



The Swiss Support to Regional Development in Poland



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1 Regional development in Poland

Since 2008, the Swiss contribution aims at reducing the economic and social disparities in the new EU member states. The amounts allocated are CHF 1,257 billion for the twelve states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. The Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) supports 58 projects in Poland with a total budget of CHF 464.6 million. About 40% of these funds are benefitting the structurally weak regions of south-eastern Poland: Lubelskie, Malopolskie, Podkarpackie and Swietokrzyskie. With a per capita gross domestic product under the EU-25 average, these four focus regions have the

lowest development indicators in Poland. They are mostly rural and depend on agricultural production. However, the wages in the agricultural sector are low, which drives young labor forces to leave the countryside to cities or even to foreign countries. Emigration, unemployment and low wages have a destabilizing effect on family units and social networks. The population is aging without being given the necessary attention. The rural regions are thus vulnerable, as they suffer from the deterioration of working conditions and the lack of other perspectives.

2 Approach and projects

Regional development approach means implementing programmes strengthening local and regional resources, institutions, social capacities, as well as infrastructure. The goal is to contribute to employment creation and economic development. The SDC regional development portfolio in Poland amounts to CHF 47.7 million and consists of 10 projects, which last between 4 and 5 years. Financing of starts-ups, SMEs and NGOs in the form of grants allow beneficiaries to start or reinforce business activities. Enforcing professional skills through training activities, advisory services and vocational training are the main activities of these ten projects, which focus on regional products production, marketing and the promotion of tourism. The amount assigned to each project varies between CHF 4 million and CHF 6 million with a co-financing of 10% to 40% from the beneficiaries.

The potential development opportunities of the region are identified by local people in a bottom-up approach. A strong support and cooperation with local authorities is necessary to link the planned activities with the expectations of civil society. Most of the activities are accompanied by promotional campaigns, learning events, as well as study visits, mostly to Switzerland. The enclosed table (Annex) shows the results achieved by the end of 2013, at mid-term of the project implementation. This map ([click here](#)) shows the location of the regional development projects including a short project description.



Start-up: Arts sewing workshop BU, in Hrubieszów

Swiss grant: CHF 9'000, with a co-financing of 30%

The grant allowed this young tailor to buy sewing machines and tissues to set up her own tailor's studio, expand her business and hire an employee. She promotes her products on her website and on Facebook and has launched additional promotional activities. In order to be properly prepared for this challenging task, she participated in a basic training and counseling and continued a more specialized training after having set up the studio.

Further information: www.facebook.com/PracowniaKrawieckoArtystycznaBu



SME: Purchasing a new ice-cream machine by Grzyb company, in Tegoborze

Swiss grant: CHF 50'000, with a co-financing of 40%

Thanks to the grant, this company run by the Grzyb family was able to afford additional equipment (incl. a shock-freezer), allowing them to increase the production volume and to improve the quality of their ice cream, which complements their offer in wedding cakes. Additionally, three new jobs have been created. The bakery is well known in the region and delivers its products up to a radius of 100 km, including the city of Cracow. Further information: www.tegoborze.pl



NGO: The Village of Fears in Moroczyn – Fairytale Land of Gotania, in Hrubieszów

Swiss grant: CHF 17'000, with a co-financing of 10%

The aim of the project is to organize tourist attractions for children and young people, where they can spend their free time. The adventure playground offers a multitude of games and attractive agility equipment. Specialized workshops were organized in order to train the professional staff of 15 people.

3 Activities

3.1 Development of local products

In the majority of the target regions, so far there were no procedures guaranteeing proper quality of production for local products. Also, there were no certification schemes or strong regional brands. Hence, local products were often not available or were sold at a very low price. This is why the projects implemented with the Swiss contribution create incentives to produce and sell local products of high quality and to create local brands and labels.

The development of local products creates an added value for the region, increasing the quality of both products and working conditions. The projects aim also at increasing networking and linking together groups of farmers producing similar products. Two kitchen incubators allow farmers to produce their products in appropriate conditions, fulfil legal requirements and to collectively organize distribution channels. Additionally, several resources catalogues of cultural, culinary, touristic and nature key items of the regions have been created in different projects.



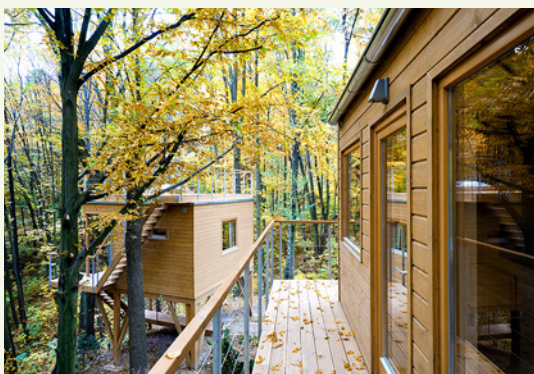
NGO: Parsley Farmer's Market in Podgorze in Cracow

The Podgorze association organizes a weekly farmer's market on this square in the city center. Up to 28 farmers sell their products on Saturdays, attracting between 500 and 1'000 customers (much more than anticipated). So far, the costs for the event have been covered by the project, but in the future, the city and the farmers will finance it.

3.2 Tourism and cultural heritage

One of the regional development objectives is to promote tourism and cultural heritage in structurally weak regions. The majority of projects base their

promotional strategies on culture, history and rural traditions, as these factors remain important aspects of the Polish identity. Hence, some projects promote agro-tourism in order to complement the farmers' income or to create new professional opportunities.



Start-up: In trees in Nałęczów

Swiss grant: CHF 45'000, co-financing of 40%

Three modern and innovative tree summerhouses offering beds for 6 persons attract a lot of interest among tourists. The project started in October 2013 and all the weekends in the first months are already fully booked.

Further information: <https://www.facebook.com/wdrzewach>;
www.wdrzewach.pl

3.3 Capacity building and trainings

All ten projects have a capacity building and training component. In order to develop their skills, the grant candidates and beneficiaries, unemployed people or interested persons are invited to participate in trainings and workshops organized by professionals. Marketing, labels creation, technical trainings, legal

and financial advices, tourism and hosting training are the main topics of the courses. Up to 2017, 10'000 persons will benefit from training, consulting and advisory services. Some projects offer cost-free consultation centers and vocational training centers. Internships of three months are also organized for unemployed people and university graduates.



Vocational Training Centers

The integrated training programme is a main component of a project implemented in the two districts Gorlicki and Nowosądecki. In terms of financing, the training programme represents 38% of the project budget. The project also foresees the renovation of facilities and purchase of training equipment for the vocational training centers. Additionally, a hotel and kitchen laboratories, agricultural machines, and e-learning rooms have been built and equipped in the Gorlicki district. A total of 620 students per year will benefit from this investment.



4 Partnerships and networks

Thanks to the regional development projects, numerous Swiss-Polish partnerships between municipalities, institutions or schools are established and developed. They aim at exchanging knowledge and experiences, as well as creating links between these two countries. About 50 study visits to Switzerland and Poland will be realized by 2017.



Partnerships between municipalities

In the framework of a project, a partnership between the Swiss and Polish municipalities Brig and Zator has been agreed. Thanks to several study visits to Switzerland and Poland, the Zator municipality benefits from Swiss experience and expertise in the areas of tourism, occupational development, reduction of unemployment as well as education. Additionally, a student exchange on secondary school level will be organized.



Partnerships between institutions

The Annual Swiss-Alpine Carpathian Forum is an example for an international partnership. It focuses on the promotion of cooperation between entities from Alpine and Carpathian areas and active promotion of this Polish region at a European level. Some Swiss institutions which are active in the field of tourism and the promotion of mountain areas as well as the Chamber of Commerce participate in the event every year.

5 Conclusion

Decentralized management, mobilization of citizens and local communities, partnerships between the public and private sector and civil society, joint activities of municipalities, job creation and skills enforcement – all these concepts rime with regional development in south-eastern Poland.

A mid-term review of all 10 projects carried out in October 2013 has shown that the regional development projects are well implemented, thanks to the commitment of all the stakeholders listed above, contributing to the projects' sustainability. The Swiss

contribution supports projects which are coherent and complementary to those financed by the EU funds. Thanks to the Swiss contribution, economic development and competitiveness are strengthened in south-eastern Poland and new employment opportunities are created (about 1'500 new jobs by the end of 2017). Also, the social impact of these projects is important, as they strengthen civil participation (grants for NGOs) and improve professional skills of citizens (training courses and advisory services). Last but not least, networking between all the projects' beneficiaries is fostered.



Annex: Mid-term phase of the implementation, cumulative results achieved by the end of 2013

Project title		Gorlicki and Nowy Sack	Świętokrzyskie mountains	Małopolska Local Product	Knight's Trail	Carp Valley	Eurochance	Dolina Strug	Gothania	Alps of Carpathians	Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation	TOTAL	Target by mid-2017*
Training	Number of trainings	75	7	21	6	9	114	4	10	33	42	321	
	Number of trainees	849	101	370	144	429	840	280	170	205	766	4'154	10'000
Re-granting	Number of concluded calls for proposals	2	2	1	0	2	10	2	4	2	8	33	
	Number of applications submitted	92	110	7	0	7	150	3	71	134	268	842	
	Number of grants awarded	23	53	3	0	4	85	1	63	111	181	524	1'130
	Start-ups	0	28	0	0	2	44	0	40	0	7	121	260
	SMEs	23	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	71	78	175	480
	NGOs	0	25	3	0	0	41	0	23	40	96	228	390
Study visits	Number of study visits to Switzerland	2	0	4	2	2	3	1	3	3	5	25	46
	Number of study visits to Switzerland	2	0	1	2	1	2	0	3	1	4	16	36
	Number of Swiss partners' visit to Poland	0	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	9	10
	Number of persons	40	0	6	32	12	20	1	35	18	35	199	
	Number of participants to Switzerland	40	0	2	32	4	18	0	35	12	31	174	
	Number of participants to Poland	0	0	4	0	8	2	1	0	6	4	25	
Events	Number of promotional project/ local products events	8	7	5	12	2	4	2	3	7	5	55	
	Estimated number of participants of promotional events	9'350	20'000	4'500	84'200	2'000	450	56	2'624	450	22'000	145'630	

* Estimations based on the logframe of the 10 projects.

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