, nor does it impose any additional obligations on the LAG. Once the application receives a positive opinion and the aid agreement is signed, the VA notify the MARD and the MARD notifies the European Commission. The foreign partner’s competent Implementing Authority performs analogous actions for the application filed by the partner. These actions have no influence on LAG’s possibility to start implementing the operation, but approval of the project

by a competent Implementing Authority (in Poland - concluding an aid agreement between the LAG and the VA) will be of key significance at the stage of the initial payment under the operation.

Note: Contrary to the regulations in force during the implementation of cooperation projects until 12 April 2011, at present aid applications are filed by coordinating LAGs/national coordinating LAGs. It means that the application is it files is filed jointly by all LAGs participating in the project. Thus, aid applications cover entire projects, not only their parts covered by particular LAGs, as was the case before. Aid is granted only by one VA, namely that competent for the headquarters of the coordinating LAG/national coordinating LAG. The aid agreement is concluded by the VA with all LAGs participating in the project.

Implementation of a cooperation project – Payment scheme for an international cooperation project

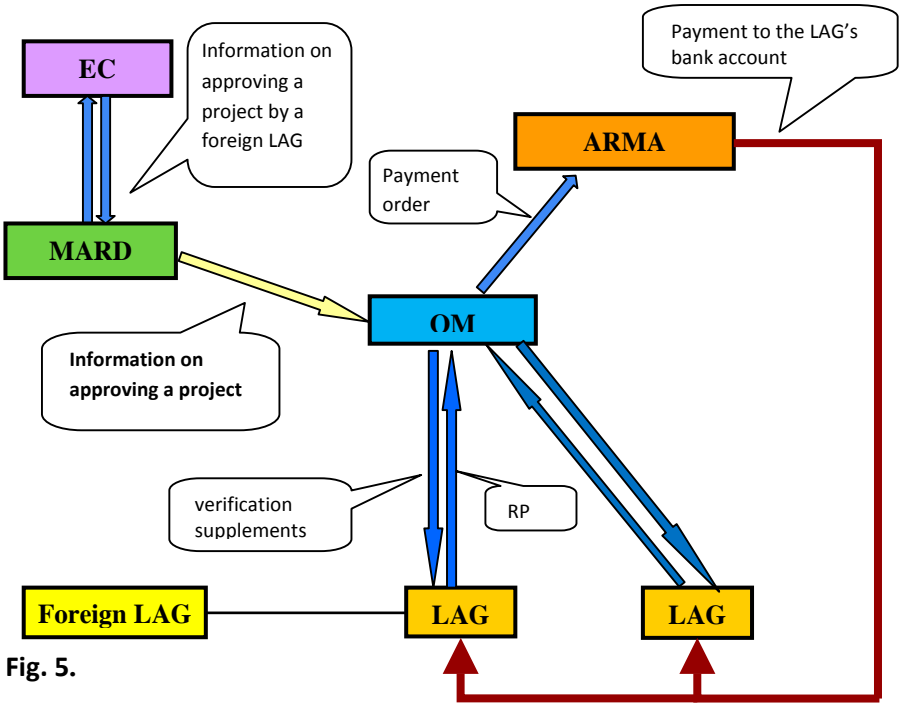


Fig. 5.

The Figure above presents the payment procedure scheme for an operation that consists in implementing an international cooperation project. Having completed the implementation of an operation stage, the LAG files a request for payment (RP) to the OM with which it concluded the aid agreement. In the case of an initial RP under an international cooperation project, the VA verify if other foreign partners of the cooperation project received project approval after it verifies the project, but before it issues a payment order to ARMA. The VA receive the information from the MARD, which in turn obtains it from the EC. The VA can issue a payment order to ARMA (based on which ARMA transfers funds to the LAG) only if the information says that all partners received project approval. If the information says that any of the partners has not received project approval yet as its verification is pending, the VA suspend issuing the payment order until they receive information on the result of such verification. The VA send relevant information to the applicant LAG. Such a suspension of payment until information is received that all partners received project approval may not last longer than 9 months. It does not mean, however, that waiting for a payment (payment suspension) will actually last nine months, as the nine-month period starts on the date of concluding the aid agreement by the LAGs awaiting payment.

Note: If a project partner fails to receive project approval within nine months from concluding the aid agreement by the LAGs applying for payment, the payment is not made and the aid agreement may be terminated. Such a situation and its circumstances are regulated by the aid agreement in detail.

Note: The request for payment along with the required appendices, including the documents to confirm the expenses incurred, must be filed in a paper form directly at the place designated by the OM, within the deadline stipulated by the aid agreement. Invoices or equivalent documents form one of the appendices to the request. Pursuant to regulations in force from 2011, duplicates of invoices or equivalent documents can be appended to a request for payment.

Criteria for the selection of cooperation projects.

Pursuant to the Annex to the Regulation there are 11 criteria used for selecting cooperation projects and based on this criteria one can get a maximum of 50 points (in the case of an international project) or 45 points (in the case of a transterritorial project).

In order for a project to be granted aid for its implementation, it needs to score at least 60% of the maximum number of points which can be awarded pursuant to the evaluation of the cooperation project's compliance with the selection criteria. The minimum number of points for an international project is 30 and the minimum number of points for a transterritorial project is 27.

Criteria for the selection of cooperation projects:

1. The implementation of a project involves more than two partners (0 or 4 points).

2. The cooperation project specifies and describes the group of entities for which the project is intended or whose participation in the implementation project was assumed (0 or 4 points).

It is possible to receive 4 points for complying with this criterion provided that the group of entities for which the project is intended or whose participation in the implementation project was assumed has been specified and described. The specification of the target group of a cooperation project should be included in the *Target group of the cooperation project* part of the application, and its description should be included in a partnership agreement or in the part of the application entitled *Description of the operation.* Points will be awarded only if both of these conditions are met (i.e. specification and description of a target group). The following groups may be target groups of a cooperation project: private sector (entrepreneurs), minorities (national, cultural), tourists, the unemployed, women, young people etc.

3. Cooperation project's objectives comply with at least one specific objective included in the LDS of at least one national LAG which participates in the implementation of a given cooperation project (0 or 3 points).

4. Cooperation project is innovative for a given area (0 or 3 points).

Innovation means:

- using ideas and solutions which have already been employed elsewhere but which have innovative character when employed in a given area;
- innovative use of local resources;
- development of new types of products or services;
- new ways of involving the local community in the development process.

Note: Partners may broaden the above definition by indicating some other innovative solutions. However, the cooperation project needs to include a description which states how partners view the notion of innovation.

Innovation in a given area may concern e.g. the method of using local natural resources[4] which define the appeal of the region, these being: diversified line of the land, numerous lakes and viewpoints. The area's offer for tourist so far has been based solely on water resources, such as lakes, around which tourist infrastructure was being built. This caused the tourist season to be restricted to summer and strictly dependant on the weather. Stiff competition from neighbouring regions and changing market needs which pose a threat to the touristic function of the region led to changing the approach to using available natural resources. The new approach puts more weight on the development of services related to tourism and leisure activities, so far offered in a very limited scope, which apart from lakes make use of other natural assets of the region. Plans include actions aimed at developing hiking, cycling, horse riding, Nordic Walking, diving and sailing. For this aim, the following natural

[4] Based on the LDS drafted by the LAG Stowarzyszenie Turystyczne Kaszuby.

resources will be used: attractive lie of the land, scenic landscape, numerous viewpoints and lakes which, however, will not serve its traditional purpose (i.e. bathing areas), but will be used to enable pursuing leisure activities, such as sailing and diving. When analysing the history of tourism development in the region, one can see that the scale of implementation of these actions has no equivalent in the past, therefore this new approach will have innovative character.

5. Cooperation project is based on local resources (0 or 3 points).

Use of local resources should be understood as engaging human resources, local traditions, history, infrastructure (including the tourist infrastructure), local products or services in the implementation of the project.

6. Tasks covered by the cooperation project go beyond the simple exchange of experiences between partners (0 or 8 points).

Points for complying with this criterion can be awarded if it can be inferred from a partnership agreement or from the information included in the *Operation description* part of the application that the cooperation project goes beyond the exchange of experiences between partners.

Note: A study visit is not a cooperation project! A cooperation project consists in joint realisation of tasks covered by the project and results in reaching a common objective, which was set by partners.

7. Implementation of a cooperation project will allow to stimulate or maintain the activity of local communities during or after the project's implementation (0 or 6 points).

Points for complying with this criterion can be awarded if it can be inferred from a partnership agreement or from the information included in the *Operation description* part of the application that the implementation of a cooperation project will allow to stimulate or maintain the activity of local communities during or after the project's implementation. Points will be awarded if the project:

- stimulates and increases integration of the local community, or

- provides a solution for identified environmental issues and needs of the environment, or
- engages at least one target group (of all the groups listed in the application), or
- engages at least one thematic objective (of all the objectives listed in the application), or
- promotes voluntary work and social work for the benefit of the local population, or
- engages persons/organisations/other entities which are not members of the LAG, e.g. inhabitants of areas covered by LDS of the project partners.

8. Managing the cooperation project - with regard to the implementation of the cooperation project, qualifications and experience of a coordinator are essential; in the case when none of the national LAGs participating in the implementation of an international project is the coordinating LAG, qualifications and experience of the national coordinator are essential.

1) in the case of transnational cooperation projects – proven knowledge of one of the working languages of the European Union (English, German or French) or of the language of a country of origin of a cooperation project partner.

List of documents certifying the knowledge of a foreign language can be found in the instruction for filling out the AA.

2) documented experience in managing projects whose scope is similar to the scope of the evaluated cooperation project:

a) more than 2 projects – 4 points,
b) 1 or 2 projects – 2 points,
c) no experience – 0 points.

The following documents can serve as a proof of one's experience in project management: employment agreement (scope of responsibilities), contract of mandate, task-specific contract, project settlement and final report on project's implementation.

9. The budget of a cooperation project involves more than two partners (0 or 2 points).

Note: Pro rata sharing of the aid between partners means that it is shared in a way which is adequate to the amount, scope and importance of objectives for the implementation of which each partner is responsible. This criterion concerns a project's budget as a whole. The issue of proportionality should not be linked with specific objectives carried out by partners. The proportionality of budget does not entail an obligation of an equal financial participation in a project.
Complying with this criterion may grant points provided that a cooperation project's budget adopts a pro rata sharing of expenditure between partners, since a situation where partners are equally involved (also financially) in a project's implementation is optimal and most wanted in terms of responsibility for a project and for its successful implementation.

10. The project’s budget complies with the planned actions (0 or 4 points).

Note: In a situation where partners of a project are national LAGs only and all of these LAGs apply for aid (are listed in the aid application), the cooperation project’s budget is comparable to tasks (their value) which make up the scope of operations covered in the application.
In a situation where except for national LAGs applying for aid (LAGs listed in the application) there are also other entities participating in a cooperation project, the cooperation project’s budget is comparable to both tasks (their value) which make up the scope of operations covered in the application as well as other costs (non-eligible costs or eligible costs which pursuant to a cooperation project’s decision are not covered in the application) resulting from tasks which were specified in a partner agreement and for the implementation of which each partner is responsible.

11. A cooperation project is a project which is:

1) Integrated, in which at least one task actively carried out by each partner of a cooperation project is different in its scope

from tasks carried out by other partners of a cooperation project (4 points).

Note: The term "**integrated project**" means a project in which at least one task actively carried out by each partner of a cooperation project is different in its scope from tasks carried out by other partners of a cooperation project. As a rule, partners in an integrated cooperation project carry out different tasks which are complementary to each other, and a proper and time-bound implementation of these tasks is a prerequisite for successful carrying out of the project and for reaching its objectives. For a project to be regarded as an integrated projected, at least one of the tasks carried out by each of the project's partners for the benefit of the whole project needs to have different scope than the scope of tasks carried out by other partners (e.g. each partner sets and marks a fragment of a horse trail; additionally, one of the partners is responsible for preparing and publishing a map and a guidebook, the second partner for organising and carrying out a horseback ride, the third one must prepare a series of meetings with young people during which they will learn how to provide first aid in the case of horse riding related accidents which can pose a threat to health and life.

2) Symmetrical, in which the same tasks or tasks with a similar scope are carried out by project partners (2 points).

Note: The term "**symmetrical project**" means a project in which the same tasks or tasks with a similar scope are carried out by cooperation project partners (e.g. organising a similar fair). However, such project must have at least one common element which links the actions of its partners and which makes it possible to talk about a cooperation project and not about a couple of separate projects carried out separately by each of the partners.

Example: Among its objectives, the interterritorial cooperation project entitled "Fresh air and clean water will give us energy" (Świeże powietrze i czysta woda – energii nam doda) includes ecological education of the population living in the area covered by the LDS. In this case, integration of a project consists in dividing the following tasks among particular partners of a project: organising an informational meeting, preparing and making copies of informational materials and materials promoting the rules for caring about the environment (use of ecological materials – e.g. recycled paper), recording a movie which presents the region's resources and ideas about how to use them for ecological purposes as

well as how to implement them and showing good practices related to environmental care in a given area. In this case, symmetry of project partner's actions may consist in organising ecological picnics in the area covered by each LAG. During these picnics there will be a presentation of conclusions from the implementation of project's tasks which were carried out so far. Also, the presentation will include some recommendations as to what should be done in the future if we want to live in a clean and inhabitant-friendly environment; the recommendations will take into account the characteristics of each area[5].

3) nor integrated neither symmetrical (0 points)

If a project scores **at least 60%** of points after being evaluated on the basis of the above-mentioned criteria, the VA signs with all LAGs an aid agreement which provides for, *inter alia,* LAG's obligations and conditions for the implementation of an operation, with a proviso that obligations consisting in carrying out operation objectives (and in the case of investment objectives also obligation to maintain the objective for the period of 5 years since the day of receiving the aid and obligation to refrain from financing the implementation of operations using other public funds) are taken by LAGs jointly.

Bear in mind that making any amendments in the agreement requires a written consent and the procedure for making such amendment is stipulated in the agreement.

Note: The framework of the action "Implementation of cooperation projects" makes it possible to implement both non-investment operations (soft operations) and investment operations (hard operations). The investment eligibility of an operation should be defined on the basis of a list of investment-related eligible costs included in Article 55 of the Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006, which stipulates that in the case of investments, eligible expenditure shall be limited to:

a) the construction, acquisition, including leasing, or improvement of immovable property;
b) the purchase or lease-purchase of new machinery and equipment, including computer software up to the market value of the asset.

[5] The presented project serves only as an example and was prepared for the purpose of this publication.

Other costs connected with the leasing contract, such as lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges, shall not be eligible expenditure;

c) general costs linked to expenditure referred to in points (a) and (b), such as fees of architects and engineers and consultation fees, feasibility studies, the acquisition of patent rights and licences.

Note: Bear in mind that despite the fact that Article 55 of the Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 defines the costs connected with the leasing contract as eligible costs of an **investment, pursuant to the Ordinance of the MARD specifying the conditions and rules for awarding aid** under the "Implementation of cooperation projects" measure lease-contracts instalments are not eligible costs.

National cooperation project coordinator/coordinators.

As it was already mentioned in Sub-chapter 2.1. *Preparing the cooperation project,* when implementing a cooperation project it is necessary to choose a person responsible for supervising the implementation, financing, promotion and monitoring of the cooperation project – this person is a project coordinator. When none of national LAGs participating in an international project coordinates the project, a national coordinator should be chosen.
Bear in mind that the VA will evaluate the experience and qualifications of such a person during the review of the AA at the stage of cooperation project's implementation.

Aid agreement specifies duties of a coordinator and of a national coordinator of a cooperation project.

The duties of a coordinator include:

1) coordinating the implementation of a cooperation project by:
   a) supervising the implementation and financing the cooperation project,
   b) monitoring the cooperation project;
2) initiating and conducting promotional actions connected with the cooperation project

3) preparing a report on the implementation of the cooperation project.

Changing the coordinator/national coordinator of a project

Aid agreement includes provisions related to a possible change of a coordinator/national coordinator.

LAG is obliged to immediately inform the VA when such situation takes place. Such information shall include:

1) personal details of a person who is to replace a coordinator/national coordinator and who has been specified in the application aid form (first name, surname, address, phone, fax, e-mail);
2) a proper annex to the aid application; the annex specifies the qualifications and experience of the coordinator/national coordinator of a project along with documents listed in this annex (the annex serves as a prove of one's experience in project management and one's knowledge of foreign languages – but only in the case of an international project).

Change is admissible if the level of qualifications and experience of a candidate for the position of a coordinator/national coordinator is not lower than that of the recent coordinator/national coordinator.

When the level of qualifications and experience of a candidate for the position of a coordinator/national coordinator is lower than that of the recent coordinator/national coordinator, it is still possible to name such a person a coordinator/national coordinator, provided that the points awarded on the basis of the criterion related to the level of qualifications and experience of a cooperation project coordinator, which were awarded during the project evaluation stage, did not determine whether the minimum level of 60% of all points which could be awarded during the cooperation project evaluation was reached.

When the level of qualifications and experience of a candidate for the position of a coordinator/national coordinator is lower than that of the recent coordinator/national coordinator, and the points awarded on the basis of the criterion related to the level of qualifications and experience

of a cooperation project coordinator, which were given during the project evaluation stage, did determine whether the minimum level of 60% of all points which could be awarded during the cooperation project evaluation was reached, VA informs the coordinating LAG/national coordinating LAG that it is impossible to replace a coordinator/national coordinator by the person whose candidacy was put forward by the LAG within 14 days since the day on which it received information about the intention to change the coordinator/national coordinator.

In such event, the coordinating LAG/national coordinating LAG should put forward some other candidate or should refrain from changing the coordinator. For this reason, making a proper choice of a person performing the duties of a coordinator has key meaning. When making such choice, the LAG should not limit itself to experience and qualifications of a particular candidate, but it should also take into account a number of other factors, such as communication skills, including the ability to make new contacts, team-spirit, organisational skills, team management skills, creativity, availability. These factors will have key meaning for the proper management of a project and for its successful implementation.

2.3 Eligible costs of a cooperation project

Eligible costs include costs incurred by the LAG for the following:

- preparing a cooperation project – not earlier than a year prior to the day on which the AA is submitted,
- implementation of a cooperation project – not before a day on which the AA is submitted,

(provided that the aid agreement was signed).

Note: The eligible costs also include the VAT which is paid due to the costs incurred for preparing and implementing a cooperation project, provided that LAG is unable to get a tax refund.

Eligible costs related to project <u>preparation</u> include the costs of:

1) organising and conducting a series of meetings between cooperation project's partners, including the costs of:

   a) travel and accommodation of persons who are representing the LAG applying for aid and who are engaged in the preparation of a cooperation project, as well as other LAGs who are partners of a cooperation project.

   b) lease of equipment and rooms,

   c) translation services,

   d) preparation, print and copying of materials;

2) conducting research, analyses, studies or drafting implementation plans, economic development plans or entrepreneurship development plans as well as technical documentation (plans, estimates, technical descriptions);

3) remuneration for providing legal services (including legal assistance in drafting provisions about joint implementation of cooperation project).

Eligible costs related to project <u>implementation</u> include the costs of:

1) organising and conducting a series of trips related to the implementation of the cooperation project, including the costs of:

   a) travel and accommodation of persons who are representing national LAGs and who are engaged in the implementation of a cooperation project,
   b) translation services,

   c) stay of persons who are representing project's partners and who are LAGs themselves, including LAGs from outside Poland.

2) lease of rooms or other areas or land lease;

3) Preparation of technical documentation, studies and analyses;

4) purchase, hiring or lease and assembling of machinery, devices, tools, equipment or software.

Note 1: Computer hardware bought under the "Implementation of cooperation projects" measure is to be used for the purpose of carrying out actions covered by a project - it should not become a part of LAG's office equipment.

- purchase of specialist software, e.g. graphic design,
- purchase of machinery and devices, e.g. for printing - if the project includes plans to create and publish a local newspaper;
- purchase of equipment for e.g. a kayak marina – if the project's objective include setting a trail, constructing a marina, etc.;

Note 2: The cost of purchase shall be an eligible cost only when the cost of hiring or the cost of lease is higher than the cost of purchase.

Note 3: Eligible costs do not include costs of purchasing means of transport.

5) purchase of materials and items;

6) purchase of seeds and planting materials of perennial plants;

7) construction works;

8) conducting author's or investor's controls (in the case of conducting construction works within the framework of the project);

9) organising and conducting promotional, cultural, leisure and sport activities;

10) purchasing, drafting, printing or copying and distributing informational materials, including audio-visual materials, related to the cooperation project, purchase or lease of advertising space, purchase of air time and inclusion of promotional articles in the press;

11) setting or marking out tourist routes, educational or environmental paths, including natural monuments and historic, natural, cultural and religious objects which are not covered by the LDS area;

12) creating and updating databases, including a tourist information database;

13) preparing internet websites, projects related to the implemented cooperation project and to maintaining and updating these websites;

14) remuneration for contract of mandate, task-specific contract or for providing services aimed at ensuring swift implementation of the cooperation project and other costs incurred by national LAGs, pursuant to separate provisions related to signing of such agreements;

15) court, license and patent fees;

16) remuneration and other benefits referred to in the provisions of the Labour Code and related to the work provided by cooperation project's coordinators, as well as other costs incurred by national LAGs due to giving employment to these persons (these costs, except for costs of business trips, which, when rendered in terms of remuneration paid for one full-time position, exceed by 250% the amount of average monthly gross wage and salary in national economy, the amount of which is published two years prior to the year in which the aid application was submitted and pursuant to the provisions on pensions paid from the Social Security Fund, are not eligible costs).

General Note 1: The eligible costs of the cooperation project do not include instalments paid for a lease agreement and for the purchase of used items, except of items related to local culture and historic heritage, i.e. objects which are on the display in museums and in open-air museums.

General Note 2: The term 'persons from the LAG who prepare or implement the projects' does not refer to LAG employees only, but it also concerns its other members who are not employees as well as persons who maintain contact with LAG and who are engaged in preparing or implementing a project (e.g. local population) and persons at whom the project is directly aimed (e.g. students who are offered a chance to participate in student exchange visits and in internships organised within the framework of the project).

3. Preparation of cooperation projects - step by step

3.1 Identification of the idea

The cooperation project idea in many LAGs originated probably already at the stage of LDS development, during consultation with the local community, the analysis of the needs and problem areas, which resulted in the identification of the objectives of the strategy. This does not mean, however, that the idea crystallized automatically and effortlessly and was included in the strategy as a finished project. Although some LAGs included cooperation projects in their strategies, it was not very common and, what is important, it was not obligatory. A cooperation project does not have to be included in the strategy to be prepared and then implemented, but it must comply with the objectives defined therein.

The ideas for cooperation projects should be searched for based on e.g. analysis of local resources. A good starting point is to identify potential target groups of the project, including the group willing to get involved in a cooperation project e.g. folk bands, concert bands, volunteer fire departments, rural women associations, school activity clubs, sports clubs, local non-governmental organisations involved in i.a. environmental protection, fostering the local historical or cultural heritage.

An idea for a cooperation project may also originate as a result of the analysis of the previous or the existing cooperation and experience therefrom. The cooperation may be conducted by municipalities (partner municipalities and towns/cities), pupils exchange programmes, etc. A cooperation project may be a continuation or a supplement to the already

implemented projects. It may also result from the experience of the LAG in establishing cooperation in various areas.

The organisation of meetings with potential project participants and target groups of the project is important, as are the discussions on the project, dissemination of information about the idea and the presentation of the value added of the project to those persons.

For example: 20 km of bicycle routes were built under the project. The objective of the project was i.a. to promote the tourist values of the region. The added value of the project may be e.g. improvement of the conditions for conducting economic activity by the inhabitants of the area (catering establishment, bike rental) or improvement of the health of the inhabitants thanks to active living.

3.2 Partner search

Step 1: How to define the profile of a partner?

In order to find the right partner, several questions about the expectations towards the partner must be asked to create the partner's profile. The criteria for the creation of the profile of the partner may include:

- Basic characteristics of the partner: geographical, historical, social and economic conditions, resources (natural, tourist), etc.;
- Human resources at the partner's disposal;
- Objectives adopted in the partner's strategy and its areas of interest;
- Type of the partner (knowledge, experience and know-how, i.e. the ability to use the knowledge and experience in practice);
- Expectations towards the contribution of the partner to the project (transfer of innovations, concept of the joint project);
- Vicinity of the partner (neighbourhood);

- Cohesion of the objectives from the strategies (own and partner's);
- Legal form of the partner;
- Language (in the case of a foreign partner, the possibility to communicate easily is of utmost importance);
- Interpersonal relations with the partner, potential impact of cultural differences on the possibility to implement the project.

Step 2: Who can be a partner of a cooperation project?

Partners of cooperation projects may be first of all LAGs selected under the RDP 2007-2013 in any Member States of the EU and partners from outside the EU. However, it must be remembered that the participation of a non-LAG partner (regardless of whether the partner comes from the EU or not) is not an eligible cost. Only the costs of coordination are eligible in such a case.



Photo 2. Implementation of the project "Local artists as the mainstay of cultural heritage". Archives of LAG „Podbabiogórze".

A partner to the cooperation project that is not a LAG must meet the criteria defined in Article 39(2) of the Regulation (EC) 1974/2006, i.e. it must be a local partnership (operating in the area other than the area of operation of the remaining partners) organised with the following features:

a) presence of a local group in a geographical territory, which is active in rural development, with the capacity to draw up a development strategy for that territory[6]; and

[6] I.e. to operate in a (geographically, culturally and historically) coherent rural area, have a drawn-up development strategy for that area, have an administrative capacity to manage the strategy implementation process.

b) the organisation of that local group is based on a partnership of local actors. [7]

Note: An annex to AA is a statement of the partner (or partners, if more than 2 partners are involved in the project preparation) saying whether the partner is a LAG selected under the RDP 2007-2013 and whether the partner meets the criteria defined in Article 39 of the Regulation (EC) 1974/2006.The statement is made on the form which constitutes an annex to the application. In the case of an transnational cooperation project, the statement of a foreign partner does not have to be submitted on the form constituting an annex to the application, but its contents must be the same as in the annex, i.e. it must clearly state whether the partner is a LAG selected under the RDP 2007-2013 and whether the partner meets the criteria defined in Article 39 of the Regulation (EC) 1974/2006.The statement of a foreign partner must be translated into Polish by a sworn translator.

Therefore, pursuant to Article 39 of the Regulation (EC) 1974/2006, apart from LAGs selected under RDP 2007-2013, partners of cooperation projects may include:

- LAGs selected to implement LDS under RDP 2007-2013;
- Groups operating within the framework of Leader + (or an earlier initiative) and not selected to implement LDS under RDP 2007-2013;
- Associations registered pursuant to the Act of 7 March 2007 on support for rural development with the use of funds of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (in the case of partners from Poland);
- Other organisations operating in line with the principles analogous to those applied to LAGs, which meet the criteria defined in Article 39(2) of the Regulation (EC) 1974/2006.

[7] I.e. be a partnership of local actors (partners representing the social and the economic sector).

Note: In view of the above, e.g. a public higher education institution, an entrepreneur, a school, a research institute or a local government unit cannot be partners of cooperation projects.

Step 3: How to determine the number of partners of a cooperation project?

With an idea for a cooperation project already in place and during the partner search, a decision must be made on an optimal number of partners for the given project. It may seem that the project with only two partners may be easier to implement, but sometimes, due to the project characteristics, two partners may not be able to create appropriate solutions to problems occurring during the project implementation. It seems that a project with 3-4 partners will ensure the appropriate dynamics and diversity of solutions to the occurring problems, but will require more work to achieve an agreement with the partners, more flexibility and effort for coordination.

Step 4: How and where to look for a partner?

In order to find a partner of the project, brief information should be drawn up about the idea for the project. Apart from the profile of a partner sought, the information should also contain a description of the LAG. The information should be translated into a foreign language (if the LAG is also interested in transnational cooperation). The selection of a language should be made based on the profile of the partner sought and the possibility of efficient communication in foreign languages by persons from the LAG who prepare the projects (and who will also implement the project). The most popular language in which LAGs disseminate the information about seeking a partner for a transnational cooperation project is English.

E-mail is a good and efficient tool for seeking a partner and does not require significant financial outlays. E-mail databases can be found (and are made available) at the national rural networks of individual Member States. The database of all LAGs selected under the RDP 20072013 in the EU Member States was created by the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development (CP ENRD). It is available at: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu.

If partners for interterritorial projects are sought, useful information about potential partners and the project they implement can be founds at the portal of the National Rural Network, a portal on LAGs operated by the Polish Rural Forum (FAOW): http://www.faow.leader.org.pl/index.php/lista-lgd, and the *Catalogue of LAGs – Local Action Groups and their activity in rural areas.*

Websites (of e.g. CP ENRD, national and regional rural networks of the EU Member States) and calendars of events (meetings, conferences, and seminars) should be regularly monitored, newsletters should be subscribed and search engines of cooperation projects should be regularly viewed. The information about the project partner search should be published in such search engines and databases so that potential partners could contact you.

3.3 Preparation of the first meeting

The first meeting of the project partners may be of key importance for successful preparation and then implementation of the project. Therefore, you should make all efforts possible to appropriately prepare the meeting.

It is important to maintain constant contact with the partner about which both parties should care to the same extent, irrespective of who initiated the contact. The contact may be maintained in electronic form (e-mail, internet communicators) or by phone. This allows the parties to get to know and understand each other better and to exchange experience.

Efficient technical organisation of the meeting is also very important. Such organisational aspects as venue for the meeting, transport, board and accommodation must be provided for in advance (and agreed with the partner). The date and place of the meeting should also be jointly agreed so that they were convenient for all partners. The scope of responsibility of each partner with regard to the organisation of the meeting must be agreed, as well as (what is extremely important) who will pay for individual elements of the organisation.

It is also essential to properly prepare (and exchange between partners) the documentation on territories covered by LDS and target groups of the project, including the groups willing to get involved in its implementation.

The list of the participants of the meeting should be carefully drawn-up. Apart from representatives of partners or experts, representatives of local authorities or target groups of the project should also be invited.

In the case of transnational projects, the organisers must make sure that the participants of the meeting are able to communicate in one language and ensure interpretation if necessary. This applies also to all documents.

The agenda of the meeting should ensure the time both for work, i.e. presentations, discussions, and for relaxation, i.e. coffee breaks, lunch and excursions to the area where the project will be implemented. The agenda should allow to accomplish three basis objectives of the meeting:

- Getting to know the partner;
- Achieving progress in the project preparation;
- Selection of the coordinating LAG.

Apart from the documentation on territories covered by LDS, it is also important to prepare an initial presentation about the project which will serve as a basis for further arrangements and discussions. It should constitute a project framework with a room for amendments made as a result of agreements between the partners.

The coordinating LAG should be selected at this stage.

3.4 The first meeting

The objective of the first meeting is to get to know the partner and achieve progress in work on the project preparation.

It is important to appoint a person responsible for running the meeting who will moderate the meeting and take care of organisational aspects. It may be a person representing the coordinating LAG. Each partner should

have an opportunity to present its structure, model of operation, method of management, motivation for participation in the project, objectives of the strategy and expectations towards the project (and partners), as well as the needs that the project is to satisfy.



Photo 3. Organisational meeting of the partners of the project WZLOT - Wirtualne Zwiedzanie Lokalnych Obszarów Turystycznych [Virtual Visiting of Local Tourist Areas]. Archives of LAG "Dolina Rzeki Grabi".

The meeting should clarify whether the partners have similar expectations towards the project and whether their individual objectives coincide.

The first meeting is a good opportunity to begin talks on detailed tasks to be implemented under the project, to designate the LAG which will coordinate the project, to discuss the project schedule, divide the tasks between the partners and to determine the budget, including to specify the contributions of individual partners.

3.5 Further steps after the first meeting

A report from the first meeting should be drawn up with a summary of all agreements made at the meeting, which will be approved by all partners participating in the meeting.

Note: A person responsible for drawing up the report must be appointed, the method of exchanging information between the partners must be agreed and the procedure for submitting comments to the final report must be specified.

The information about the project and the will of partners to cooperate should be disseminated among the inhabitants of the areas where the project will be implemented, local authorities should be notified and the

groups which voiced their wish to participate in the project should be asked whether they continue to do so.

At this stage, work can begin on preparing a **partnership agreement**, i.e. **an agreement on joint implementation of a cooperation project which will be concluded with all partners of the cooperation project.** The agreement is an obligatory annex to AA in the case of a cooperation project.

3.6 Signing a partnership agreement

The partnership agreement is the basic document regulating the relationship between the project partners, including their rights and obligations.

The contents of the partnership agreement are to some extent defined in the Ordinance of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 25 July 2008 on detailed conditions and procedure of granting and paying financial aid under the measure "Implementation of cooperation projects". The elements specified in the Ordinance do not form a closed catalogue and project partners may include additional provisions in the agreement. Therefore, pursuant to the Ordinance, the document should include:

1. Data identifying the partners of the cooperation project, i.e. name, address, contact data (phone and fax numbers, e-mails, website);

2. Description of objectives and expected results of the cooperation projects and the main tasks under the project. Tasks must be distributed among the project partners. Description of objectives and main tasks is to present the project idea and present the planned result of the project;

3. The definition of the group of entities for which the project is intended or whose participation in the project implementation was assumed - at this stage of work on the draft the groups should already be clearly defined;

4. Definition of the role of each partner of the cooperation project in the implementation of tasks under the project - the agreement should clearly define the responsibility of each partner for the

implementation of individual tasks. The specification of the scope of responsibility of individual partners will facilitate project implementation and coordination;

5. Indication of the coordinating LAG and if none of the national LAGs participating in a transnational project is a coordinating LAG, then a national coordinating LAG should be designated;

6. Indication of the coordinator and if none of the national LAGs participating in a transnational project is a coordinating LAG, then a national coordinator should be appointed;

7. The implementation period of the cooperation project - expected date of beginning and completion of the project implementation;

8. Timeframe of the cooperation project implementation;

9. Specification of the area where the cooperation project will be implemented and the place where individual tasks under the project will be implemented;

10. Title of the cooperation project;

11. Acronym of the title of the cooperation project;

12. Budget of the cooperation project including the financial contribution of individual partners - in the case of transnational cooperation projects, the agreement should also provide indicative amounts in EUR;

13. Provisions defining the procedure for amendment or termination of the agreement, which specify when and to what extent the agreement cannot be amended or terminated;

14. Commitments of the partners concerning in particular:

    a) Active participation and cooperation in implementing the cooperation project;

b) Joint elaboration of project monitoring indicators, procedure for monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation project;

c) Timely implementation of tasks for which the project partners are responsible;

d) Notifying other partners about the obstacles to the implementation of tasks, including the risk of exceeding the agreed deadline for the task implementation;

e) Use of the adopted system for exchange of information and communication between the partners of the cooperation project;

f) Collecting and archiving the documents of the cooperation project.

4. Implementation of cooperation projects - step by step

Step 1: Contact with partners

The successful project implementation requires regular contact with the partner. The contact may take the form of cyclically organised meetings, teleconferences, or at least e-mail correspondence. A good form of contact, which does not require substantial financial outlays, is a free-of-charge internet communicator.

It is advisable to agree the schedule of meetings with the partners, as well as the rules governing the exchange and flow of information, including the problems occurring and a risk of delays in the implementation of tasks. It is of utmost important from the point of view of ensuring the continuity of the project, since a delay in the implementation of a task by one partner has a significant impact on the possibility to begin and implement subsequent tasks by other partners. The organisation of meetings, exchange of information and constant communication with partners should be the responsibility of the project coordinator.

Step 2: Project coordinator.

Binding regulations ensure easier implementation of actions related to preparation and in particular implementation of cooperation projects,

thanks to designation of the coordinating LAG or the national coordinating LAG. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate the working contact between the project partners and jointly resolve problems occurring during the project implementation, it is worth appointing an advisory body, e.g. a Steering Committee. The frequency of the Committee meetings should be agreed by partners at the beginning of the project implementation. The meetings should be cyclical (e.g. once a month), but it is also advisable to provide for the possibility of convening a meeting outside the set dates, when a problem occurs which needs urgent resolution.

The Committee should consist of the representatives of all partners of the project.

Reports, notes and arrangements should be drawn up after the Committee meetings and distributed to all partners of the project. The costs of the Committee meetings are eligible costs of the project, since they belong to the costs of coordination and therefore they should be covered by the coordinating LAG.

5. Monitoring and evaluation of cooperation projects

Monitoring of the project is a task of the project coordinator[8]. It must be conducted on an ongoing basis, using the earlier specified indicators. Partners of the project should jointly develop the project monitoring indicators, bearing in mind that the indicators should measure the progress in the project implementation, i.e. should be related to the objectives of the project (e.g. length of delimited routes, number of participants of the fairs, number of organised sports events, etc., depending on the project characteristics).

The development of indicators may be entrusted to the Steering Committee which should remember to observe the SMART principle, according to which indicators should be:

[8] If none of the national LAGs is a coordinator of a transnational cooperation project, the task is performed by the national coordinator.

Specific i.e. clearly, precisely define what they are to verify;
Measurable i.e. possible to be measured in the numerical form;
Achievable i.e. result from earlier analyses and be closely related to the objective of the project;
Results-oriented i.e. real, possible to achieve;
Time-specific i.e. specified in time, with a measurement time agreed earlier by the partners.

Monitoring should result in reports drawn up by the coordinator and co-coordinators and presented to the Steering Committee. The reports should be both thematic (progress in the project implementation) and financial (disbursement of funds) and should be drawn up regularly during the project implementation and after its completion.

Partners should also provide for the possibility to change the monitoring indicators and develop the relevant procedure. The necessity to change the indicators (e.g. by adding new ones) may occur as a result of the analysis of information included in the reports on the progress in the project implementation. The information should be used for potential adjustments of the project implementation process or to inform the local community about the progress in the project implementation and the impact of the project on the area where it is implemented.

The key issue in the project evaluation is to select the evaluation method: self-assessment or external evaluation.

The evaluation of the project should consist in measuring the “success of the project”. The process of defining “success” may have four levels presented at the diagram below:

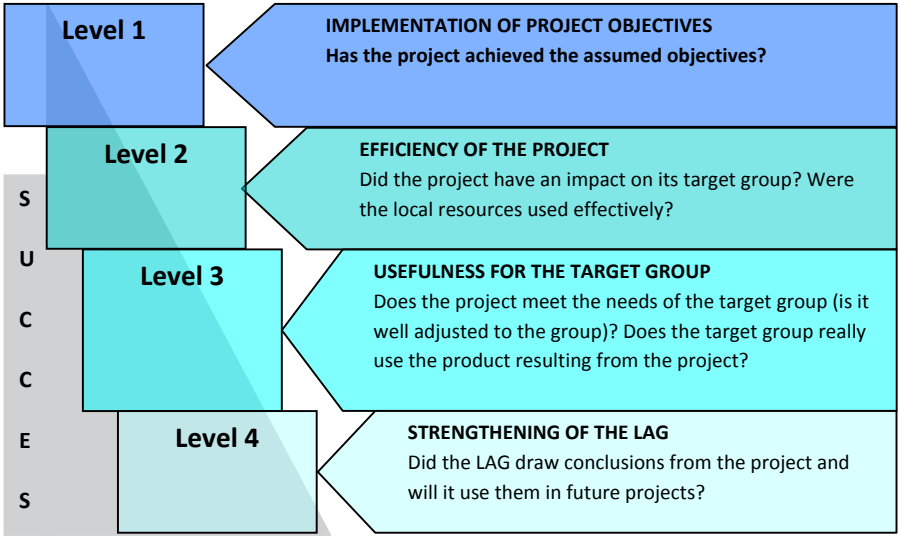


Fig. 5

The result of the project evaluation should be disseminated e.g. in the form of an information folder distributed among the inhabitants of the areas covered by LDS of the partners and among local authorities. The information about the results of the project should also be included in the databases with the previously added information about the project partner search.

6. Examples of good practices

This chapter presents examples of good practices and completed cooperation projects. They include both transnational and interterritorial projects. The descriptions were prepared based on information submitted by Local Action Groups. The publication also contains photos from the project implementation, provided by the partners of the presented projects.

Projects implemented by Polish LAGs focus mainly on development of tourism in the areas covered by LDS, investments in infrastructure for

sports and recreation, fostering of the local cultural heritage (folk art, culinary traditions) and environmental education[9].



[9] The collage includes the photos from the implementation of the following cooperation projects: 1. "Zapraszamy na Roztocze" [„Roztocze is waiting for you!"], partners: "Roztocze Tomaszowskie" and "Serce Roztocza" (Lubelskie/Podkarpackie Voivodeships). Archives of LAG "Roztocze Tomaszowskie". 2. "Lokalni Twórcy ostoją dziedzictwa kulturowego" ["Local artists as the mainstay of the cultural heritage"], partners: LAG "Podbabiogórze and LAG "Gorce-Pieniny"(Małopolskie Voivodeship). Archives of LAG "Podbabiogórze". 3. "Smaki Łączą Regiony - Festiwal Smaków" ["Tastes Bring Regions Together - Festival of Tastes", partners: "Dolina Raby", LAG Associations "Gościniec 4 Żywiołów", "Puszcza Białowieska", Stowarzyszenie Światowid, "Echo Puszczy Bolimowskiej", Stowarzyszenie "Ziemia Chełmońskiego". 4. „Odnawialne źródła energii przyszłością obszaru lokalnych grup działania" ["Renewable Energy Sources - the Future of the Local Action Groups' Area"], partners: Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Gmin "CENTRUM", LAG „POLCENTRUM" and Fundacja Rozwoju Gmin "PRYM". Source: Promotional materials. 5. "Transgraniczna Przedsiębiorczość Blekinge / Warmia – Mazury" ["Cross-border Entrepreneurship Blekinge / Warmia – Mazury"], partners: "Warmiński Zakątek". "Brama Mazurskiej Krainy" and LAG LEADER BLEKINGE (Sweden). Archives of LAG "Warmiński Zakątek".

6.1. Transnational cooperation projects

Title
"Meeting with Nature 2010" ["Spotkania z naturą 2010"][10]



Photo 4. Integration activities for participants of a meeting at an agro-tourist farm.

Partners
Local Action Group "Przymierze-Jeziorsko" (Łódzkie Voivodeship), Stowarzyszenie "LGD7 – Kraina Nocy i Dni" (Wielkopolskie Voivodeship), LAG Welterbe Oberes Mittelrheintal (Germany) and Lokale Aktionsgruppe Hunsrück (Germany)

Objectives
Environmental education and integration of young people from Poland and Germany, and mainly the formation of environmental awareness of young people, teaching them about the principles of rational use of natural resources and their important for human life and health and first of all the benefits of various forms of active leisure in the bosom of nature



Photo 5. A hike. Archives of LAG "Kraina Nocy i Dni"

Target group
Young people aged 12-16, living in the area where the Polish and German partners operate.

Actions taken

- Educational and integration activities for project participants, organised in the area where the Polish partners operate (a visit to an agro-tourist farm where sports competition took place, a visit to a landed gentry's homestead, presentation of traditional professions, a visit to a mini open-air ethnographic museum

[10] Based on materials provided by "LGD7 – Kraina Nocy i Dni" Association.

- Activities in the forest (a trek along the Educational Path "Winiary" - learning how to identify the flora and fauna species) and at the Jeziorsko lake



Photo 6. Bike rally. Archives of LAG "Kraina Nocy i Dni".

- Organisation of a bicycle rally
- Organisation of a hike

Implementation period
September 2010 - December 2010

Project budget
Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation): PLN 67 427.41

Title
„Plum Area Tourism PAT" ["Śliwkowy Obszar Turystyczny"] - PAT[11]

Partners
Stowarzyszenie "Na Śliwkowym Szlaku", LAG BIAŁE ŁUGI (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship), LAG BACHUREN (Slovakia) and LAG CSERHÁTALJA (Hungary).

The name „Plum Tourism Area" refers to numerous plum orchards in the area covered by the groups implementing the project.

Objectives
- Use of local natural and cultural resources
- Promoting the activity of the tourism sector
- Improving the quality of tourist services
- Actions for better and more efficient promotion of tourist, culinary and cultural values



Photo 7. Meeting during the preparation of the project. Archives of LAG "Na Śliwkowym Szlaku".

[11] Based on materials provided by Stowarzyszenie "Na Śliwkowym Szlaku".

- Exchange of experience in the processing of plums and other fruit
- Creation of a tourist product related to plums



Photo 8. Traditional method of plum drying. Archives of LAG "Na Śliwkowym Szlaku".

Target group

Representatives of the tourism sector, i.e. entities involved in tourism, operating in the areas covered by activities of individual partners - companies and non-governmental organisations and the inhabitants of the area.

Actions taken

- Project preparation: organisation of three meetings with the cooperation project partners in order to agree in detail the planned actions in terms of schedules and budgets of individual project partners
- Project implementation: production of promotional gadgets, creation of a website: www.theplum.eu, organisation of visits to the areas of individual project partners

Implementation period

June 2011 - August 2013

Project budget - Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation): PLN 476 699.08

Title

CRAVING FOR PRODUCT" ["SMAK NA PRODUKT"] [12]

Partners

- LAGs from Poland (Małopolskie Voivodeship): Podhalańska Local Action Group, Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Orawy, Stowarzyszenie Białych Górali i Lachów Sadeckich Local Action Group "Nad Białą

"CRAVING FOR PRODUCT" is the largest transnational cooperation project in the Małopolska

[12] Based on materials provided by LAG " Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Orawy".

Przemszą", Stowarzyszenie Dolina Karpia, Local Action Group Dunajec-Biała, Zielony Pierścień Tarnowa

- LAG from Austria "Regional Community for the Development of the Villah – Hermagor Region"



Photo 9. Project partners. Archives of "Stowarzyszenia Rozwoju Orawy".

Objectives

General objective: Development based on the local product.

Specific objectives:

- Raising awareness of the inhabitants and farmers in the areas covered by the LAGs participating in the project about the use of local resources for the purpose of creating local products
- Promotion of local products and new forms of distribution by means of promotional activities, informational and promotional meetings, creation of a website and preparation and publication of informational and promotional materials



Photo 10. Wedding crescent rolls. Archives of "Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Orawy".



Photo 11. Bread from Orava on a leaf. Archives of LAG "Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Orawy".

Target group

Non-governmental organisations, including LAGs, local leaders, private sectors, farmers' families, local population, tourists, women, men, young people.

Actions taken

- Promotion of several dozens of products during the fair in Kościelisko, Rzuchowa, Zubrzyca Górka, Lisia Góra, Łącko, Trzyciąż and Zator, Villah Region - Austria
- Publication of a promotional album in 2400 copies

- Submission of approximately 15 traditional products for registration in the Małopolskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office on the List of Traditional Products. Examples of products submitted for entry to the List: Orava bread on a cabbage leaf, Wedding crescent rolls from Orava, Orava salad and Orava horseradish soup.

Implementation period
May 2011 - June 2012

Project budget - Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation): PLN 325 116.03

6.2. Interterritorial cooperation projects

Title
„Local Attractive Trail" ["Lokalny Atrakcyjny Szlak" (LAS)] [13]

Partners
LAGs from Łódzkie Voivodeship: Stowarzyszenie Lokalna Grupa Działania "Dolina Pilicy", Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Rozwoju Społeczności Lokalnej "Mroga", Stowarzyszenie Lokalna Grupa Działania "BUD-UJ" Razem

Objectives
Development of equine tourism in the Łódzkie Voivodeship by means of creating connecting passages which add new trails to the small and big horse riding loop trail, passing across agro-tourism farms and horse studs.

The reason for building connecting passages for horse riding trails was the implementation of the project entitled "Equine tourism - infrastructure of an innovative tourist product of the Łódzkie Voivodeship" by the Department for Physical Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Marshall's Office in Łódź, which resulted in creation of the so-called small and big horse riding loop trail, crossing als the area of Stowarzyszenie "Dolina Pilicy".



Photo 12. Active tourism along delimited trails. Archives of LAG "Dolina Pilicy".

[13] Based on materials provided by LAG Stowarzyszenie "Dolina Pilicy".

Target group
Owners of agro-tourism farms and horse studs, tourists, inhabitants of areas covered by LDS.

Actions taken

- Delimitation and blazing of two sections of horse riding trails with the total length of 87 kilometres
- Preparation of maps with marked GPS points and a multimedia atlas



Photo 13. On a horse riding trail. Archives of LAG "Dolina Pilicy".

Resources of the area covered by LDS of the project partners:
- ✓ cavalry traditions,
- ✓ high use value (for professional and recreational sports) of the local horse breeding,
- ✓ abundance of agro-tourist farms with horse studs or saddle horses and cart horses
- ✓ landscape and nature potential of the Pilica River valley (forests, remains of ancient Pilicka Forest, landscape parks along the Pilica River)

Implementation period
October 2010 - October 2012

Project budget
Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation): PLN 172 095.40

Title
Eastern Małopolska on the bike [Wschodnia Małopolska na Rowerze] [14]

Partners
LAGs from Małopolskie Voivodeship: Pogórzańskie Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju, Stowarzyszenie "Zielony Pierścień Tarnowa", Lokalna Grupa Działania Dunajec-Biała, Stowarzyszenie "Na Śliwkowym Szlaku", Stowarzyszenie "Kwartet na Przedgórzu"

[14] Based on materials provided by LAG Pogórzańskie Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju.

Objectives

- Development and implementation of an offer for tourists based on local cultural and natural values
- Increasing the awareness of the inhabitants with regard to their place of living
- Promoting the activity of the local community

Innovative nature of the project consists in its uniqueness in the subregion of Eastern Małopolska. Municipalities constituting five LAGs form a geographically coherent area, offering various cultural, historical and tourist attractions.

Target group

Inhabitants of the area, tourists, local entrepreneurs (in particular from the tourism sector)



Photo 14. A break during a bicycle rally. Archives of the project "Eastern Małopolska on the Bike".

Actions taken

- Delimitation of bicycle trails (selection of attractions that are worth presenting, describing them, adding geographic coordinates and contact data, photographing the facilities/attractions, marking the bicycle trail on the map in a way connecting all attractions in the given area in the best possible way)
- Preparation and publication of maps (graphic project, package)
- Promotional campaign of delimited bicycle trails (virtual presentation in flash made available on the internet, preparation and publication of leaflets, broadcast of a radio commercial in local radio stations, preparation and filming of a promotional clip for the bicycle trail, organisation of a bicycle rally which would sum up the campaign)



Photo 15. Registration of a bicycle rally - an element of the promotional campaign of the project. Archives of the "Eastern Małopolska on the Bike" Project.

Implementation period
December 2010 - June 2011

Project budget - Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation): PLN 72 445.37



Photo 16. Sculpture by Artur Piętka. Archives of LAG "Ziemia Przemyska"

Title
"Land, Foothills and Valley – Three Lands, Three Fields" [Ziemia Pogórze Dolina – Trzy Krainy Trzy Dziedziny][15]

Partners
LAGs from Podkarpackie Voivodeship: Local Action Group "Ziemia Przemyska", Local Action Group

"Pogórze Przemysko – Dynowskie", Local Action Group – Leader "Dolina Strugu"

Objectives
Identification and promotion of culture and cultural heritage related to tradition and folk art from the area of three partner LAGs by means of various integration and art activities (meetings, exhibitions, conferences, competitions) and creation of a database (on a common website) of persons and organisations engaged in traditional, contemporary and professional art.

Target group
Folk artists and their audience.

Actions taken

- Creation of a database of artists from the area of partner LAGs (local artists and organisations, i.e. rural women associations, folk



Photo 17. Meeting in Obory. Archives of LAG "Ziemia Przemyska".

[15] Based on materials provided by LAG "Ziemia Przemyska".

bands) and 600 photo documents and other art forms (folk poetry, lyrics of songs)

- Organisation of an integration meeting in Orły including a handicraft exhibition and art workshops, food tasting and performances by singers, with a view to integrating artists from the three partner LAGs
- Organisation of an educational conference in Błażowa which included a presentation of artists participating in the cooperation project entitled "Land, Foothills and Valley – Three Lands, Three Fields" and tasting of dishes prepared by rural women associations.
- Organisation of a handicraft competition for designing and making an element promoting the cooperation project, in order to mobilize the inhabitants of the LDS areas of partner LAGs and create a unique symbol of the project using a traditional technique
- Maintenance of a website created based on the database – www.trzykrainy.pl

Implementation period
May 2011 - November 2011

Project budget
Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation): PLN 86 457.53

Project logo.



Title
"Adventure Route" ["Szlak Przygody"][16]

Partners
LAGs from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship: Local Action Group "Białe Ługi", Local Action Group "Dorzecze Bobrzy", Local Action Group "Krzemienny Krąg", Local Action Group Stowarzyszenie "Nad Czarną Pilicą", Stowarzyszenie „Lokalna Grupa

[16] Based on materials provided by Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Wsi Świętorzyskiej.

Działania – Wokół Łysej Góry", Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Wsi Świętokrzyskiej

Objectives

General objective – Creating an integrated, attractive and competitive tourist offer based on key characteristics of the Partnership, addressed at specific target groups (tourists), to be developed according to principles of marketing management and sustainable development.

Specific objectives:

- Creation of a linear tourist product "Adventure Route"
- Creation or development of attractive and competitive tourist products in the area where individual LAGs operate

Adventure Route is a continuation of the project entitled "Abundance of Tourist Attractions of the Region Inspired by Świętokrzyskie Region", under which the "Strategy for development of tourist products of the Partnership" was developed.

Target group

Tourists -families travelling by car, entrepreneurs and inhabitants of the area of the project partners.

Actions taken

The **Adventure Route** project is the first stage of the implementation of the "Strategy for development of tourist products of the Partnership". Therefore, it contains the following key tasks:

- Delimitation of the Adventure Route (manufacturing and installation of information boards with maps, direction signs, regional style rest areas for tourists)



Photo 18. The Land of Sacrum and Profanum around the Holy Cross Relics Sanctuary in Święty Krzyż. Archives of the "Adventure Route" Project.



Photo 19. Land of Great Dinosaurs – JuraPark in Bałtów. Archives of the "Adventure Route" Project".

- Design, implementation and maintenance of a loyalty programme with a view to encouraging tourists visiting the region covered by the Partnership to extend their stay for tourism and recreation purposes, use the offer of the Partners of the loyalty programme, come again for tourism and recreation purposes, visit the largest possible number of tourist attractions offered by the Partners of the loyalty programme. Furthermore, an IT tool created within the framework of this task is to provide statistical data on tourism to the loyalty programme operator. When the financing from the EAFRD ends, the loyalty programme is to generate revenues for the operator which will allow to maintain and develop the system.

- Promotion by means of designing, creating and implementing a website, creating and maintaining a fan page on Facebook along with competition applications, building relations with the media, mobile outdoor advertising, ambient campaigns in Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź and Warsaw, Google AdWards and Facebook campaigns, implementation of six questing routes, printing of folders promoting the Adventure Route, drafting and printing materials promoting the loyalty programme and addressed to its participants and potential partners.

Implementation period
April 2012 r. - December 2014 r.

Project budget
Total budget of the project (expenditure of all partners for the project implementation):
PLN 705 804 23



Photo 20. Land of Nature – Świętokrzyskie Lake District. Archives of the "Adventure Route" Project.

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This publication uses information, logos and photographs sent by Local Action Groups. The information delivered by LAGs provided the basis for the descriptions of already implemented cooperation projects, currently implemented cooperation projects, and the ideas for cooperation projects which at the same time constitute the proposals of cooperation. Since it was necessary to verify the data included in the database of the National Rural Network, each LAG was asked to update the data.

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