

**Polish National Rural Network
Examples of implemented projects**

Warsaw 2011

Dear Readers,

It is a remarkable fact in the history of the European Network for Rural Development (EN RD) that the initiative was officially launched at the conference entitled *Europe's Rural Areas in Action – facing the challenges of tomorrow*, which took place on 16–17 October 2008 in Limassol, Cyprus. The actions associated with the creation of the National Rural Network (NRN) in Poland were initiated as early as in 2007. The Polish NRN was established in order to organise meetings of partners involved in European rural development policy, and to provide genuine incentives to pursue the objectives set out in the strategic guidelines for rural development in the EU, adopted by the Council of the European Union. The NRN is intended to highlight the added value generated thanks to the support for rural areas. By drawing on practical experiences, it helps decision-makers to identify the right choices when implementing rural development strategies and programmes. The rural development network is constantly striving to simplify procedures and to tighten cooperation with other European funds focusing on rural areas. The NRN is also helping to achieve the optimal use of sustainable rural development policy. In all EU Member States, the European network makes it easier for rural stakeholders to exchange and share experiences not only at the national but also at the European level.

I would like to emphasise that in Poland the number of partners declaring their willingness to cooperate with the NRN is ever rising. Currently, the database contains over 1,468 various entities (local action groups, non-governmental organisations, local government authorities at voivodeship, powiat and gmina levels, branch organisations, agricultural chambers, institutes, research and development units, and agricultural advisory centres). Such a high number of diverse partners requires us to elaborate a new form of collaboration that would be based on an increasingly close partnership.

The implementation of the *Action Plan of the Polish NRN for 2008–2009* was completed in December 2009. The first years of the Polish NRN's operation revealed that the network created in Poland has contributed mostly to improving the transfer of information between institutions and organisations acting for the benefit of Polish rural areas and their inhabitants, as well as to integrating communities, organisations and associations stimulating rural development. It has also become a forum for exchanging good practices, knowledge and experiences related to the implementation of programmes and projects supporting sustainable rural development. Moreover, the network is an instrument assisting central and local government administration in performing their tasks associated with agriculture and rural areas, to be fulfilled under the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 and cohesion policy operational programmes. Special importance is attached to those activities of the network that accelerate transformations in rural areas and contribute to improving the quality of life and the conditions of work in Polish rural areas. In order to fulfil these tasks, entities at all administrative levels organise, inter alia, meetings, conferences, trainings, competitions, seminars, or expert networks that help to ensure an increasingly effective and dynamic rural development.

The implementation of the *Action Plan of the Polish NRN for 2008–2009* involved:

- 218 conferences, seminars and other meetings;
- 65 various competitions;
- 60 study visits;
- 92 trainings;
- participation in 70 trade fairs and exhibitions aimed at promoting regional products;
- elaboration of 22 expert opinions and analyses.

This publication explains the rules governing the NRN's operation, and it describes selected projects carried out by regional secretariats and partners of the network.

The presentation of these projects in one paper is primarily aimed at helping you to grasp the very essence of the NRN's activity, and to use the experiences of other secretariats in improving your own operations.

I would like to invite you to read the paper and get acquainted with the principles that underlie the functioning of Polish National Rural Network as well as its outcomes.

Marek Sawicki

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

1. Legal basis for the creation of the National Rural Network (NRN)

European Union law:

Article 68 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD):

- obligation of each Member State to establish a national rural network;
- inclusion in the NRN of all organisations and administrations involved in rural development;
- obligatory tasks performed under the NRN;
- co-financing from the EAFRD.

Article 41 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2009 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

National law:

Article 37a of the Act of 7 March 2007 on supporting rural development with the use of resources from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (Dz. U. [*Dziennik Ustaw* – Polish journal of laws] No 64, item 427, as amended).

Ordinance of the Prime Minister of 18 March 2009 on the national rural network (Dz. U. No 53, item 436).

2. Objectives of the National Rural Network

- support for the implementation as well as evaluation of the rural development policy;
- stimulating all organisations and administrations active in the field of rural development;
- identification, analysis, dissemination and exchange of information and knowledge on rural development among all the stakeholders at local, regional, national and Community levels;
- dissemination of knowledge on rural development strategy;
- improvement in the effectiveness of measures implemented under RDP 2007–2013.

3. Structure of the National Rural Network

The **Central Unit (Secretariat) of the NRN** is responsible for coordinating the establishment and operation of the network. The task of the Central Unit is to create and run the network's website, and to facilitate contacts among network participants.

The **16 Regional Units (Secretariats) of the NRN** in Marshal Offices of individual voivodeships contribute to the accomplishment of the NRN's tasks, and coordinate contacts among network participants in individual regions as well as inter-regional collaboration.

The Working Group is composed of representatives of central and local government bodies, and of organisations and institutions active in the area of rural development.

The task of the Working Group is to create thematic working groups and guide their works. The Working Group is also responsible for determining the NRN's priorities, as well as for recommending actions and monitoring the NRN's operation.

The members of the NRN Working Group include:

- (a) representatives of National Rural Network Central Secretariat and of 16 regional secretariats, representatives of ministries competent for the economy, regional development, health, education, culture and national heritage, labour and social policy, as well as administration and internal affairs;
- (b) representative of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture;
- (c) representative of the Agricultural Market Agency;
- (d) representative of the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture (FAPA);
- (e) representative of the Agricultural Advisory Centre;
- (f) representative of the National Centre for Agricultural Education;
- (g) two representatives of the National Council of Agricultural Chambers;
- (h) representative of the Polish Bank Association;
- (i) three representatives of Local Action Groups;
- (j) representative of employer organisations;
- (k) representative of research and development units;

- (l) representative of gmina government bodies selected by the Joint Central and Local Government Committee;
- (m) representative of powiat government bodies, selected by the Joint Central and Local Government Committee;
- (n) representative of trade unions;
- (o) three representatives of non-governmental organisations promoting rural development, including organisations active in the field of ensuring equal opportunities;
- (p) representatives of higher education institutions selected by the Central Council of Higher Education.

4. Participants of the National Rural Network

In accordance with RDP 2007–2013, the NRN has an open character. It groups administrations (of local, regional and national levels) and the stakeholders who foster rural development and contribute in a direct or indirect manner to a better use of the EAFRD resources. To ensure a better functioning of the network, a list has been compiled comprising administrations and entities that are engaged in promoting rural development. The NRN can be adhered to by all entities that actively participate in rural development, and are willing to receive and provide relevant information.

Such entities include in particular:

- (a) government administration bodies interested in rural development, including institutions responsible for structural funds;
- (b) voivodeship, powiat and gmina governments;
- (c) branch organisations;
- (d) cooperative organisations;
- (e) agricultural chambers;
- (f) ministerial institutes;
- (g) economic operators;
- (h) research and development units;
- (i) non-governmental organisations, especially those active in the agri-food sector or engaged in rural development in its broad meaning;
- (j) State agricultural advisory units;
- (k) nature conservation services;
- (l) local action groups (LAGs), their formal and informal networks and other networks of importance for actions in support of rural development at the local level;
- (m) secondary and higher education institutions;
- (n) natural persons.

5. Action Plan of the NRN

Pursuant to Article 68(2)(b) of the Council Regulation No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and to the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013, the Action Plan of the NRN comprises, among others, the following specific tasks:

- identification and analysis of good transferable rural development practices and the provision of information about them;
- transfer of good practices and innovative projects as well as organisation of exchanges of experience and know-how;
- the preparation of training programmes for local action groups in the process of formation, including exchange of experiences among local action groups;
- network management;
- technical assistance for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation;
- support for collaboration among institutions, including at the international level;
- exchange of expertise and policy evaluation as regards rural development.

With the view to carry out these tasks, meetings, trainings, seminars, expert networks, etc. are organised. Furthermore, a website has been set up for the NRN. The www.ksow.gov.pl website constitutes the main platform for exchanging information among entities engaged in rural development, including the institutions within the NRN structure (Central Secretariat and 16 regional secretariats).

In addition, a NRN bulletin is published.

The NRN's objective is pursued mainly through the actions provided for in the NRN action plans, which are elaborated for the Central Secretariat and regional secretariats in two-year intervals. The NRN action plan sets out the objectives of measures, a framework schedule of action, and an indicative budget (financing plan with sections focusing on individual actions).

6. Financing of the National Rural Network

The budget of the National Rural Network is planned in the amount of EUR 55 million, and allocated under RDP 2007–2013 Technical Assistance. It covers the expenditure on the functioning of the NRN structure, such as the costs of operation and organisation of central and regional units – EUR 11 million, and the expenditure associated with the performance of tasks within the network (as per the NRN Action Plan) – EUR 44 million.

7. Website of the National Rural Network

As planned, the National Rural Network website was launched at the end of 2009. This website is a principal communication and network-building tool for network participants and all other entities engaged in stimulating rural development. A major ambition in designing the website for the National Rural Network, which is available at www.ksow.gov.pl, was to create a transparent and functional informational platform, providing an opportunity to find information in a fast and easy way.

The main objective of the network – at local, regional, national and Community levels – is to ensure effective and dynamic rural development through the exchange of information and dissemination of good practices associated with the rural development programmes/projects carried out, as well as improvement in the implementation of rural development instruments, and effective evaluation of their operation. The actions taken by the Central Secretariat and regional secretariats are intended to promote the principle of partnership and to foster exchange of information, which will in turn enable all the interested parties to obtain exhaustive information about the measures introduced at national, regional and local levels.

Furthermore, the website serves the purpose of propagating good practices under all axes, and tightening the cooperation between network partners. The administration of the NRN website is ensured on an ad-hoc basis, thus the information published on the main page is always up-to-date and matches the rich calendar of events that involve the Central Secretariat, as well as regional secretariats and network partners.

The website contains abundant information of considerable value both to institutions that are already engaged in promoting rural development and to entities that intend to become partners of the NRN. The first basic step consists in registration in the NRN partner database – everyone can do it individually. The second step involves nothing more than developing cooperation, and exploiting own knowledge and experience, as well as that of potential partners, in individually selected areas of activity. Moreover, the NRN website is a priceless source of information about, among others, local action groups, agricultural producer organisations, loans from the State budget for advance financing of operations under RDP 2007–2013, as well as on regional products.

It is also a place where one can learn about European rural networks, see how other EU Member States approach a given rural development issue, and go back to sections on national regions to consult the calendar and find the most interesting events in the nearest future.

The www.ksow.gov.pl website is maintained and coordinated by the Division – Central Secretariat of the National Rural Network in the Department of Rural Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. We hope that you are satisfied with what we have achieved thus far, and that in the future the website will become a meeting point and a place for exchanging information for all those who take interest in matters related to Polish rural areas and rural development.

8. European Network for Rural Development (EN RD)

The European Network for Rural Development – EN RD – was established in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The main tasks of EN RD provided for in the Regulation consist in:

- a) analysing and disseminating information on Community rural development measures;
- b) disseminating and consolidating at Community level the good rural development practice;
- c) providing information on rural development in the Community and in third countries;

- d) organising meetings and seminars at Community level for those actively involved in rural development;
- e) setting up and running expert networks with a view to facilitating an exchange of expertise and supporting implementation and evaluation of rural development policy;
- f) supporting national networks and transnational cooperation initiatives.

The Coordination committee has been appointed to coordinate EN RD activities. The first meeting of the EN RD Coordination committee (established by way of Commission Decision 2008/168/EC of 20 February 2008) took place on 1 October 2009 in Brussels. This was an important step in preparations for the network's operation, especially in elaborating its work programme for 2008/2009. The Coordination committee gathers twice a year in order to:

- prepare and implement the EN RD activities;
- ensure coordination between EN RD, the national rural networks referred to in Article 68 of Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, and organisations active in the field of rural development at Community level;
- advise the Commission on the annual work programme of the EN RD and contribute to the choice and coordination of thematic work carried out by the EN RD;
- propose to the Commission the creation of thematic working groups.

In addition, at the beginning of 2009, the European Commission established the following three thematic groups:

- TWG 1: Targeting rural territorial specificities and needs in rural development programmes
- TWG 2: Agriculture and the wider rural economy
- TWG 3: Public goods and public intervention

These groups are to analyse the methods for implementing the rural development policy in different EU Member States, and draw conclusions from this analysis as regards the future of this policy. The task of the groups is also to identify good practices and participate in disseminating and promoting international cooperation. Each thematic group works in the area indicated in its name. Therefore:

- TWG 1 focuses on the issues relating to the differences between rural areas across the EU, and on the manner of accounting for these differences in rural development programmes – defining rural areas, determining their categories, and tailoring support instruments to their needs.
- TWG 2 analyses the differences in rural economy and the connections among sectors; it looks not only at the rural development support instruments that have traditionally been associated with the CAP, but also at the activities covered by the cohesion policy.
- TWG 3 deals with the issues related to the identification of public goods delivered by agriculture for the benefit of the society, as well as on the revision of rural development programmes and the manner of approaching the subject of public goods in individual countries.

In February 2010, the fourth thematic group was created: Delivery mechanisms of EU rural development policy.

- TWG 4 is engaged in activities aimed at applying and implementing the European rural development policy, and at participating in its management: activation of EU rural development policy mechanisms in selected Member States at all institutional levels, and taking measures to improve the methods of action, to disseminate good practices, and to make suggestions as to their future implementation.

The thematic groups are composed of about 10–15 persons appointed by the European Commission on the basis of the propositions submitted by the Member States. The analysis and elaboration of reports has been entrusted to a team of specialists employed by the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development.

The representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development participate in the works of the four thematic groups. The materials produced in the course of groups' activities are available on-line at the following websites:

- TWG1: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/whos-who/thematic-working-groups/twg1/en/twg1_home_en.cfm
- TWG2: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/whos-who/thematic-working-groups/twg2/en/twg2_home_en.cfm
- TWG3: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/whos-who/thematic-working-groups/twg3/en/twg3_home_en.cfm
- TWG4: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/whos-who/thematic-working-groups/twg4/en/twg4_home_en.cfm

With the view to carry out the evaluation tasks referred to in Article 67(e) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, the European Evaluation Network was established. It is a part of the European Network for Rural Development, yet it performs its tasks in an autonomous manner. The objective of the Evaluation Expert Network is to establish good practices and to build capacity in evaluating Rural Development Programmes, and, consequently, to increase the usefulness of monitoring and evaluation as tools for improving, targeting and implementing rural development policy. The network is open to anyone evaluating rural development programmes and the related measures in the EU: rural development evaluators, programme managers, policy makers, academics and researchers, and other experts. In fulfilling the tasks of the Evaluation Expert Network, the European Commission is assisted by the Evaluation Helpdesk. The Evaluation Helpdesk produces expert opinions and guidelines regarding the tools and methods used in gathering and evaluating data; it also facilitates international exchange of good practices in the field of programme evaluation. The action plan and the structure of the Evaluation Helpdesk are presented at the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/network/index_en.html.

The EN RD has its Contact Point, which functions as an intermediary between individual national networks. It is a Brussels-based team of specialists working on numerous tasks.

The Contact Point ensures:

1. **Close cooperation with national networks.** The work is coordinated through direct contacts, meetings of national units, and regular consultations. The aim of such cooperation is to adjust the actions taken by the European network to national needs.
2. **Support for international cooperation among local action groups.** Its goal is to facilitate the search for partners and to provide information on procedures for selecting them.
3. **It plays a role of Secretariat for entities within the network,** including for the Coordination committee and the LEADER subcommittee.
4. **Possibility to access the services of an expert group.** It is possible to commission experts to carry out various analyses, for example, concerning the work of thematic groups or more specialised tasks connected with seminars or publications.
5. **Information and communication tool kit.** It includes publications, special editions presenting examples of good practices, thematic papers and magazine, as well as a multi-language informational website with interactive thematic sections. The website also features a section with frequently asked questions and a search engine which makes it possible to find examples of good practices and of LEADER projects.
6. **Organisation of seminars and conferences.** Seminars and conferences are held mainly to promote exchange of information and of good ideas.
7. **Promotion and representation of the EN RD.** The Contact Point is also responsible for promoting and representing the network at various meetings, conferences, trade fairs and other events where the information about the actions taken by the EN RD should be presented.
8. **Hosting persons dealing with rural development policy.** The Contact Point has a possibility to host guests and provide them with information about issues associated with rural development and the undertaken activities.

9. Website of the European Network for Rural Development

Those who would like to broaden their knowledge on the operation of the European Network for Rural Development and national networks in other Member States are invited to visit the EN RD website, which is run by the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission.

The European Network for Rural Development serves an important role in the process of implementing the Rural Development Programme in the European Union. At the Community level, the European Network for Rural Development functions as a platform for exchanging information, and it creates conditions for smooth operation of national networks, which function in as many as 26 out of 27 EU Member States (soon, the network will be joined by Romania).

The EN RD website is a marvellous source of knowledge about rural development in Europe. It contains a lot of information on the Union's rural development policy, including the relevant strategic guidelines and other documents of special importance for its implementation.

Concise information on conclusions from previous conferences, as well as on currently discussed matters and organised events can be found, first of all, in the *Rur@J News* newsletter. Those who seek specialist information offered in an accessible way and look for examples of interesting solutions

in the area of rural development, applied at the European level and in other Member States, will surely be satisfied with the contents of the *EU Rural Review* quarterly. The problems discussed thus far include, among others, innovation for rural areas, climate change and rural diversity. We believe that you will find a lot of interesting and useful information in both publications available at the website. They are certainly worth reading.

Persons for whom rural development issues are a new area of exploration will surely be happy to find the glossary of basic terms in the field and the *Who is who* section. Yet, the website is something more than just the source of knowledge on how the EN RD operates. The website also features a calendar of all rural development related events organised in various Member States.

It contains a lot of practical information on interesting conferences, trade fairs or seminars prepared by national networks and European institutions. Shortly, it will also include information on selected events taking place in Poland. For local action groups that would like to start international collaboration, the *Transnational Cooperation Guide* has been made available on the website. The *Guide* gives practical guidelines on how to initiate cooperation and prepare a project. Those groups who do not know how to find foreign partners for cooperation will certainly find the LAG database useful, with contact details of all groups in Europe. International collaboration offers are also published in the LEADER section of the NRN website.

The EN RD website is available at: www.enrd.ec.europa.eu, or via a banner on the NRN website (www.ksow.gov.pl or www.ksow.pl). It is maintained by the EN RD Contact Point – e-mail: info@enrd.eu, telephone: +32 2 235 20 41.

10. Examples of implemented projects

Dolnośląskie Voivodeship

Project title: A study tour for farmers interested in gaining knowledge and experience on establishing and functioning of agricultural associations and organizations, including Agricultural Producer Groups, in European Union Member States, based on the example of the Free State of Saxony.

Co-executor: Dolnośląskie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Wrocław.

Project implementation date: 30 November – 2 December 2010.

Budget: PLN 33,000

Project objective: allowing the participants to gain knowledge and experience on establishing and functioning of agricultural associations and organizations, including Agricultural Producer Groups, in European Union Member States, based on the example of the Free State of Saxony. **Beneficiaries:** farmers from Dolnośląskie Voivodeship interested in establishing agricultural producer groups, persons engaged in creating agricultural producer groups in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and involved in relevant consultancy and supervision.

Project description: Organisation of the tour was yet another element of mutual cooperation between Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and the Free State of Saxony in Germany. The schedule of the trip was prepared by Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, in consultation with the Saxon Ministry of Environment and Agriculture, and the National Office for Environment, Agriculture and Geology in Dresden. On the Dolnośląskie part, transport, accommodation and catering was organised by Dolnośląskie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Wrocław, in cooperation with the National Rural Network. The group was accompanied by a licensed tour guide – an employee of Regional Secretariat of NRN in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, who took care that the trip run smoothly. The group consisted of 30 persons from Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, mostly agricultural producers specialising in dairy farming and cattle farming for beef.

The farmers were accompanied by consultants on animal production and on establishing and supervising Agricultural Producer Groups. A representative of another National Rural Network partner, namely Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, who pursues a doctoral degree, specialising in agricultural producer groups, also took part in the trip.

During the three-day trip, the Lower Silesians visited Saxon agricultural farms and cooperatives specialising in dairy and meat cattle production, in plant production, and in direct sale of their products. The visitors were introduced to operational rules of farmer associations in Saxony as well as to issues related to farm management. They also got familiar with the challenges faced by European agriculture and with the directions of its development. Representatives of Dolnośląskie Agricultural Advisory Centre, responsible for advisory on establishing agricultural producer groups, and the person responsible for keeping the register of such groups in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Marshal Office, advised farmers on how to establish farmers associations in line with applicable Polish regulations. Heated discussions between the participants have shown that farmers who had wanted to establish an agricultural producer group before the trip were reassured on its benefits. The Saxon example has proved that only those producers who cooperate have a chance to function effectively on the European market. Getting to know each other and building mutual trust, observed during the tour, encouraged the farmers to form associations .

Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship

Project title: "Culinary Voyage around Kujawy and Pomerania" organised in Berlin.

Entity in charge of project implementation: Marshal Office in Toruń.

Project objective: popularization of cultural heritage, including culinary heritage, as well as ecological and tourist values of rural areas of Kujawy and Pomerania.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Organisation and participation in domestic and foreign events.

Budget: PLN 98,024.45

Project Beneficiaries: German consumers, residents of Berlin and Brandenburg.

Project description: In August 2009, an event entitled "**Culinary Voyage around Kujawy and Pomerania**", promoting regional traditional and organic products, was organised in Berlin in cooperation with Polish Embassy and German-Polish Association in Germany. The presentation was held in Wannsee, a leisure district of Berlin.

A two-day event was attended by several thousand Berliners and residents of Brandenburg.

The main objective of the undertaking was to popularize cultural heritage, including culinary heritage, as well as ecological and tourist values of rural areas of Kujawy and Pomerania. Promotion of regional products took on a form of tasting and sale of traditional and organic products. Food producers and distributors took part in it.

To encourage involvement of the participants in the event and to familiarise them with Kujawy, Pomerania and Poland, a knowledge quiz about famous persons and interesting places was held. The prizes included sets of region-promoting gifts, and vouchers for weekend stays in Toruń and Bydgoszcz.

A folk band from Kujawy, a blues band from Toruń, and mimes entertaining the audience formed the artistic lineup of the event. The organizers also took care of decoration – in the form of display of handicraft and artwork.

The event was moderated by a Berlin TV presenter, who, among others, held interviews on economic, cultural and social topics related to Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship and its links with Germany.

The target group of the promotion were German consumers, residents of Berlin and Brandenburg, persons relaxing in Berlin district Wannsee, as well as prominent representatives of authorities and politicians from Berlin and Brandenburg. The scale of the event and its wide media promotion that started in July both contributed to a good attendance.

"Culinary Trip around Kujawy and Pomerania" was followed by another promotional event, namely "Tastes of Kujawy and Pomerania", organised by German-Polish Association in August and September in a number of places around Berlin and Brandenburg .

Lubelskie Voivodeship

Project title: Renewable energy sources as a chance for development of Lubelskie Voivodeship - development of agricultural biogas plants.

Entity in charge of project implementation (partners): Marshal Office

of Lubelskie Voivodeship in Lublin, Department of Agriculture and Environment and Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network of Lubelskie Voivodeship, Lubelskie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Końskowola, Spatial Planning Office in Lublin, Foundation for the Development of Lubelskie Voivodeship.

Project implementation date: 5-6 November 2009.

Project objective: Presenting the possibilities of development for Lubelskie Voivodeship on the emerging biogas market. Discussing with entrepreneurs, farmers, and municipal as well as powiat authorities various formal, legal and economic issues arising in the course of constructing biogas plants.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Renewable energy sources.

Budget: PLN 38,439

Project Beneficiaries: The participants of the conference included representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Economy, as well as employees of Marshal Office and of Lubelskie Agricultural Advisory Centre, entrepreneurs, farmers and representatives of gmina and powiat governments.

Project description: In Lubelskie Voivodeship, the arable land resources which could be used for energy crops make it possible to produce the quantity of biomass ample for the needs of several dozen biogas plants, with the capacity of ca. 2 MW. For infrastructural and environmental reasons, the best locations for biogas plants are unused agricultural farms – former state-owned agricultural farms, and unused industrial plants – sugar factories and other agri-food processing facilities.

The conference was organised by Lubelskie Voivodeship Marshal Office in Lublin, in cooperation with Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network of Lubelskie Voivodeship, Spatial Planning Office in Lublin, and the Foundation for the Development of Lubelskie Voivodeship – the leader of Lublin Eco-Energy Cluster. The event was held under the honorary patronage of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. The conference topics "*Renewable energy sources as a chance for the development of Lubelskie Voivodeship - development of agricultural biogas plants*" were selected with the view to attract a wide audience.

In Lubelskie Voivodeship, there are towns and gminas where biogas plants are already being established, but for the majority of the area they have remained a novelty. Therefore, the technological process had to be explained to conference participants, as well as the activities undertaken by individual institutions, the sources of investment subsidies and facility location and opening conditions. The conference dealt with practical aspects of using renewable energy sources. One of the topics were the possibilities of using biomass to produce biogas in Lubelski region. Potential investors got acquainted with formal and legal issues regarding the connection to the electrical power network, spatial aspects of biogas production location in Lubelskie Voivodeship, the possibility to finance the investment under ROP LV for the years 2007-2013, current regulations concerning renewable energy sources and methods of financing renewable energy sources investments. Examples of biogas plants operating in Poland were also included. Participants had a chance to get acquainted in detail with

experiences of investors in the field of construction and operation of a biogas plant in Listków and a biogas plant in Parczew powiat.

Photo: Conference on renewable energy sources (RS NRN archive)

Lubuskie Voivodeship

Project title: Conference: "Organic farming – the present and perspectives for development".

Entity in charge of project implementation: Lubuski Agricultural Advisory Centre.

Project objective: Popularization of organic farming and presentation of competition award winners.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Identification and analysis of rural development good practices that can be transferred, and informing about such practices..

Budget: PLN 10,000**Project beneficiaries:** Organic farmers or farmers willing to set up organic activity.

Project description: On 11 December 2009 in Kalsk, Lubuskie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Kalsk, in cooperation with Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network of the Department of Rural Development Programmes of Lubuskie Voivodeship Marshal Office, organised a conference "Organic farming – the present and perspectives for development." The conference was opened by Mr. Andrzej Bratkiewicz – Director of Lubuski Agricultural Advisory Centre. The meeting was also honoured by the presence of Mr. Stanisław Tomczyszyn, Member of Lubuskie Voivodeship Executive Board. . The lecture part covered some interesting topics related to ecology. Mrs. Justyna Magdziarz, representing the Voivodeship Inspectorate of Commercial Quality of Agri—Food Products in Zielona Góra, discussed organic production in Poland and European Union, while Mrs. Dorota Metera, a representative of the Organic Farming Certifying Body BIOEKSPERT Warsaw, presented a lecture "Legal regulations applicable to organic farming." Mrs. Anna Litwinow from Agricultural Advisory Centre in Radom talked with participants of the meeting devoted to organic products market, while employees of the Regional Office of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture in Zielona Góra prepared a lecture devoted to organic farming audits.

Photo: Participants of the conference "Organic farming – the present and perspectives for development."

(SR NRN archive)

Łódzkie Voivodeship

Project title: Competition for the best agritourism farm in the Voivodeship

Entity in charge of project implementation (partners): Regional Secretariat of NRN in the Łódzkie Voivodeship in cooperation with Łódzki Agricultural Advisory Centre in Bratoszewice.

Project implementation date: June – September 2009

Project objective: Identification and analysis of rural development good practices that can be transferred, and informing about such practices..

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Identification and analysis of rural development good practices that can be transferred, and informing about such practices..

Budget: PLN 34,166.35

Project beneficiaries: Owners of agritourism farms in Łódzkie Voivodeship.

Project description: Agritourism is a special form of leisure, linking tourism with agriculture, and making it possible to relax in natural surroundings and to enjoy the products and services offered by the farm. As one of few non-agricultural activities, it stimulates agricultural growth by creating advantageous market for agricultural raw materials and products, and by offering a possibility to rent

accommodation and render services, thus increasing the income of farmers. In this way agritourism becomes an important non-agricultural source of income, contributing at the same time to the attractiveness of rural areas and to increased economic activity of local communities.

With a view to identify good practices and to disseminate information about them, and in consequence, to encourage the establishment of agritourism farms, a contest "Golden Pear Tree" was organised for the best agritourism farm in the Voivodeship. Łódzkie Agricultural Advisory Centre with its headquarters in Bratoszewice was invited to help organize the event. The competition covered the entire Voivodeship.

At the beginning, relevant information was placed in the Internet portal of the Marshal Office in Łódź and of Łódzkie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Bratoszewice. Simultaneously, a two-week broadcast of information spots in the local TV channel took place.

The competition was opened for farmers who provided agritourism services as their additional source of income. Each person meeting the aforementioned requirements and willing to participate had to fill in application form and submit it to Łódzkie Agricultural Advisory Centre.

The Awarding Committee, appointed by Łódzkie Voivodeship Marshal, elaborated the evaluation criteria, arranged the work schedule, and after the application submission procedure was over, began to visit the farms. The Committee drove nearly 900 km, and visited 21 farms. In each of them the same evaluation scenario was applied; the owner showed around the place, described its features and answered the Committee's questions.

It was not easy to select the winners, so the Committee decided to grant five distinctions, next to the main awards. The competition was closed by a formal conference, when the results were announced and winners were granted awards. The winners were awarded Golden Pear Tree statues and financial prizes – PLN 5 500 for the first place, PLN 4 000 for the second, and PLN 3 000 for the third. Owners of the distinguished farms received such prizes as household appliances. The awarded farms offer a wide range of attractions. Their guest may participate in special events, or relax by the water, go angling and grill their catch, go horseriding, mushroom picking, and even take a bread baking or liqueur making Course.

The offer of the farms that took part in the competition is available in a publication issued by the Regional Secretariat, which complements the undertaking and is a perfect tool to promote agriculture in the Voivodeship.

Małopolskie Voivodeship

Project title: Sheep herding in Bielany – exhibition of shepherd culture.

Entity in charge of project implementation: Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network of Małopolskie Voivodeship.

Partners: University of Agriculture in Krakow.

Implementation date: 19 September 2010

Project objective: Sheep herding was organised with a view to bring the shepherd culture tradition closer to the residents of Małopolskie Voivodeship, and to highlight its significance for the region.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Transfer of good practices and of innovative projects; organization of experience and know-how exchange.

Budget: PLN 142,437.00

Project description: In the experimental station of the Department of Swine and Small Ruminant Breeding in Krakow, within the Faculty of Animal Sciences, the Sheep Herding in Bielany - exhibition of shepherd culture" was organised for the second time. The first edition of sheep herding was held in

2009, aimed at popularizing shepherd culture, sheep production, and traditional and regional products, enjoyed a great interest.

On Sunday, 19 September, the traditions and culture of Podhale were presented in Krakow. Sheep herding was officially opened by Marek Nawara - Marshal of Małopolskie Voivodeship, and by Professor Janusz Żmija - Rector of the University of Agriculture in Krakow. The organizers prepared numerous attractions, including: sheep herding, kneading of traditional "oscypek" cheese, and tasting of traditional highland delicacies. Sheep herding was accompanied by two highland bands: "Zbóje" and "Turbacyki".

The programme of the event also included numerous competitions and games, for both children and adults.

Display of border collies, able to herd as many as 1500 sheep on mountain pastures, enjoyed the greatest interest. Upon whistles and commands of the master, a dog herded sheep in shown directions. Upon the herder dog's tutelage, sheep immediately formed rings and divided themselves into groups. A demonstration how to make the traditional "oscypek" sheep cheese, hosted by Kazimierz Furczoń - a shepherd from Leśnica, also enjoyed great popularity. Several thousand residents of Krakow and its surroundings took part in the sheep herding. The main assumption underlying the event was to use the information and to exchange experience in order to preserve the shepherd culture. The organisers also wanted to draw public attention to the fact that some trades and rituals related to them are vanishing. This year's edition of sheep herding in Bielany was also a chance to taste regional delicacies: oscypek, cold meats from Podhale, traditional ice-creams, beeswax products, and other treasures from villages of Małopolskie Voivodeship.

Mazowieckie Voivodeship

Project title: Organisation of the Voivodeship conference on rural development – III Masovian Rural Development Congress.

Entity in charge of project implementation: Local government of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship.

Project implementation date: 1-2 October 2008.

Project objective: To analyse financial support instruments and rural development directions, and to exchange related experiences between local governments of various levels.

Project beneficiaries: Representatives of central and local governments, research staff dealing with the Congress' issues.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Identification and analysis of rural development good practices that can be transferred, and informing about such practices..

Budget: PLN 102,894.69.

Project description: III Masovian Rural Development Congress took place on 1-2 October 2008 in the Conference and Leisure Centre "Łochów Palace" in Łochów.

The event hosted 212 participants. They were mostly mayors and voits of gminas, starosts of poviats from Mazowieckie Voivodeship, as well as representatives of central and local government dealing with rural areas, members of the Parliament, representatives of the Sejmik of Mazowieckie Voivodeship and guests from: Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Podlaskie, Lubelskie and Lubuskie Voivodeships. Representatives of science also attended the Congress.

The Masovian Rural Development Congress is a regular event, organized in various parts of the Voivodeship, in rural or urban and rural gminas, in historic palaces and court complexes. The venues are selected with a view to promote these historic places in the region and in Poland. The III Congress focused on a presentation of rural development plans in Mazowieckie Voivodeship until 2013, in the context of regional, national and European policy. It also formally inaugurated the Leader Axis 4 measures under RDP 2007-2013. Speeches and discussions on first day were held in the following

thematic blocks: *“Supporting rural development in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship”*, *“State policy in the field of supporting rural development”* and *“European Union support for rural development”*. The second day of the Congress was fully dedicated to Leader Axis measures under RDP 2007-2013. The participants could get acquainted with expert knowledge, presented at special information and promotion stands set up, among others, by: Mazowieckie Voivodeship Marshal Office, Masovian Unit of EU Programmes Implementation, Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, European Fund for the Development of Polish Villages, and the Town and Gmina of Łochów. During official and behind-the-scenes talks, voits and mayors emphasized that thanks to effective partner cooperation with the Local Government of Mazowieckie Voivodeship, the distribution of Community funds for rural areas runs smoothly with no major obstracles. They also drew attention to the need of organizing such meetings as the III Masovian Rural Development Congress in the future, where the issues of greatest importance to Mazowieckie Voivodeship could be discussed.

Opolskie Voivodeship

Project title: A conference “The Action ‘Villages of the Future’ as a means to control the rural renewal process in the region”, along with a study visit to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria.

Entity in charge of project implementation (partners):

Marshal Office of the Opolskie Voivodeship, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Office of the Secretariat of the National Rural Network

Implementation date: 24-26 September 2009

Project objective: The aim of the undertaking was to show methods of controlling the rural renewal process, and to illustrate the process by presenting rural renewal programmes in Opolskie Voivodeship, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lower Austria.

Opolskie Voivodeship is a leader in implementing regional support schemes.

The Rural Renewal Programme, operating since 1997, thanks to a grassroots activation of rural communities, has contributed to the multifaceted development of villages, whereas development strategies of individual villages, elaborated at the level of villages and adopted by their residents are the basis for sustainable growth of both villages and the entire region. The participants were presented with a tested rural development method, which in a long run contributes to permanent development and to enhancing living standards in rural areas.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented:

1. Transfer of good practices and of innovative projects; organization of experience and know-how exchange – exchange of knowledge and experience in rural renewal.
2. Technical assistance for inter-regional and trans-national cooperation – national and foreign study visits aimed at exchanging experiences in rural development.

Project description:

Between 23 and 26 September 2009, a conference and a study visit devoted to rural renewal took place.

On 23 September 2009, during the conference entitled “The action ‘Villages of the Future’ as a means to control the rural renewal process in the region”, attended, among others, by members of executive boards of Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships, by directors of rural development departments from Dolnośląskie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Świętokrzyskie, Lubuskie, Śląskie and Opolskie Voivodeships, by representatives of Local Action Groups from Opolskie Voivodeship, and by representatives of higher education institutions, rural development issues were presented from national, regional and gmina perspectives.

The conference hosted the following speakers: Mr. Mieczysław Paradowski – Deputy Director of the Department of Rural Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, who presented the assumptions of the EU rural development policy after 2013; Mr. Ryszard Wilczyński – Voivode of the Opolskie Voivodeship, who talked about controlling the process of rural renewal as part of regional programmes, as well as on the assumptions of the actions “Villages of the Future” in Opolskie Voivodeship; Mr. Witold Magryś from the Silesian Association of Gminas and Poviats, who presented visions of rural development – conclusions from the III Rural Renewal Congress; Mr. Wiesław Kryniowski – Director of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Opolskie Voivodeship Marshal Office, who talked on the role of rural renewal programme in rural development process in Opolskie Voivodeship; and Mr. Joachim Wojtala, Mayor of Gmina Gogolin, who presented the achievements in rural renewal as a part of rural development policy of Gmina Gogolin. The conference was hosted by Mr. Tomasz Kostuś – Member of Opolskie Voivodeship Executive Board in charge of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Opolskie Voivodeship Marshal Office, which is responsible, among others, for implementation of regional Rural Renewal Programme in Opolskie Voivodeship.

The summary of subjects discussed during the conference took place in Kamień Śląski (Gmina Gogolin) – the village where the VI European Rural Renewal Congress was held in 2007.

On 24 September 2009, a study visit began, with the first stop in Pilszcz (Gmina Kietrz). This village is a perfect “renewal” example, and is currently an attractive residential place with a rich cultural and social offer, and with an entertainment programme for visitors.

Then the participants visited Drevohostice in the Olomouc Region (Czech Republic), which is one of the partner regions of Opolskie Voivodeship. Its Starost, Mr. Stanislav Skypala, talked about the use of Community funds to implement rural renewal programme and the Leader programme. The next stop was Radkovy, a place characterized by remarkable care for public areas and facilities, where Community funds are effectively used for rural renewal, and where solar farms generate electrical power used to heat public utility facilities and agricultural farms.

On 25 September 2009, the participants visited a heritage park in Modra, which exists owing to financial support from the Rural Renewal Programme and the Leader Programme, and is a tourist attraction.

Then, the participants went to Slovakia, where a meeting was organized with Mr. Frantisek Jezky - the Mayor of Trencianska Turna who discussed the use of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development to promote cultural and natural values. Then, in Plavecky Peter, Mrs. Viera Kollarova – its Mayor, presented the achievements of the gmina in taking care for folk architecture and village spatial management characteristic for that region.

On the last day of the trip, 26 September 2009, the participants went to Poysdorf in Austria, where Mr. Karl Wilfing, the gmina leader for rural renewal, presented a number of projects for village senior citizens (implemented from rural development funds), and then talked about the energy landscape of the Lower Austria climate network, and about the programme “Rural and Urban Renewal.” Then, in the town of Herrnbaumgarten, some interesting solutions aimed at promoting the town and developing tourism were presented; these included: establishing small museums of rural tradition, as well as agritourism farms and restaurants serving local culinary delicacies and wine from numerous vineyards of the area. The last stop of the trip was Laa an der Thaya, where Mr. Christian Muck, the director of Association of Municipalities implementing environmental protection tasks in the Laa Region, presented the “Energy Shield” programme, under which a biomass heating plant and a thermal leisure centre operate.

Podkarpackie Voivodeship

Project title: Festival of Borderland Cultures and Victuals.

Entity in charge of project implementation: RS NRN in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, Gmina Lubaczów.

Project implementation period: 15-16 August 2009.

Project objective: Promoting a rich culinary tradition of the Eastern borderlands of Poland, characteristic of Lubaczów and Podkarpacie regions.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Organisation of and participation in national, regional and local rural development related events .

Budget: PLN 70,000

Project beneficiaries: Residents of Eastern borderlands, of Podkarpackie Voivodeship and of the entire country.

Project description: On 15 and 16 August 2009, in Basznia Dolna (Gmina Lubaczów) a Festival of Borderland Cultures and Victuals took place. Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network in Podkarpackie Voivodeship implemented this project with a partner – Gmina Lubaczów. The project was executed under the measure “Organisation of and participation in national, regional and local rural development related events”. The amount of PLN ca. 70 thousand was assigned to the event, out of which PLN 30 thousand were earmarked for RS NRN in Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the Action Plan for 2008-2009..

Festival of Borderland Cultures and Victuals, organized for the first time in Podkarpacie in Basznia Dolna (Gmina Lubaczów), is a supralocal event, aimed at promoting the rich culinary tradition of Polish Eastern Borderlands, characteristic for Lubaczów and Podkarpacie region .The event gave an opportunity to show the potential of the so called farmers' wives' associations as well as of non-governmental organizations. The Festival of Borderland Cultures and Victuals is also a perfect occasion to promote good practices related to high quality food, as well as for exchanging knowledge and experience.

The visitors could taste borderland delicacies. Though, next to the tables laden with food and drinks, there were plenty other attractions awaiting them. Representatives of farmers' wives' associations, of hunting associations, and of agritourism and fishing farms presented their culinary products, made following traditional borderland recipes. Mr. Dariusz Gnatowski hosted a culinary show "Mr. Boczek and his borderland cooking." Splendour was added to the festival by performances of Polish and foreign folk groups, including “Niespodzianka” and “Karpaty” folk groups from Poland, “Georgian Gene” from Georgia, and “Sumadija” from Serbia. The “Pacalycha” cabaret from Lviv took care that the visitors had a good laugh, while in the evening you could dance to the street band’s tunes.

During the two-days of the Festival, folk art and handicraft fair took place, as well as smithery, pottery and wickerwork shows. Two photo exhibitions were opened: “Memory and Faith – Churches of Eastern Borderlands of the Republic of Poland” by Stanisław Szarzyński - in the Blessed Jakub Strzemię Co-cathedral; and “Radruż Impressions” by Tadeusz Budziński - in the Borderland Museum. A performance of a Galician Academic Chamber Choir from Lviv and a lute concert by Anna Wiktoria Swoboda took place in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Grace. On Sunday, Mr Tomasz Kuba Kozłowski delivered a lecture in the Borderland Museum, entitled “Borderland Melting Pot of Nations Cultures and Religions – there was a Union here once”, thus making the borderland closer to the audience.

The Festival has left indelible culinary impressions, and was a chance to have fun. An equally important aspect of the event was its motto – do not efface the beautiful traditions of Polish Eastern Borderlands, and we hope, that we did manage to achieve this goal.

Podlaskie Voivodeship

Project title: A ploughing contest.

Entity in charge of project implementation: RS NRN, Podlaskie Agricultural Advisory Centre (PODR) in Szepietowo.

Project implementation date: 2 - 6 September 2009

Project objective: Promoting the right agrotechnology and the proper use of equipment .

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Identification and analysis of rural development good practices that can be transferred, and informing about such practices..

Budget: PLN 30,571.59

Project beneficiaries: Farmers, students of secondary schools of agriculture, rural residents.

Project description: The ploughing contest that took place on 2 – 6 September 2009 was an initiative which helped to identify and analyse rural development good practices that can be transferred, and to disseminate information on such practices.. The undertaking was carried out at a regional level (preliminaries in Dowspuda, Czartajewo and Rudka, the finals at the Voivodeship level in Szepietowo), in cooperation with the Secretariat of NRN and Podlaskie Agricultural Advisory Centre in Szepietowo. The Voivodeship contest in traditional ploughing was organized for the second time with a view to popularise the right agrotechnology and the proper use of equipment, as well as to promote the “be the best” attitude.

Organisational expenses covered by the NRN Secretariat were the costs of the evaluating committee, for both the preliminaries and the finals, and the logistics costs – catering for participants, costs of awards for winners at regional and Voivodeship levels (cups and prizes in kind). The undertaking hosted 319 participants (50 in Rudka, 52 in Czartajewo, 57 in Dowspuda, and 160 in Szepietowo). The finals took place during the “Corn Day”, thus the audience of around 7 thousand could watch the contest on the spot, and further several dozen thousand could enjoy a live broadcast in regional media (TVP3 Białystok, Radio Białystok).

Pomorskie Voivodeship

Project title: Art contest for children on Community subjects, entitled “The Village of my Dreams.”

Entity in charge of project implementation: Regional Secretariat of NRN in cooperation with primary schools of Pomorskie Voivodeship.

Project implementation period:

October – December 2009

Competition announcement – October 2009

Artistic works submission deadline – 10.11.2009

Selection of the best works – 21.12.2009

Project objective:

Encouraging teachers and schoolchildren get actively interested in European Union issues, focusing the kids’ attention on changes that have taken place in their environment since the accession of Poland to the European Union, popularising knowledge on Community Funds, in particular in rural areas, and on their role in the process of development of our country, promoting Rural Development Program (RDP), developing imagination and manual skills among children.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Transfer of good practices and of innovative projects; organization of experience and know-how exchange.

Budget: PLN 30,371.86 gross – the project was fully financed by NRN.

Project beneficiaries: Pupils of I-III grades of rural primary schools in the Pomorskie Voivodeship.

Project description: The artistic contest “The Village of my Dreams” was aimed at pupils in grades I-III of rural primary schools in the entire Pomorskie Voivodeship. The children’s task was to visualise changes that have taken place or that should take place in their environment thanks to making use of the European funds for rural development . The contest enjoyed massive popularity – over 1600 works from 140 schools were submitted to the Department of Rural Development Programmes of Pomorskie Voivodeship Marshal Office . The jury evaluated the works, taking into account their topic selected, as well as their aesthetics and originality. The young artists showed a high degree of creativity, both as regards the techniques they used, which were very diverse, and the visions of changes in the surroundings they proposed.

Works sent by pupils presented sports fields, playgrounds, and Internet cafes. Some drawings touched upon environmental protection, for example by showing the need to segregate waste. The Awarding Committee found it very hard to select best drawings, so **the total number of awards and distinctions was 100**. Three first places were awarded to:

I place – Kaja Pobłocka from No 5 Primary School in Lębork;

II place – Maksymilian Wieczorkiewicz from Primary School in Waplewo Wielkie;

III place – Celina Kasyna from Primary School in Zaleski.

Twelve most original drawings were selected for a 2010 wall calendar published by the National Rural Network Regional Secretariat .

The contest was closed on 21 December 2009 with a formal prize giving gala, when Mr. Mieczysław Struk - Pomorskie Voivodeship Deputy Marshal, met with the authors of awarded works. Prize and diploma award ceremony was preceded by a lecture, entitled “European funds as a chance for the development of my town”, and a theatre performance for kids.

The contest has shown that the youngest residents of our region are interested in what is going on around, and **in this context**, the Community funds will make it possible for many dream to come true.

The contest was organized for the first time under the Pomorskie Voivodeship NRN Action Plan for 2008-2009. The aim of this event was to draw the kids’ attention to changes that have been taking place around them since the accession of Poland to the European Union and to the European Union related issues, as well as to popularize knowledge on the European funds.

Śląskie Voivodeship

Project title: III National Rural Renewal Congress.

Entity in charge of project implementation (partners): Marshal Office of the Śląskie Voivodeship.

Silesian Association of Gminas and Poviats.

Kroczyce Gmina Office .

Project implementation period: 28-30 May 2009, Podlesice (Gmina Kroczyce).

Project objective: The aim of the Congress was to promote the idea of rural renewal as a significant element of regional policy in Polish rural areas and as an element shaping civil and cultural awareness of rural residents. The Congress was a good chance to gather a wide circle of citizens - representatives of rural development organizations and institutions.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Transfer of good practices and innovation projects, as well as exchange of experiences and know-how.

Budget: PLN 120,228.87

Project beneficiaries: The Congress was addressed to a wide audience - representatives of rural development organizations and institutions.

Project description: Between 28 and 30 May 2009, in Podlesice, Gmina Kroczyce, Śląskie Voivodeship, the III National Rural Renewal Congress took place.

The event hosted approximately 1000 participants, including representatives of rural development organizations and institutions, as well as numerous folk artists and folk bands. The Congress was an excellent chance to exchange experience, present achievements and effects of previous actions in the field of rural renewal and development in the Śląskie Voivodeship and other regions of Poland. It was also an inspiration for further efforts leading to the enhancement of living standards in the countryside.

Lectures on rural renewal were on the Congress agenda, with particular focus on local involvement in creating the future and in making visions come true with the use of regional renewal programmes. Those issues were presented in the form of lectures, workshops, discussion panels and debates of the regions.

The lectures emphasised the need to perceive rural areas as the room for investment and the room for work, leisure, education and promotion of culture. During the congress, a number of participants took part in study visits, organised as to present the achievements of gminas of Śląskie Voivodeship which, thanks to their involvement and good organisation, have distinguished themselves in the rural renewal process, combining their development with preservation of cultural traditions and values of the region. The traditional song and dance band "Śląsk", a trademark of multicentennial folklore tradition of the region, supported by other regional bands, orchestras and folk groups gathered in "The Folklore Scene", added splendour to the artistic part of the Congress. During the Congress the prizewinners of various competitions, such as "Beautiful Village of the Śląskie Voivodeship" and "Actions for Rural Renewal", had a chance to present their regional products, thus promoting their region and showing their care for local identity. Local Action Groups from Śląskie Voivodeship also presented their achievements and the activities they were planning to take.

The III National Rural Renewal Congress was an event that inscribed itself in rural development policy, giving at the same inspiration for the future.

Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship

Project title: A study tour around Sweden and Denmark as part of the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage.

Project implementation date: 11-12 October 2010.

Entity in charge of project implementation: Świętokrzyskie Regional Development Office (Regional Secretariat of the National Rural Network in Kielce).

Budget: PLN 50,400 gross.

Project objective: Allowing member entities of Świętokrzyskie Network of Culinary Heritage to get acquainted with the actions of Danish and Swedish farmers, who next to their basic activity engage in other business operations, such as rendering services, processing fruit and vegetables, and manufacturing chocolate.

Project description: On 11 and 12 October 2010, members of Świętokrzyskie Network of Culinary Heritage and representatives of institutions linked to organic food sector in Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, paid a study visit to regions that are members of the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage: Scania in Sweden and Danish Isle of Bornholm. The visit was organised under the Annual Network Forum.

Enterprises and farms belonging to local networks were visited during the tour. Among them, a horticultural farm Kivikas Fruit, where apples are not only grown and fresh-sold, but also processed into natural preservative-free, pasteurized juice. Other stops included a fish smokehouse and a manufacture of chocolates with fillings made of locally grown fruit. In the same place, the participants visited a horticultural and apiary farm.

Linás och Binas. Then they visited Christinehof Castle and the surrounding eco-park. During the supper for all the Annual Forum participants, the fifteen-year anniversary of the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage was celebrated. On the second day of the visit, the participants saw a rapeseed oil compressing plant "Lehnsgaard" and a mill "Bornholms Valsemolle." Then, in Svaneke, they visited a chocolate manufacture, a mini-brewery, and an ice-cream shop.

All the visited enterprises were very interesting in their close links to the region. They stick to the guidelines of the Network, thus serving as a perfect example for other Network members, and proving that the organic food market can grow and develop in an undisturbed way. This visit has turned out an extremely instructive and very inspiring one. It has enriched its participants with numerous valuable experiences, which – when transferred to our country - will foster development of *Świętokrzyskie Culinary Network*, and will add to its positive image .

Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship

Project title: The First Regional Fish Day - Warmia, Mazury, Powiśle.

Entity in charge of project implementation: Local government of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship.

Partners: Martom - Traveland Spółka z o.o.

Project implementation date: 6 June 2009, Stare Jabłonki.**Project objective:** The aim of this event was to cultivate, promote and disseminate knowledge on regional cuisine of Warmia, Mazury and Powiśle, and to promote fish processing enterprises of Warmia and Mazury. This aim is related to the Voivodeship's membership in the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Identification and analysis of rural development good practices that can be transferred, and informing about such practices..

Budget: PLN 79,716.62

Project beneficiaries: residents of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, tourists, fish processing enterprises, fishing farms.

Project description: Promotion of traditional cuisine, featuring original dishes prepared from local products, is a key element in promoting Warmia, Mazury and Powiśle. On 6 June 2009, in the Hotel Andres leisure area in Stare Jabłonki, the "First Regional Fish Day - Warmia, Mazury, Powiśle" took place.

As a part of the Fish Day 3 contest were organised: a contest for the best fish dish of Warmia and Mazury, "Fish quiz" for the public, and a fish soup cooking contest "Fish pot of Warmia and Mazury". The Fish Day also featured a presentation of fish processing companies and of fishing farms from Warmia and Mazury.

Wielkopolskie Voivodeship

Project title: School for women leaders of local development.

Entity in charge of project implementation: Regional Secretariat of the NRN in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship.

Partners: The measure was co-organised by Local Action Groups.

Project implementation date: The project covered the area of four LAGs. September–December 2010.

Project implementation cost: PLN 103,078.38.

Project objective: The project's main objective was to develop the competencies of women from rural areas who stimulate social activity within local communities in the area covered by four Local Action Groups.

Project Beneficiaries: 80 women living in the area of four Local Action Groups – 20 women from each LAG's territory – who undertake social activity at their place of residence.

Project description: The project entitled "School for women leaders of local development" consisted of two two-stage modules, each taking 16 hours. The first module was devoted to the principles of local animation – female animator and leader, galvanizing people into action, or identifying local community resources. The classes took the form of workshops. The first module also involved a practical course held by a make-up artist.

The second module focused on non-governmental organisations operating in rural areas – bases and forms of their functioning, their establishment and registration, accounting essentials, or working on a project. In addition, in the evening the participants attended a concert of a jazz band set up by a foundation active in the field of music in rural areas.

To present examples of good practice, both modules were accompanied by meetings with women who achieved success in social activities within their communities. Each group was supervised by a female LAG representative, who had an opportunity to make close contacts with the leaders and to involve them in the LAG's activities. The participants could exchange information, they have also established new contacts and come up with ideas of joint actions.

The activating influence of the "School for women leaders of local development" was revealed at the Tour Salon 2000 trade fair, which was organised by the Regional Secretariat of the NRN in collaboration with Local Action Groups. The participants took part in the events held during the trade fair: presentation of local products, presentations of regional teams and the seminar entitled "Tourism as an opportunity for local development."

Moreover, the high value of the "School for women leaders of local development" has been evidenced by requests to hold similar trainings submitted by local action groups, and by the willingness to extend the training and to increase knowledge and skills in a similar manner expressed by the participants of the present edition of the training.

The Regional Secretariat of the NRN will continue the project entitled "School for women leaders of local development" in the upcoming years in collaboration with other local action groups from Wielkopolskie Voivodeship.

Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship

Project title: Promotional campaign for regional food products from Western Pomerania.

Entity in charge of project implementation: B.P. Media Sp. z o.o.; Sorter out of home media Sorter Media Sp. z o.o., Sp. komandytowa; SV Soft Vision Mariusz Rajski; Agencja Reklamowa Anny Turkiewicz Sp. z o.o.; Division of Agriculture and Environmental Protection in the Office of the Marshal of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship; Division of Tourism, Economy and Promotion in the Office of the Marshal of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship, Local Action Groups.

Project implementation date: 15 November–15 December 2009.

Project objective: To increase the awareness of the residents of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship on regional products, to spread the idea behind producing such goods, and to build cultural identity of the region's inhabitants.

Name of measure under which the project was implemented: Transferring good practices and innovative projects, organising exchanges of experience and know-how.

Budget: PLN 458,547.25.

Project Beneficiaries: The inhabitants of the entire Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship, tourists visiting the region.

Project description: Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship is a region with not only a rich and tumultuous history, but also fascinating traditions, customs and culture. All this is due to its inhabitants – people who arrived from various parts of the pre- and post-war territory of Poland. These settlers brought along a varied range of flavours and dishes, which blended with the customs cultivated in the area before the war.

Such a multifarious tradition is certainly worthy of promoting. To this end, in November and December 2009, Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship held a large-scale advertising campaign for its regional products. As part of the campaign, regional and local press publications featured advertisements for products from the Voivodeship that have been put on the Traditional Products List. For four weeks, the following products were promoted: “Miód drahimski” honey, “Ogórek kołobrzeski” cucumber, “Jeziorowy ogórek kiszony” pickled cucumber, and “Chleb razowy koprzywieński” bread. Simultaneously, these products were presented on billboards placed in the biggest cities of the Voivodeship. For the first time, the Office of the Marshal of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship also used a non-standard large-scale commercial format: the 3D commercial. In addition, a film was made about the regional products, along with a TV commercial. All this was complemented by the www.smaki.wzp.pl website.

Thanks to their qualities, traditional products constitute an excellent tourism product, which is a valuable addition to the already interesting offer of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. Tourists staying in agrotourism farms want to taste delicious, homely and previously unknown dishes. They expect something that is original, unique and not to be found anywhere else. Due to such a link between the product and the region, the purchase of such a commodity has the potential to be the beginning of a long-term contact of the tourist with the extraordinary community, tradition and nature of the area. The tourist gets to know our little homeland and – encouraged by the taste of its products – could feel the need to come back.

The idea behind the campaign for traditional products was not only to use such goods as tourism products. A regional product also defines the identity of a region’s inhabitants. The Voivodeship wanted the advertising campaign to remind the inhabitants about the abundant culinary tradition and its interesting history. This common heritage should inspire pride in the residents of Western Pomerania.

The image campaign for regional products manufactured in Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship launched at the end of 2009 will be continued. The future actions will include culinary contests, held usually during Summer festivals, trade shows and exhibitions (such as the “Our Culinary Heritage” competition), which are aimed at finding new producers of regional products and encouraging them to submit their products for the Traditional Products List via the Office of the Marshal of Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. A strong emphasis will also be placed on expanding the sales network for such products, which is currently still far from extensive.

Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów, Branch Office in Kraków

Project title: “Essentials of EU projects management.”

Entity in charge of project implementation: Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów, Branch Office in Kraków.

Project implementation date: 14–15 December 2009.

Project objective: The project was aimed at providing the training participants with the knowledge of general rules for EU projects management in the context of the role and tasks of a local action group as regards activating local communities in the area where the local development strategy (LDS) is being implemented. Furthermore, it was assumed that the training participants would acquire the skills necessary for preparing a project and filling in the aid application, and for supporting potential beneficiaries of small-scale projects implemented in the territory of the LDS’s implementation.

Budget: The overall cost of the training and the survey study was PLN 26,220.00.

Project Beneficiaries: The training was attended by members of management boards, project coordinators and employees of local action groups.

Project description: The two-day training consisted of eight hours (course hours, i.e. 45 minutes) of lectures, and five hours of workshops held in two groups. 38 LAG representatives participated in the training. The training was preceded by a survey study, which allowed for identifying the expectations of LAGs as regards the programme and form of the training. After the survey study, the programme was revised and the training materials were adapted to suit the participants' needs. The training was prepared by specialists from the Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów, Branch Office in Kraków in collaboration with external experts dealing with the implementation of EU programmes.

The training took the form of lectures and workshops held for two teams. The workshops were closely connected with the issues discussed during the lectures. The participants were provided with training materials, that is, the textual form of the lectures and printouts of the presentations which were used by the instructors.

NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF ANIMAL PRODUCTION in Kraków

Project title: Native Breeds Exhibition at the 23rd National Animal Breeding Exhibition in Poznań on 3–5 October 2008.

Entity in charge of project implementation: National Research Institute of Animal Production.

Project implementation date: 2 October–2 December 2008.

Budget: PLN 332,812.75.

Project objective: Due to the increasing intensity of animal production, the breeding of many local breeds and species of farm animals has lost economic viability, thus such breeds and species have disappeared forever or are in danger of becoming extinct. The Native Breeds Exhibition – organised during promotional events of great significance for agricultural producers, such as the National Animal Breeding Exhibition and the International Fair of Animal Breeding “FARMA” – allows to promote local breeds on a large scale, encourage producers to keep such animals and disseminate knowledge about the possibilities and methods of obtaining agri-environmental payments under RDP 2007–2013.

Project Beneficiaries: The project was addressed to farmers and producers interested in keeping animals of native breeds, as well as to the representatives of the ministry in charge of agriculture, institutions dealing with animal breeding, agricultural advisory centres, and academic circles.

Project description: The project consisted in organising the Native Breeds Exhibition at the 23rd National Animal Breeding Exhibition in Poznań on 3–5 October 2009. It comprised the following elements:

Running an informational and promotional stand at the Native Breeds Exhibition.

The stand of the National Research Institute of Animal Production screened films about native breeds and expert presentations from CDs. The scientific supervision over all the activities was ensured by experts. At least one of them was always present at the stand of the Institute. They provided all the interested persons with information and answered questions about breeding local animal species, conditions of participating in protection programmes and possibilities to apply for agri-environmental payments. They also distributed informational and promotional materials devoted to local breeds and the agri-environmental programme under RDP 2007–2013 among animal producers, agricultural advisors, representatives of agricultural chambers and agricultural universities, as well as other interested guests.

Performing an assessment of local breed animals during the Native Breeds Exhibition.

The exhibition was attended by 57 exhibitors who presented a total of 174 animals and 29 poultry flocks. The following breeds were featured: cattle: Polish Red, White-backed, Polish Black-and-White and Polish Red-and-White; pigs: Puławska, Złotnicka White and Złotnicka Spotted; sheep: Polish Heath, Świniarka, Polish Mountain Coloured, Podhale Zackel, Olkuska, Pomorska, Kamieniecka, Wielkopolska, Uhruska, Coloured Merino, old-type Polish Merino; chickens: Yellow-legged Partridge, Green-legged Partridge, Leghorn, Sussex, Rhode Island Red, Rhode Island White, Polbar Pb; geese: Lubelska, Kielecka, Podkarpacka, Pomorska, Suwalska, Kartuska, Swan and Rypińska, Roman, Slovak, Kuban, Biłgorajska; ducks: Call, Polish Pekin, English Pekin, Danish Pekin, French Pekin and KhO-1; rabbits: Popielniański White; chinchillas: Beige; and coloured nutrias: Standard, Black Dominant, Amber-Golden and Pearl. Mares of the following breeds were shown as well: Konik, Hucul Pony, Sokólski Coldblood, Wielkopolski and Silesian along with foals. Other animals at the exhibition included common pastel foxes, polecats, Central European bees of the Asta line and Kołudzka White geese. In sum, 61 native breeds, species, and families were presented. The animals and flocks presented were assessed by a jury. In total, 20 champion and 20 runner-up titles were awarded, and 149 gold and 12 silver medals were given.

Elaborating and publishing the brochure entitled “Procedures in applying for agri-environmental payments from the package ‘Conservation of endangered animal genetic resources in agriculture’ under the agri-environmental programme included in the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013.”

Co-organising the 10th Agricultural Forum entitled “Ovine spongiform encephalopathy: genetical aspects of scrapie in sheep, diagnostics and breeding programme for native sheep breeds” on 4 October 2008.

Organising the seminar entitled “Principles of breeding the Kołudzka White goose and technologies for keeping a reproductive flock of Kołudzka White geese” on 5 October 2008.

11. Central Secretariat of the NRN

Nationwide contest entitled “Friendly Village”

In order to promote the best projects in the field of technical infrastructure carried out in rural areas since May 2004 with the use of the European Union funds, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development organised, within the framework of the activities of the National Rural Network, the contest entitled “Friendly Village.”

The “Friendly Village” contest was organised by the Central Secretariat of the National Rural Network in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The contest comprised two stages: the regional and the nationwide. At the first, regional stage, the competition was coordinated by the 16 regional secretariats of the NRN. The second, nationwide stage, was held by the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture (FAPA) commissioned by the Central Secretariat of the NRN.

The right to enter projects into the competition was given to beneficiaries of projects focusing on infrastructure, implemented in rural areas and co-financed from the European Union funds after May 2004. Contest entries were received in the regionally competent regional secretariats of the NRN.

Projects that ranked first in the regional contests reached the nationwide stage. At the second stage, the Central Contest Committee – appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and composed of the representatives of the Minister of Regional Development, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Agricultural Advisory Centre and Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture (FAPA) – picked the three winner projects at the working session of 19 October.

When choosing the best projects, the Central Contest Committee and the contest committees evaluating the projects at the regional level looked at the score achieved by each project as regards the following criteria:

1. originality, exemplarity and innovativeness of the project;
2. functionality and usefulness of the project after its implementation;
3. partnership at the stage of implementing the project;
4. scope of the project;
5. usefulness and accessibility of the project for disabled persons;
6. impact on the region's economic development, including the creation of new jobs;
7. impact on the region's horizontal policies, especially in the field of rural development and environmental protection.

Applying the above criteria, the Central Contest Committee awarded the following projects:

- 1st place – Environmental Education Centre for the reconstruction of a historical farm in Mniszki; beneficiary: the gmina of Międzychód, Wielkopolskie Voivodeship;
- 2nd place – reconstruction of the pre-war Astronomical Observatory – Star City “Lubomir;” beneficiary: the gmina of Wiśniowa, Małopolskie Voivodeship;
- 3rd place – Centre for Rural Initiatives in Ścinawka Górna; beneficiary: the city and gmina of Radków, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship.

The huge interest in the competition encouraged the Central Secretariat to organise the second edition of the “Friendly Village” contest in 2010. It was also decided that there would be two project categories. The projects for social infrastructure were taken into account in separation from the projects concerning technical infrastructure. In 2010, a special prize was introduced: the “green place” for the project that employed environment-friendly technologies and observed the principles of nature conservation, for example, made use of renewable energy sources. This special award was taken by the gmina of Osjaków, which installed solar panels on a sports arena to use them as a modern and renewable energy source for the water heating installation and the central heating system.

The Central Contest Committee appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development awarded the following projects at the second, nationwide stage:

The winners in the “social infrastructure” category:

- 1st place – Museum of Central Pomerania, Pomorskie Voivodeship, for implementing the project entitled “Slovincian Culture Centre in Kluki;”
- 2nd place – gmina of Karlino, Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship, for implementing the project entitled “Construction of a village community centre in Poblócie Wielkie;”
- 3rd place – gmina of Komorniki, Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, for implementing the project entitled “Construction of a full-sized room in the lower secondary school in Komorniki.”

The winners in the “technical infrastructure” category:

- 1st place – gmina of Mrągowo, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, for implementing the project entitled “Construction of infrastructure for the “Góra Czterech Wiatrów” winter sports centre;”
- 2nd place – gmina of Węgierska Górka, Śląskie Voivodeship, for implementing the project entitled “Extension of touristic facilities;”
- 3rd place – gmina of Chocianów, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, for implementing the project entitled “Refurbishment of the historical city centre.”

Rural infrastructure (both technical and social) stimulates a multifaceted economic development in rural areas. It ensures facilities for economic activity and a basis for the functioning of a given area's population. Rural infrastructure constitutes a system of elements that enter into mutual relations, which contribute to a comprehensive rural development. Rural inhabitants need both technical infrastructure:

in the area of transportation, telecommunications, water supply and sewage system, power generation, environmental protection, etc., and social infrastructure, which satisfies the community's needs in terms of education, science, culture, healthcare, social care, leisure and recreation. The social needs and the demand for technical and social facilities tend to differ across the country.

Rural infrastructure stimulates economic development of an area, which is evidenced, among others, by the number of economic operators that employ persons ceasing agricultural activity. It also constitutes one of the many elements influencing the unemployment rate. The appropriate technical and social infrastructure is indispensable for fostering economic activity in a given region and for preventing young people from leaving rural areas. Financial support for such measures is ensured by the second pillar of the CAP, cohesion policy and European Social Fund.

The "Friendly Village" contest allows to provide an at least partial response to the question of how to improve the quality of life in rural areas, or how to encourage people to identify themselves with their villages and be proud of living there. The improvement in the quality of rural life leads to a revitalisation of rural areas and prevents their degradation.

Competition for the logo of the "Friendly Village" contest

The Central Secretariat of the National Rural Network held a competition for the best logo of the "Friendly Village" contest. The interest in the competition surpassed the organisers' expectations – they received as much as 195 entries.

On 7 July 2010, in accordance with the competition rules, the Competition Committee picked the best project without knowing the contestants names.

The Committee was composed of:

- **Paweł Pacek** – Chair of the Committee, Deputy Director in the Department of Rural Development;
- **Przemysław Saltarski** – Department of Rural Development, Head of Division, Central Secretariat of the National Rural Network;
- **Izabela Kurek** – Department of Rural Development, Senior Specialist, Central Secretariat of the National Rural Network;
- **Marcin Zieliński** – Department of Programming and Analyses, Head of Division of Forecasts;
- **Aleksandra Wars** – Department of Advisory Services, Agricultural Education and Science, Chief Specialist, Division of Educational System Organisation.

At the stage of choosing the best project, the authors were anonymous and the proposed logos were evaluated on the basis of criteria concerning functionality and artistic value. The winner project was submitted by **Tomasz Słupski from Warsaw**.

In addition, the Competition Committee decided to give honorary mention to three authors, that is:

- **Andrzej Pietyra from Sułkowice;**
- **Anna Gołębiowska from Wrocław;**
- **Wojciech Sikora from Rybnik.**

The best logos are presented on the www.ksow.gov.pl website.

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