

Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme

2007-2017
SUMMARY



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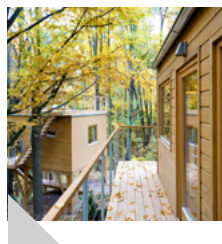
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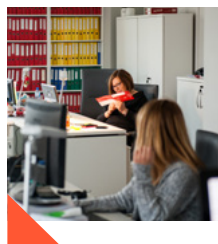
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Message from Paweł Choraży, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Economic Development

We are delighted to present to you a publication summarising the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. It describes the best practices developed by the beneficiaries

of this important Programme, which has contributed to the social and economic development of Poland. By showcasing the most interesting projects whose

positive effects are already experienced by hundreds of thousands of Poles, we wish to share our experience and thus inspire you to take further action



to improve the quality of life in our small homelands.

In less than two years we will be celebrating a centenary of Polish-Swiss diplomatic relations. Switzerland was one of the first countries to recognise the independence of Poland, regained after 123 years. Partnership, openness, the sympathetic attitude to the vision of reconstruction of the Polish state on the part of the stable state of Switzerland constituted an important symbol of Poland's reappearance on the map of Europe and, at that time, were significant for us not only politically, but also economically.

A symbolic expression of the ties linking our two countries are also the white and red colours of our national flags. The characteristic white cross on the red background is a well-known brand; it is a synonym of the highest quality, reliability, precision, practicality, competitiveness, innovativeness, high added value. We strive to make Polish economy a carrier of the same values and associations. Our economic aspirations are yet another reason why we are so keen to encourage Poles

to cooperate and form partnership relations with Switzerland.

Switzerland has been an inspiring model for us in one more, very important area – sustainable development. Our partner has been among the top countries (ranked the 1st in 2015, the 4th in 2017) of the World Happiness Index, compiled by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a UN body responsible for integrating and transferring the best practices in sustainable development. Responsible growth forms a part of the Swiss DNA – both with regard to private businesses, public institutions and the attitude of the society. The support granted to Poland under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme is perfectly compatible with the idea of sustainable development. Thanks to this support we have completed more than 1700 projects. They differ in the subject matter, the scope, the scale; what they have in common is the permanent effect in the form of increased awareness of the importance of the public goods we share and the improvement of the living conditions and standards. It is particularly

satisfying that the cooperation within the framework of the Programme has a universal dimension – it is not only about providing investment support, but it also gives access to the highest quality expertise on how to identify, plan and implement projects that are important for local communities and for the public good.

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail” – this line by Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19th century American poet and essayist, contains guidance on where the countries of Europe should look for sources of growth, strength and competitiveness improvement. They should lead the way rather than copy others. They should respect their independence, develop good neighbourly relations based on trust and partnership. The Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme is a perfect proof that such a responsible approach gives the best results.

Paweł Chorąży,
Undersecretary of State
at the Ministry of Economic
Development of the Republic
of Poland

Message from Andrej Motyl, Ambassador of Switzerland to Poland

The Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme is promoted with the slogan “We change Poland with Swiss precision”.

There is a reason for saying that: each project implemented within the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme is carefully planned, responds to real, properly identified needs, and is implemented in cooperation with my fellow citizens who have proved to be experts in the areas in which support is needed.

The scale of our cooperation and its effects are unprecedented. Let me just quote some figures: 489 million Swiss Francs of support for Poland (nearly half of the total amount allocated by Switzerland to the assistance for the new EU member states); 58 large and 1,700 smaller projects; 1,600 schools and kindergartens supported by the programme promoting healthy and active lifestyles; 34,000 patients examined to detect hepatitis C infections infection; 25,634 solar panels installed; over 131,000 tons of removed asbestos.

The figures are impressive, but the most important are the people behind

the figures – those who wanted to improve the quality of their life and environment, those who had ideas how to do it and were ready to use our assistance.

It is in this sense that the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme constitutes a perfect expression of the virtues that have been the foundation of the Swiss success: stabilising inclusion, subsidiarity and reasonable solidarity.

Let us have a closer look into these three components of the magic Swiss elixir, in the context of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. Our Programme has focused on a broadly understood participation and co-creation, that is, inclusion. The source of the success of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme is the openness – to other people, but also to other experiences and views. Diversity is an invaluable catalyst of innovation. It also allows us, by learning from each another, to adapt to new challenges and trends. It is worth mentioning that, in Switzerland, we often combine the word “inclusion” with the adjective “stabilising” - to emphasise the fact that developing and maintaining a cross-party, cross-

generation consensus contributes to ensure stability within our society.

The principle of subsidiarity, for me is nothing else than the deep confidence in people – their knowledge, experience, motivation and commitment. The essence of decentralisation is based on this assumption: to fully trust in people and vest in them the power to take decisions, leaving for the higher level of decision-making the minimum of the responsibility, only for the tasks that cannot be accomplished at lower levels. And in this respect too, the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme provides examples of the best practices: while implementing the projects we made sure that the beneficiaries felt they were the real owners, decision-makers and authors of the changes. I am sure that – thanks to this sense of ownership and responsibility – the projects, though formally concluded, are in fact just the beginning, the first link in the chain of good transformation of the quality of life in local communities.

And finally – solidarity. Poland is a country where

there is no need to explain the profound sense of this term. I am glad that solidarity – as a guarantee of economic and social stability – is part of a long list of similarities between our red-and-white countries. The Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme is a pure expression of solidarity – not only in the sense of cooperation between our two countries, but also within the communities where the change is taking place.

I have already mentioned precision. Let me now refer to the concept of antifragility. This term has been used by an American writer, Nassim Taleb, with reference to Switzerland. He indicated our country as an example of a society which has developed an unusual capability – not always spectacular, but usually very effective – of adaptation to constant change. And in this we also have a lot in common with Poland – the

country that has been so many times forced to adapt to a new situation. I do hope that the recipe for antifragility – developed during our Swiss-Polish cooperation, including the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme – will remain our common achievement and a message sent to the unstable world.

Andrej Motyl,
Ambassador of Switzerland
to Poland



Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme - a Success Story

The 10-year Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), commonly known as the Swiss Contribution Fund, has come to an end in 2017. The amount of CHF 489 million has been spent under the Programme to reduce the economic and social disparities between Poland and the more highly developed EU member states as well as the disparities within Poland. In this publication we summarise the results of our joint work and recall the Programme's background.

Although Switzerland is one of the most important trade partners of the European Union and has been strengthening the mutual cooperation since the early days of the Community, it remains outside the EU's formal structures, due to the specific political system of the country. This is based - among others - on the deeply-rooted principles of neutrality, federalism and direct democracy. The special status has not prevented Switzerland from extending the cooperation with the European Union within the framework of bilateral agreements.

Based on corresponding bilateral agreements, Switzerland shares with the European Union the four basic freedoms: the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital. Within the framework of its close relationship with the European Union, Switzerland decided to contribute to meeting some of the challenges faced by the EU. Evidently, one of such challenges was the enlargement of the European Union by 10 new states (including Poland) in 2004 (and by 3 more states in the following years). On 19 May 2004, during the Switzerland - European Union summit, Switzerland declared its readiness to establish an assistance programme to reduce the economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union.

From declaration to strategy

In February 2006, the EU Council and Switzerland signed the so-called Memorandum of Understanding. It was decided that Switzerland would allocate a total of 1 billion Swiss francs for non-refundable aid for the new EU member states, of which Poland would receive CHF 489 million - that is, almost half of the total amount. When dividing this considerable pool of funds, the negotiators adopted the already established method of distributing the EU cohesion funds among

the different countries, which took into consideration the size of the population, the gross national product per capita, the surface of the country and a number of other social and economic factors. It is worth bearing in mind that the SPCP is a programme complementary to other development funds that Poland has received since its accession to the EU, primarily from the EU itself, but also from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein (under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism).

In December 2007, in the Swiss capital, a framework agreement was signed which gave shape to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. The assistance was eventually directed to 5 areas of financing: regional development and border protection; environment and infrastructure; private sector; science, health and social welfare; civil society and partnership cooperation.

Thousands of big and small success stories

After 10 years of operation of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, the moment has come when it is possible to demonstrate that thanks to the good cooperation,

sound project management and the readiness to respond to challenges, Poles - representatives of the broadly understood public sector; non-governmental organizations and small and medium entrepreneurs - have put the assistance to good use. We refer here to thousands of examples of improvements, from some at the local level to some on the national scale; to improvement in health and care of people needing help, including the elderly; to protection of wild animals and promotion of a wise coexistence between man and nature; to financing entrepreneurship and the art of running a socially responsible business; to transition from disruptive competition to developing cooperation among local producers; to cleaner air, cheaper energy and innovative scientific projects; to trainings, study trips, publications, videos and smartphone applications.

The 10 years of SPCP have been 10 years of investing in the improvement of social and economic cohesion in Poland in a number of areas:

Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

Thanks to the Swiss Contribution Fund, three large projects aimed at developing entrepreneurship have been implemented. First, venture capital funds have been supported and enabled to invest in the innovation potential



of new micro, small and medium-sized companies. SMEs have also received support in the form of loan guarantees. The amount of CHF 53 million has so far translated into more than thirty specific investment projects in new technologies as well as loan guarantees for SMEs in the total amount of PLN 157.2 million. Second, professionalization of financial reporting has been supported by training more than 8,600 statutory auditors in international accounting standards. Third, the development of entrepreneurship has been facilitated through corporate social responsibility (CSR) - first by training hundreds of entrepreneurs, inspiring them and showing them the benefits of being socially responsible, then by supporting 177 SMEs implementing CSR solutions. The project has brought some additional net revenue in 51% of SMEs that received the support, has contributed to creating

additional jobs in 44% of the SMEs and facilitated entry to new markets in the case of 25% of the supported SMEs.

Research and Development and scholarships for researchers

In addition, under the Polish-Swiss Research Programme, almost 7,000 research studies have been carried out. Cooperation of more than 500 Polish and Swiss researchers resulted in 22 patent applications, almost 169 international publications, over 246 seminars, workshops and scientific conferences presenting the findings of the research studies.

Switzerland has also allocated considerable funds for supporting young scientists. Under the Scholarship Fund, 135 doctoral students and young researchers could conduct research projects in the best scientific centres in Switzerland.

Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) at a glance

- Poland is one of 13 countries benefitting of the Swiss programme of support for the new member states of the European Union.
- CHF 489 million of non-refundable aid were allocated to Poland under the SPCP.
- The aim of the SPCP is to stimulate the social and economic development in Poland.
- 5 areas have been supported under the Programme:
 - Regional development and border protection ,
 - Environment and infrastructure ,
 - Private sector,
 - Science, health and social welfare ,
 - Civil society and partnership cooperation.
- Public institutions, the private sector as well as non-governmental organisations have benefitted from the Programme.
- 58 large projects, funds and programmes as well as more than 1,700 smaller projects have received funding.
- Projects were selected through a competitive process or – in special cases, in a non-competitive procedure.
- The level of project co-financing ranged from 60% to 100% of the total qualifying costs.
- More than 43% of all Programme funds have been allocated to four voivodships of south-eastern Poland: Lubelskie, Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Świętokrzyskie.
- Support has been granted to partnerships between Polish and Swiss entities.
- The role of the National Coordination Unit has been played by the Ministry of Economic Development.
- The institutions representing the Swiss side were: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Federal Department of Economic Affairs acting through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), as well as the Swiss Contribution Office at the Embassy of the Swiss Confederation in Warsaw.

Duration of the SPCP: June 2007 – June 2017

Improving social security

The activities improving social security included 4 national prevention programmes:

- Oral health prevention directed to small children,
- Preventing overweight and obesity and chronic diseases,
- Prevention of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infections,
- Prevention of addiction to alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substances.

By the end of 2016, 1.38 million people participated in the programmes and more than 9 million Poles took advantage of almost 240,000 different educational activities. The good practices of these programs have been included into the national health strategies.

No less important has been the support granted to social assistance and special education centres in 4 voivodships of south-eastern Poland. The results of these activities include modernization of 30,000 m² of premises, enhancing services and activities, ensuring better conditions for treatment, rehabilitation and leisure - thanks to, among other things, the purchase of over 620 pieces of medical equipment. However, the most important effect has been the improved quality of life and the increased life potential of persons who really needed it - the elderly, the lonely, the disabled as well as children.

While creating a strategy for the improvement of social security, the importance of supporting the development of competent staff has not been forgotten. More than 28,000 people, including over 6,600 nurses, care givers and physicians of different specialties have been trained.

Protecting the environment

A multifaceted approach has also been applied to protection of the natural environment.

Removing carcinogenic asbestos from roofs has been an important element of the Programme. Thanks to educational activities, asbestos removal and additional financing for the purchase of steel roof sheets for the poorest households, it has been possible to eliminate the risk affecting 88,000 people. Altogether as much as 131,000 tons of asbestos have been removed and safely stored, which equals the weight of 332 high-speed trains.

In addition, the list of priorities also included development of sustainable public transportation systems. As part of the Programme, co-financing has been provided to: rolling stock for regional railways on the route Malbork-Grudziądz and for the Warsaw Commuter Railway (WKD) and a transport hub in the town of Legionowo. The new station together with the two Park&Ride car parks provide a friendly

environment for passengers, including the elderly and people with disabilities.

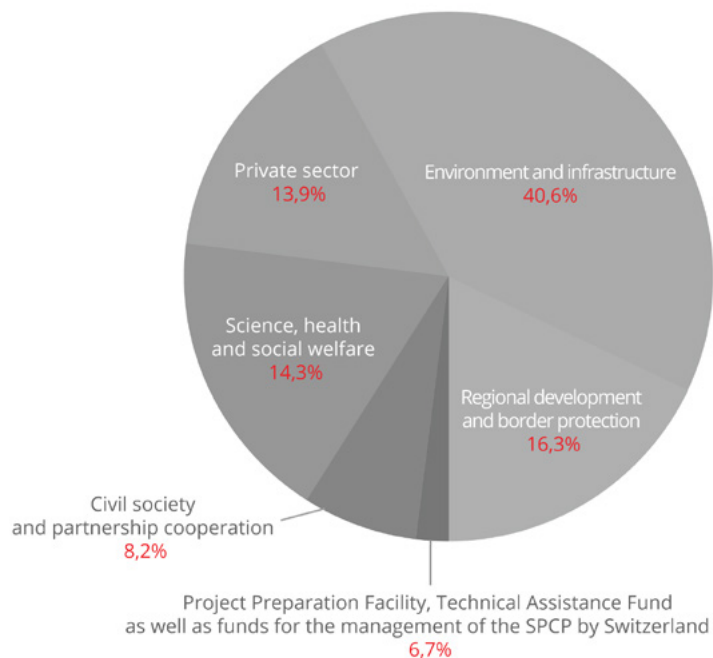
The problem of environmental pollution has been tackled at source by constructing a combined heat and power plant and installing solar systems on 25,634 buildings (including more than 200 public buildings).

Protection of Polish nature and its biodiversity has not been forgotten, either. As part of this task, a number of interesting projects have been implemented - from 3,000 nature inventory stock-takings to preparing local development strategies and nature conservation plans, to renaturalization to re-naturalization of rivers and supporting the network of the so-called ecological corridors in order to ensure that wild animals can maintain their natural migration routes.

Improving security and border protection

Apart from activities such as the improvement of the capacity of the border crossings in Siemianówka and Połowce, purchase of more than one hundred vehicles for the border guards, organization of trainings and field workshops for more than 500 customs officers, construction of an epidemiological filter in Biała Podlaska, a lot of attention has been devoted to road safety, both in the form of education and investment

Supported areas



in road infrastructure in the selected poviats of the Lubuskie, Podlaskie and Mazowieckie voivodships.

Strengthening civil society

Another area where the positive effects of the Swiss-Polish cooperation can be seen is the civil society. Non-governmental organizations implemented 336 educational and community engagement projects, with the participation of more than 151,000 people.

When trying to master the art of cooperation and developing partnership it is worth learning from the best. Therefore the Partnership Fund has co-financed 21 projects (and 10 mini-projects) which strengthened the cooperation network among the Polish and Swiss organisations. This led, for instance, to increasing their role in the decision-making process at the level of regions and sub-regions.

Polish-Swiss partnership cooperation

The cooperation between Poland and Switzerland is beneficial for both countries. For Poland it means the possibility to implement a number of innovative plans, the improvement of the environmental conditions, support for activities of local organisations, associations and active residents as well as saving old traditions from oblivion. Study visits allowed sharing knowledge and experience. The Swiss can expect to establish trade relations, can count on sharing experience and implementing joint projects. Similarly to other countries benefitting from the Enlargement Contribution, Poland is an attractive market offering new opportunities to entities from the Swiss Confederation. European science has also benefitted from exchanges. Scholarship programmes for independent researchers and doctoral students, exchange of research staff, joint research projects, all that enables both parties to see more development also in this area.

Each of more than 1,700 activities and projects implemented thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme tells a separate, unique story. We encourage you to read the descriptions of some of them, included in the publication you are holding in your hands.

Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme in figures

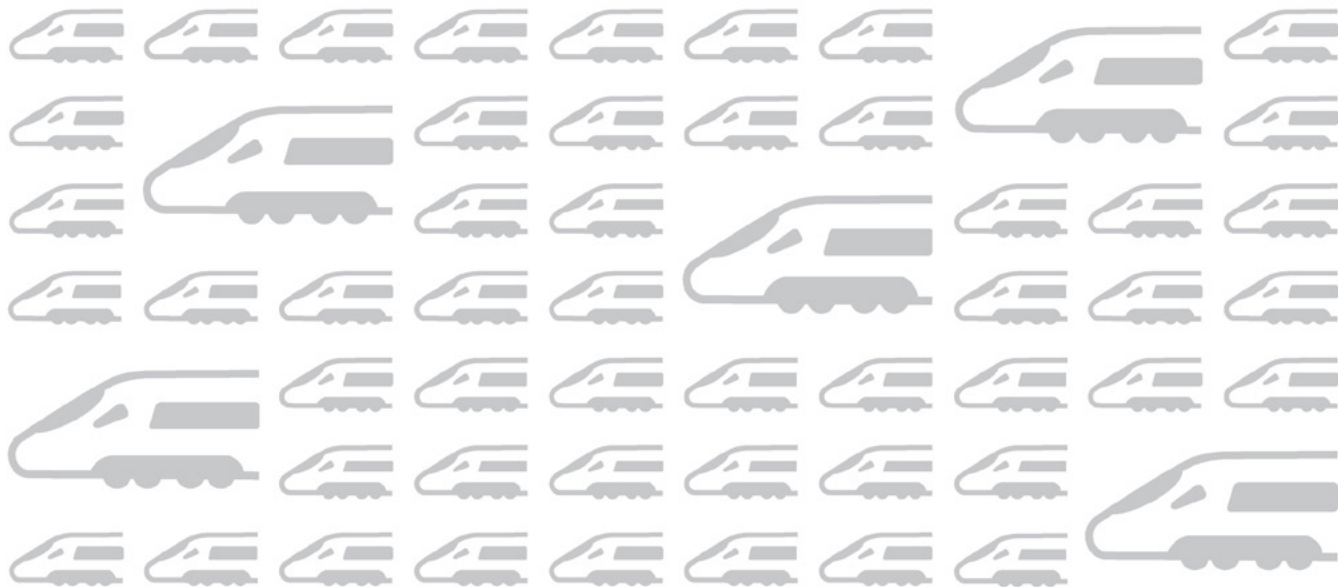


131,338 tons

of removed asbestos

=

it equals to the weight of **332 high-speed** trains





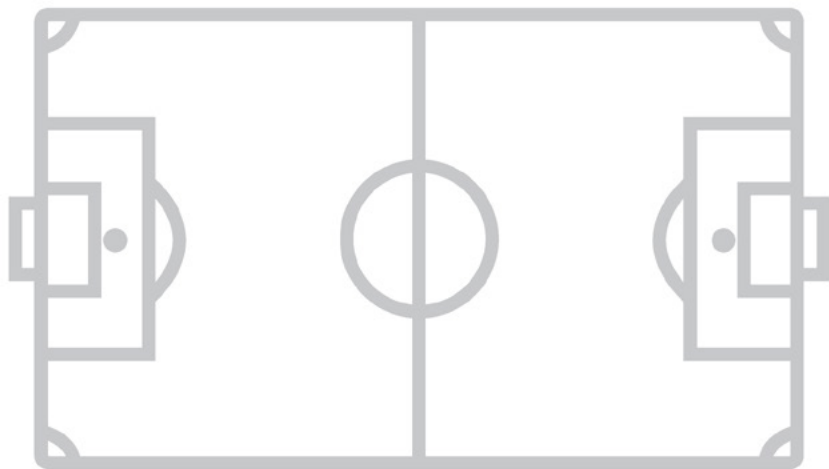
25,634

solar systems

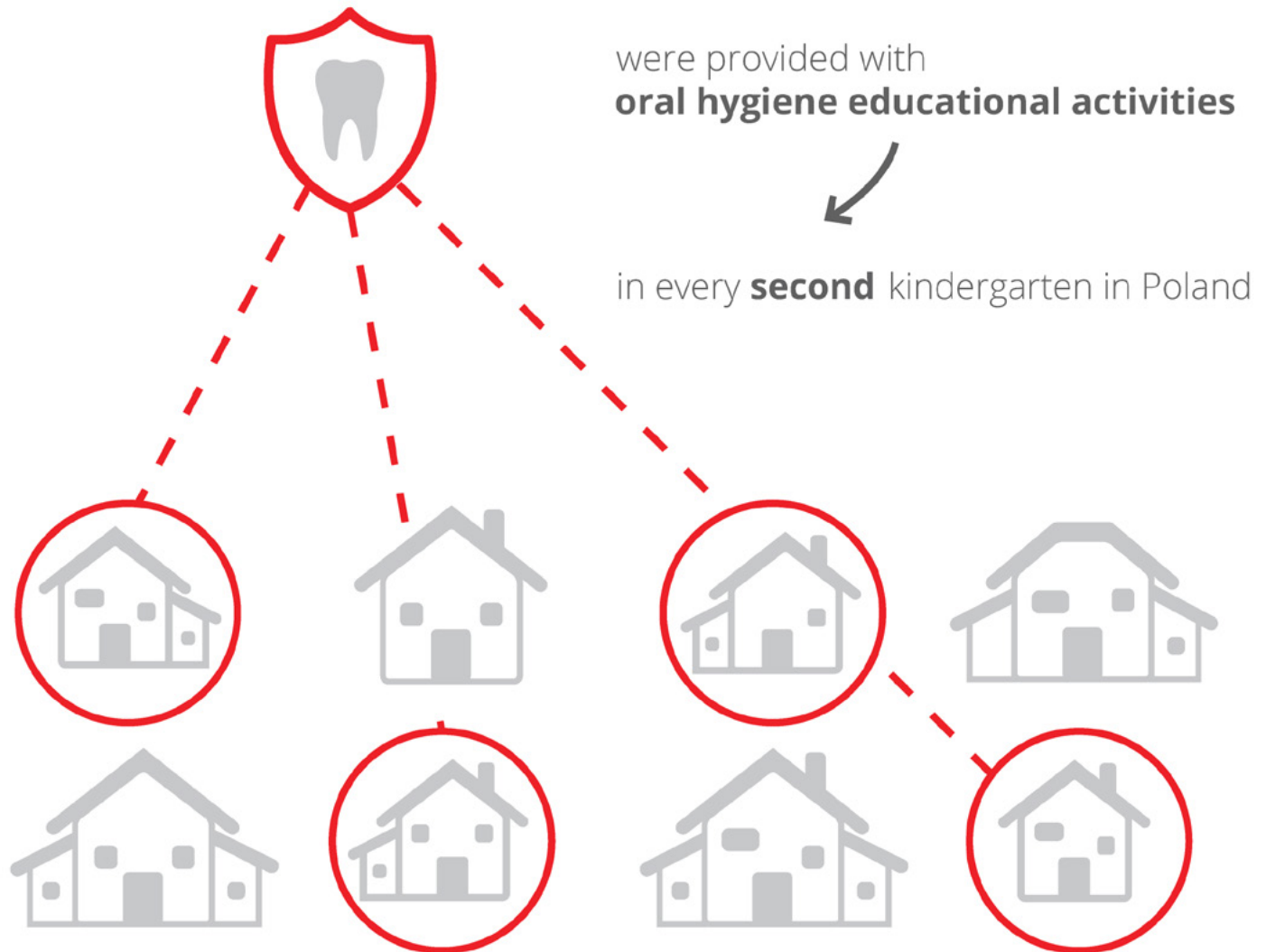


their total surface area is larger than

20 football pitches



5,725 kindergartens



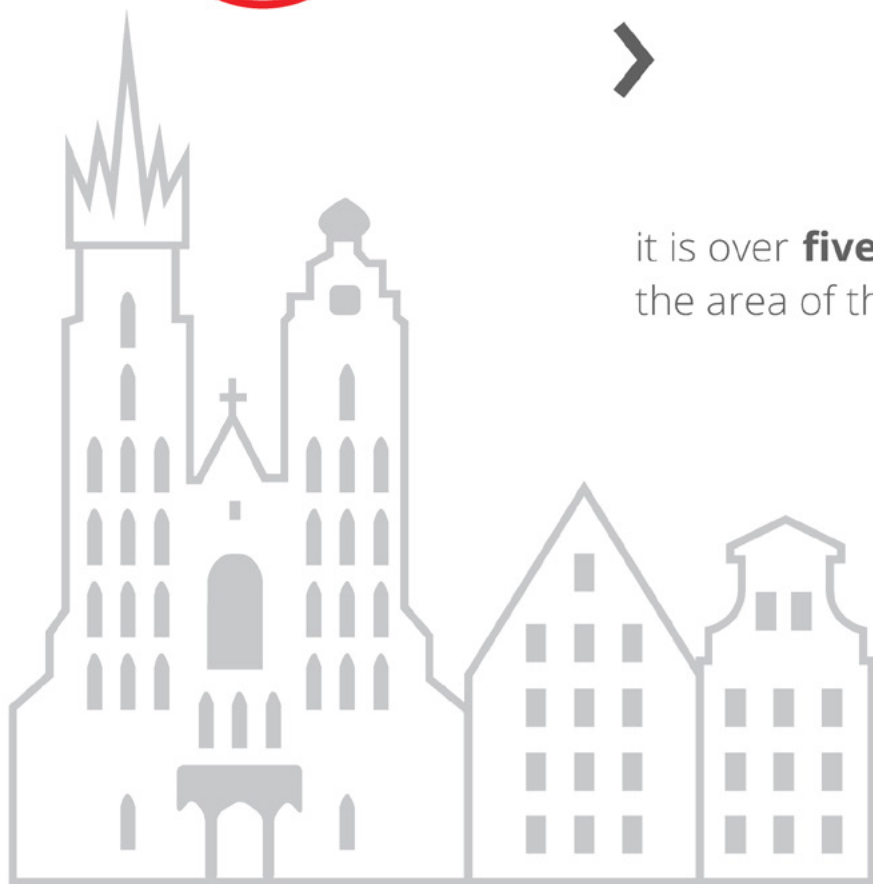
205,005 m²



of modernised social welfare homes
and educational care centres



it is over **five times more** than
the area of the Main Square in Cracow





civil society development projects
in which **151,140 people**
took part



it is over **2.5** times more than the **National Stadium** in Warsaw stands' capacity





1,352

GRANTS
FOR REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

125

INNOVATIONS

31

SWISS-POLISH PROJECTS
IN PARTNERSHIP FUND

177

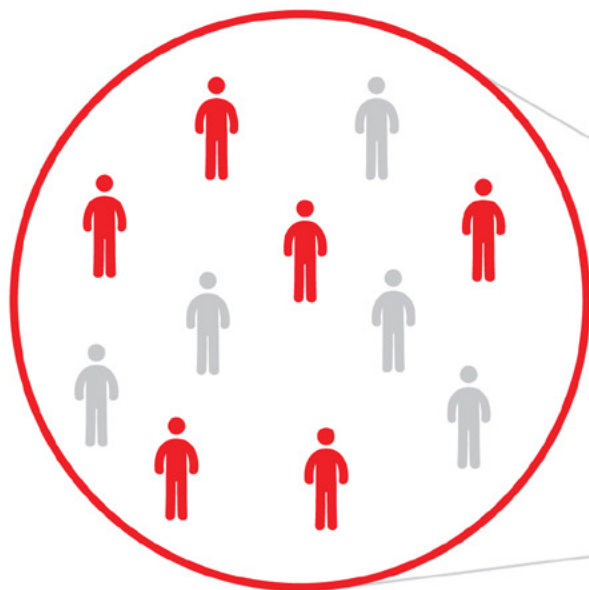
CSR PROJECTS

27,000



trained persons
in Regional Development projects

=

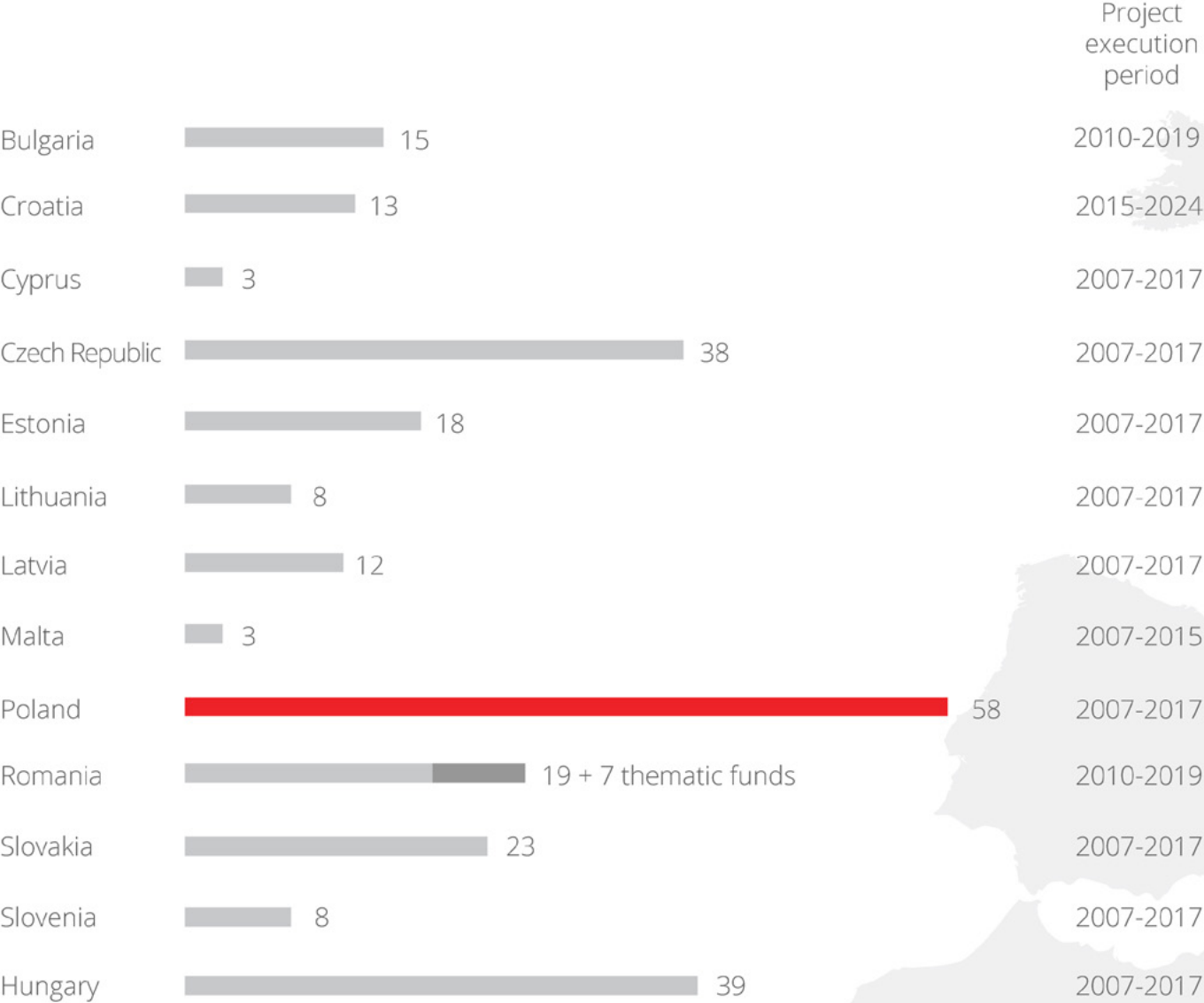


it is like to train **11 persons**
in every single municipality in Poland

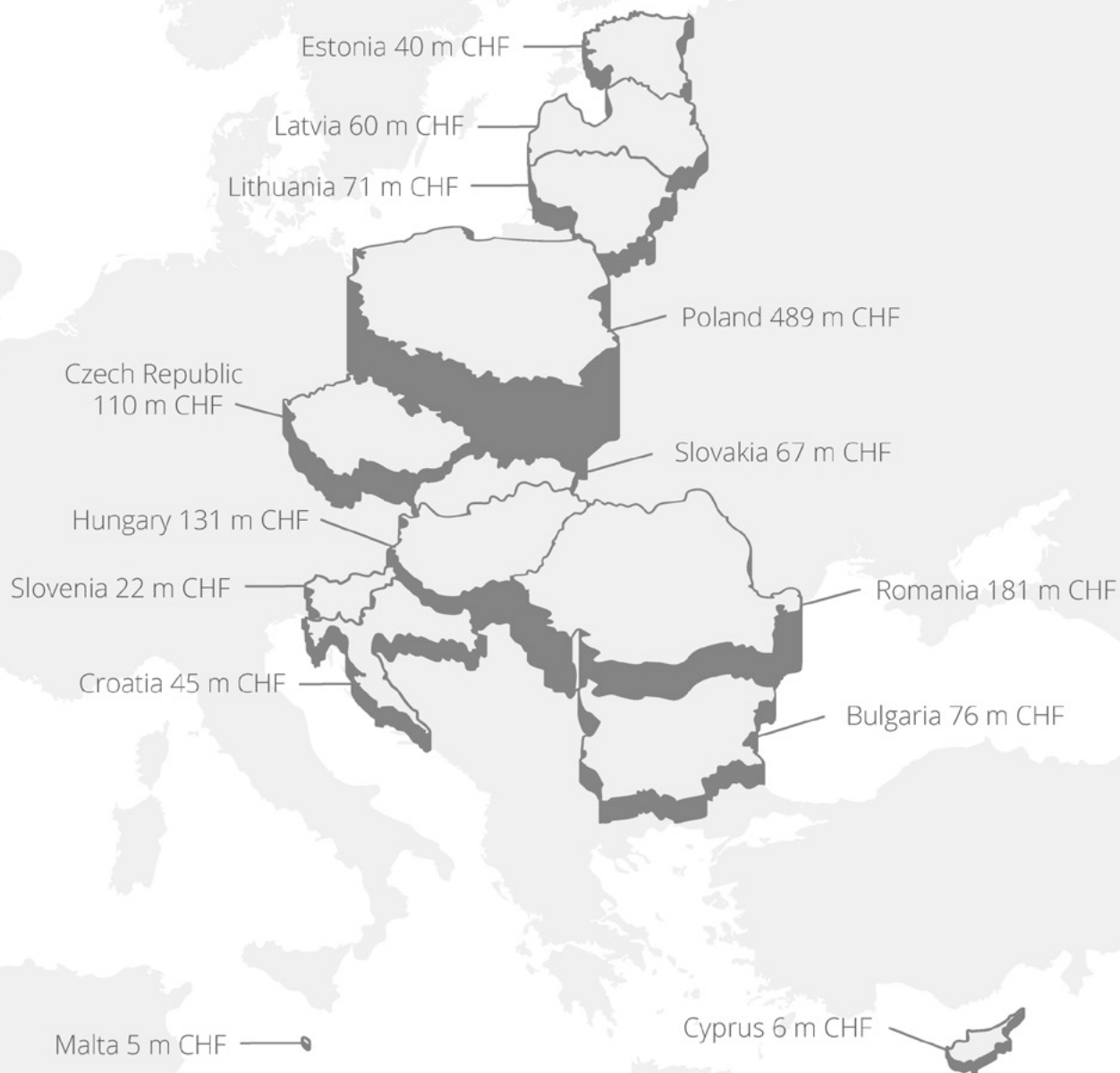


Swiss assistance for European Union countries

Total number of large projects, programmes and funds in individual countries



Total amount of support for individual countries

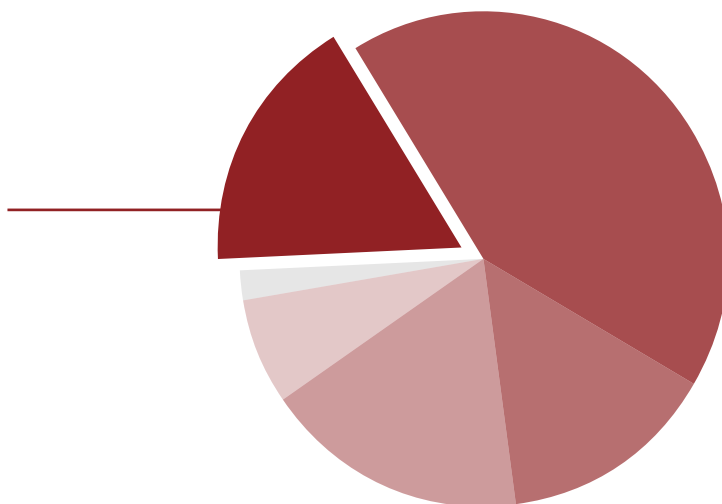


Regional development and border protection



16.3%

- **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND BORDER PROTECTION**
- Environment and infrastructure
- Private sector
- Science, health and social welfare
- Civil society and partnership cooperation
- Project Preparation Facility, Technical Assistance Fund as well as funds for the management of the SPCP by Switzerland



PROJECTS:

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Cooperation of local governments from Małopolska

Project title

Local initiatives for the regional development of the Gorlicki and Nowosądecki poviats

Implementing organization

Małopolska Regional Development Agency Joint Stock Company

Project partners

Nowosądecki powiat, Gorlicki powiat, Małopolska Tourism Organization

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 6,753,818

Project implementation period

August 2011 – December 2016



Thanks to the cooperation of local governments supported by Swiss Contribution funds, the residents of the Gorlicki and Nowosądecki poviats have improved their professional skills, which increased their chances of finding a good job. The economy of the microregion has benefitted

from the promotion of local brands, support for enterprises and from higher quality of training and consulting services, including e-learning.

Cooperation between local governments is one of the development challenges of Poland. In the case of this project, the success depended on the joint activities of neighboring areas. Fortunately, the authorities of both poviats - Gorlicki and Nowosądecki - were truly convinced that, given a similar socio-economic profile as well as similar resources and problems, cooperation would let them achieve cumulative benefits and solve common problems.

The funds from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), acquired by both poviats, were allocated to the three most important areas. The first one was related to the broadly defined promotion of the region. It involved promoting regional products and brands and thus supporting local artists, craftsmen and farmers. The second area involved local entrepreneurs. They could count on business grants and advisory support. The residents and farmers who decided to expand their competencies or change their occupation also benefitted from the assistance.

Tailor-made support

The project was created in response to well-diagnosed problems of both poviats related to high unemployment, relatively low economic activity, insufficient processing of organic food and inefficient mechanisms of its sales, unsatisfactory use of the health-resort, cultural and touristic characteristics of the area. A coherent idea was needed to promote the sub-region – its cultural heritage and its natural beauty.

The implementation of the project took advantage of this area's qualities, especially the strong agricultural tradition. There are over 45,000 farms, including many certified organic food producers and producers of traditional local products. With such a large business fragmentation, an important objective of the project was to support cooperation between the companies conducting similar activities – creation of the Portal for Fruit Growers based on a Swiss technology is a good example of a positive change in this area.

Organizations implementing the project reached out companies and entrepreneurs in the region and invited them to cooperate. As regards the



financial support, on average, three entrepreneurs applied for one grant. The greatest asset of the project was its comprehensive nature: every group of residents of both poviats could receive the support, regardless of their age

or education. Beneficiaries of the project included micro, small and medium entrepreneurs, people involved in agriculture and activities related to agriculture - in fact - all the residents of the sub-region. The individual components of the

project were related not only to entrepreneurship, but also to vocational training, agriculture, tourism promotion, thus involving a large number of residents of the Gorlice and Sądecki poviats.

The support from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme for the nowosądecko-gorlicki sub-region proved to be very effective. The 86 subsidized SMEs located in this area recorded an increase in revenues and, additionally, 42 companies benefitted from pro-innovation audits. For example, **"Forest"** company, which produces wooden clothes hangers and was one of the beneficiaries of the project, bought a precision woodworking machine, which enabled the company to save money, improve the raw material yield and, consequently, increase the turnover. The project also promoted 15 new local brands. Moreover, nearly 3.6

▶▶ We are extremely proud of the investment in vocational education infrastructure. Thanks to the project, the Center for Practical and Continuing Education in Gorlice is a place where the sub-region residents can learn and improve their professional skills in renovated, well-equipped studios and workshops, with state-of-the-art devices and programmes. ▶▶

Joanna Jakubowska-Łazęcka, the deputy director of the Department of Project and Programme Management of the Małopolska Regional Development Agency



The part of the project which aimed to improve the quality of vocational education was very successful as well. Joanna Jakubowska-Łazęcka, the deputy director of the Department of Project and Programme Management of the Małopolska Regional Development Agency, emphasized that study visits were of particular importance in this area. Thanks to their visit to Switzerland, the participants were able to find out what the vocational training system in Switzerland looks like, to get acquainted with its leading institutions and attend lectures and presentations on the main features of the Swiss education system. It is particularly important today, when vocational education is becoming the key to success in the labor market.

thousand people have improved their skills. However, the numbers alone cannot show the full effect of the project and the success it brought to many companies and their owners.

the Horse Theme Village, and the introduction of local products registered on the List of Traditional Products.

Thanks to intensive tourism promotion activities there has been a 4% increase in the number of visitors to this sub-region, and as a result, the revenue of the tourism sector has increased as well. This change has been generated by the development and implementation of a promotional strategy, the launch of informative websites, the creation of multilingual electronic applications, new tourist attractions such as



The Carpathians: Poland's Alps

Project title

"The Alps for the Carpathians"
- a programme to unlock
the economic potential
of mountainous areas
of the Podkarpackie region through
the transfer of Swiss practices

Implementing organization

The Carpathian Foundation – Poland

Project partners

Bieszczady Regional Development
Agency in Ustrzyki Dolne,
Subcarpathian Chamber of Commerce,
Regional Chamber of Commerce,
Bieszczady European Forum

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 4,818,388

Project implementation period

August 2011 – October 2016

**The Alps and the Carpathians
have numerous common
features. However, the**



**Carpathians, though
diverse and beautiful,
are underestimated and
their tourism potential is still
waiting to be discovered.
The Swiss, who mastered**

**the art of promoting
mountains and know how to
invest in them, showed the
residents of southern Poland
what an effective model
of activities in the Polish
mountains might look like.**

The project was a response
to the challenges the region
was facing, especially related to:

- insufficient knowledge
on how mountainous touristic
areas function in developed
countries,
- a modest tourist offer
and standard of services,
- the need to support micro
and small businesses
to enhance the region's
visibility and create local
brands and products.

▲▲ **"The Alps for the Carpathians" project was a response to numerous problems of mountainous, cross-border areas of the Podkarpackie Voivodship. The tourist potential of the region has been underestimated for many years. It was recognized that, due to the similarity of the Alps and the Carpathians, the Alpine model of tourism development can be used as a mode of action for the Carpathians. The invited experts have considered this an appropriate approach. It was recommended to focus on supporting the development of tourism and local products and carrying out a wide promotion campaign of the region.** ▼▼

Zofia Kordela-Borczyk, the Director of "the Alps for the Carpathians" project



This diagnosis allowed to define the basic objectives of the programme:

- to increase knowledge of the residents about the potential of the region – on the example of the Swiss experience,
- to create financial support mechanisms for the region covered by the project and the development of financial capacity and competence of NGOs and businesses,
- to support local products,
- to carry out an intensive

promotional campaign for the region.

"Transfer, adapt, and implement"

Individuals and institutions involved in the project sought Swiss sites and experiences most similar to the situation in the Carpathians in order to find solutions that can be "transferred, adapted and implemented" in southern Poland. The analysis of the Swiss experience has shown that the Carpathians have the

potential, but lack a concept for effective promotion.

Local products were one of the pillars of the project. Over 80 business entities had the opportunity to participate in a sales and marketing partner network. In this way, 162 items were registered on the list of certified products and 45 businesses supplying branded products or services were financially supported. Their promotion was supported by 4,000 catalogs dedicated

to branded products and Carpathian tourist services. There are also new attractions, such as the Bieszczady Bicycle Trolleys.

For business and NGOs

The residents of the Carpathians have gained knowledge of the region's potential, crucial for their further activities. Four strategies for the Carpathians have been developed. Trainings have been organised for non-governmental organizations, with 248 participants. 212 individuals have been involved in business training, resulting in 279 business plans. 10 traineeships for business representatives and 10 for non-governmental organizations have been organized as well. Thanks to a comprehensive enrolment procedure within the Mountain Non-Governmental Organizations Fund, 124 sub-projects were implemented, while 170 sub-projects were implemented under the call for sub-projects of the Mountain Entrepreneurship Fund.

Within the project, NGOs received a total of PLN 2.47 million, whereas enterprises received 170 grants in a total amount of PLN 10.14 million. In addition to stimulating efficiency and the emergence of innovative business plans,



113 new jobs have been created thanks to the support.

Break free in the Polish mountains

"The Alps for the Carpathians" project also involved real support for the promotion of this beautiful region. It has created an information service www.alpykarpatom.pl, which recorded over 186,157 visits to the site. Thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, a film "Where bears brew beer" promoting the region has been realized, which was awarded the third place at the Zagreb International Tourism Film Festival in July 2013. Two TV spots -

summer and winter edition - have also been realized - under the great slogan "Bieszczady - break free!".

Various promotional campaigns within the project have reached more than 20 million viewers thanks to broadcasts on the national television. A reportage book "Open space, open people - Podkarpacie" has been published. An event promoting the book and the film "Faces of Podkarpacie" in Rzeszów and the promotion of the book in Sanok have been organised. A photography contest as well as a contest for a regional pattern "Motif from Podkarpacie" have been organized. 2,200 items of the



Carpathian Lynx Mascot have been produced – this is the total estimated number of lynxes living in the Carpathians. A study tour of foreign tour operators in the region and a film promoting the Network “Made in Karpaty” have been realized. An article about the region has been published in the National Geographic Traveler. There have been 21 events promoting the project. “The Alps for the Carpathians” project has not only let the people of Podkarpacie recognize the potential of the region they live in, but they have also learnt how to use it wisely.

How were the Bieszczady Bicycle Trolleys created?

Janusz Demkowicz*

- The creation of this amazing tourist attraction was possible thanks to the funds from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. The Carpathian Foundation, which received these funds, evaluated our idea positively, so we were awarded the funding. This enabled us to launch the largest tourist bicycle trolleys rental service in Poland.

What are the biggest benefits of the project?

J.D. - It is extremely important that our project has become

a permanent feature on the tourist map of the Bieszczady Mountains. The main station of the Bieszczady Bicycle Trolleys is located in Uherce Mineralne, which thanks to this project is visited by nearly 1,000 tourists every day. This is a great result given that until recently, despite its beauty, Uherce was only a pass-through village.

How has the project contributed to the economic development in the surrounding areas?

J.D. - The Bieszczady Bicycle Trolleys has certainly contributed to the creation of new jobs. In summer we have about nine employees. Other entities have also become active. The economic activity of our stores, hotels and other service businesses has developed. There are also new companies that produce ice cream and sell cheese, and the ladies from the rural housewives organizations gladly take care of our passengers along the route. The Bieszczady Bicycle Trolleys have had a very positive impact on our area.

***Janusz Demkowicz,**
one of the beneficiaries of the project
“The Alps for the Carpathians”

Świętokrzyskie: natural resources and ... traditional tastes

Project title

Świętokrzyskie Mountains
– our future

Implementing organization

Entrepreneurship Support Centre
in Sandomierz

Project partner

Marshal's Office of the Świętokrzyskie
Voivodship

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 6,722,265

Project implementation period

October 2011 – March 2017



Although Sandomierz is one of the best known tourist destinations in Poland, the region of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, where the city is located, has never enjoyed such a great interest as the Tatra Mountains. The Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme

(SPCP) has made the richness of tastes and unique values of nature of the Świętokrzyskie region the foundation for the pro-development activities undertaken by local entrepreneurs as well as the local authorities and non-profit organizations.

The idea and the main objective of the project implemented within the framework of the SPCP was to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Świętokrzyskie region and to increase the region's attractiveness. The best way to achieve that is by taking advantage of the local cultural, material, social, spiritual and natural heritage. The project focused on various interrelated measures encouraging residents to develop economic and social activities, promoting the qualities of the Świętokrzyskie region. The project components, addressed to different target groups, complemented each other both with respect to the content and to the implementation schedule, thus supporting the achievement of the main goal.

The implementation of the project required

the development of appropriate procedures to hold grant competitions that would meet the requirements of the SPCP, and, at the same time, would be clear and transparent for the beneficiaries of this support. "We were able to meet these challenges thanks to the commitment of a motivated and experienced team of people, who had already participated in the implementation of many projects, including projects carried out over the 25 years of existence of our Foundation," says Anna Frańczak, the project manager at the Entrepreneurship Support Centre in Sandomierz.

Krówka Cafe and DIY¹ Food Processing Incubator

During implementation of the project, 12 grant competitions were held for business start-ups, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and public cultural institutions operating in four districts of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship. Beneficiaries have implemented 280 projects and received grants of a total value of almost PLN 15.3 million.

A new culinary route called "Tastes of Świętokrzyskie" has been created. Thanks to it, 53

¹ Do it yourself



businesses from different sectors now cooperate and support each other. The route includes agro-tourism farms, restaurants, processing and manufacturing companies offering local, traditional products, food and beverages. The route is open to businesses that have been certified using predetermined quality requirements. All certified participants of the Tastes of Świętokrzyskie are included in the special map published as part of the project, which recommends

locations worth visiting in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains.

Another interesting outcome of the activities under the SPCP is the Food Processing Incubator in Dwikozy – an innovative pilot project. The Incubator, equipped with modern facilities, enables stakeholders to process fruits and vegetables in such a way that they can be later sold in compliance with the sanitary standards. Thanks to this initiative it has been possible to launch some new local products on the market and

to improve the region's capacity for economic growth.

The Dairy Cooperative in Opatów, which benefitted from financial support under the SPCP, has created its own brand Krówka Cafe, where customers can not only have great time eating toffee candies called "Krówka" (little cow), but can also take part in unusual workshops which show how this famous treat is manufactured.

About 50 entities located in Sandomierz and its immediate surroundings have benefited directly from financial support under the project, significantly enhancing the town's tourist offer. New catering and accommodation facilities have been created to meet tourists' needs, restaurant and accommodation infrastructure has been modernized. New services have appeared such as city sightseeing tours in original Polish Melex electric vehicles or regular summer cruises on the Vistula river. Old tourist routes have been renovated and some new ones have been designed, including trails promoting the unique and picturesque Pieprzowe Mountains. The association of vineyard owners are restoring old Sandomierz wine-making tradition through a joint promotional campaign of vines cultivation and wine production.

Four study visits have taken place, attended by 100 beneficiaries, local leaders or members of partnerships as well as 100 students and teachers of upper secondary schools. Participants have acquired knowledge on the need and benefits which can be obtained by tapping into regional cultural resources and building a common tourist offer which makes the region more attractive to visitors. Participants of the study visits have seen examples demonstrating how to combine the culinary offer with different types of educational activities and develop a joint offer of entities operating in the restaurant, culture and tourism sectors.

The SPCP has let the inhabitants of the region recognize and utilize the beauty of the Świętokrzyskie region in their undertakings. The Programme has had a real impact on the development potential and economic exploitation of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains region.

How has the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme influenced the development of tourism in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains?

Halina Siemaszko* -

Tourism is a very important part of the economy



in our region. We have some extremely attractive tourist sites which until now have not been sufficiently promoted and presented to visitors. Therefore, we decided to use the potential of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains. With the assistance received under the SPCP, we have designed a project that has allowed touristic and economic development of the area. Visitors can not only admire the beauty of nature, but they can also enjoy various activities and taste regional delicacies.

What activities have been carried out within the framework of the project?

H.S. - The project "Świętokrzyskie Mountains – our future" has been quite complex and its implementation has been based on several components. We began our work with identifying the resources available in our region and determining which of them were suitable for business use and promotion. As a result of this study, a publication entitled "The List of Important Things. Resource Catalogue



of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains” has been published. We have also implemented an educational component in which we have trained people interested in setting up their own businesses. We have organised the Świętokrzyskie Business Academy for already established entrepreneurs as well as the School of Leaders for the non-governmental organizations representatives.

What has been the impact of the project on the activation of local youth?

H.S. - A very interesting element of the project was the training carried out under the title “Dream Company”, addressed to students of eight upper secondary schools from four districts. It was an extremely innovative and very attractive way of teaching entrepreneurship.

Young people came up with ideas for their own businesses based on the identified local resources. The best business plans of the “Dream Company” projects were rewarded with a study trip to Switzerland, where very good solutions and examples of entrepreneurship and education were shown to the participants. It was also a great opportunity to see how local resources are utilized in Switzerland.

What have been other signs of impact on the local enterprises?

H.S. - Within the framework of the project, funding has also been granted to entrepreneurs to support the development of new products for tourists and the use of local resources as well as for setting up new businesses. Subsidies have also been given to local authorities, cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations for various projects related to cultivating the traditions and culture of the region. In total, we have awarded about 280 grants, which have led to the creation of about 200 new jobs.

***Halina Siemaszko,**
President of the Entrepreneurship
Support Centre in Sandomierz



Effects of the SPCP in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains

- 77 non-governmental organizations have received grants for social and cultural projects implemented in local communities for the total amount of PLN 3.3 million;
- 39 public institutions have received grants for the total amount of PLN 1.6 million for the implementation of projects promoting the Świętokrzyskie Mountains;
- 93 rural leaders expanded their knowledge of management and organization of initiatives based on local resources;
- 70 people have received grants for starting their own business activity for a total amount of PLN 2.6 million;
- 83 entrepreneurs have used the investment grants in the total amount of PLN 7.5 million to expand their businesses;
- 91 jobs have been created by people starting their own business;
- 110 new jobs have been created by active companies;
- about 60 accommodation facilities and 140 new places in catering facilities have been created.

Healthy food unites

Project title

Małopolska Local Product
– development of local
entrepreneurship and processing
based on the partnership initiative
for the economic education of
inhabitants as well as regional
marketing system of products from
Małopolska

Implementing organization

Environmental Partnership Foundation

Project partners

Association of "Gościniec 4 Żywiołów"
Four Tastes Association

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,576,610

Project implementation period

August 2011 – March 2017



A common market for consumers and producers based on local products is the underlying idea of the project, implemented within the framework of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) and aimed at supporting the socio-economic development

of the Małopolskie Voivodship. Shopping clubs, centres of local culinary culture, direct purchase from the producer, Food Processing Incubator – are all pillars of the new food market. Certification of local products has ensured the marketing success of the venture.

The project has been designed to become the driving force for 130,000 small farms in Małopolska. These farms produce mainly for their own needs. The goal of the project was to promote the development of these small farms and small food producers and to enable them to sell their surplus production. The project aimed at increasing competitiveness, at winning new markets and new customers, and, consequently, at fostering positive changes in the regional market.

Parsley Market in Cracow? Yes!

An important goal of the project was to develop pro-partnership attitudes. Emphasis has been put on promoting and organizing cooperation among food producers. This has resulted in the organization, together with a group of farmers, of the Parsley Market in Podgórze in Cracow. The beginnings were difficult, people did not believe they could succeed. After two years, the market has

turned out to be a great success – this has shown that acting together enables to achieve the desired sales on a very competitive food market. The experience gathered in the Parsley Market project has allowed to develop a number of other solutions linking producers and consumers, which form now the basis of the local food system.

Together with other NGOs, chambers of agriculture, local authorities, MPs and farmers, the Environmental Partnership Foundation launched a campaign called "Legal Local Food". Its purpose was to make sanitary regulations and tax system more friendly to small farmers. The Foundation's activities have led to legislative changes that allow farmers to process and sell food products from their own farms. "Our primary success is the creation of a local food system called 'Małopolska Local Product'", says Rafał Serafin.

SPCP – an opportunity to experiment

Financing from the SPCP was a unique opportunity – it provided time to experiment with different solutions in order to build a local food system.

As a result, it has been possible to create a functioning system

leading to regular interactions of several hundred consumers and dozens of manufacturers. The pillars of the system include shopping clubs, centres of local culinary culture and direct purchases from the producer at his farm or at a local market. The system is backed up with an IT platform, a certificate proving the authenticity of the products sold, and a Food Processing Incubator. The eight shopping clubs that run the weekly sales of local products include almost 100 producers and 295 certified products.

Within the Nowa Huta Cultural Centre in Cracow, the Centre of Local Culinary Culture “Marchewka Bistro” (Carrot Bistro), based on local products, operates seven days a week. In Zakrzów, a modernized Food



Processing Incubator provides services to about 50 entities. The Incubator is a place designed for small companies processing agricultural products, catering

companies and farmers who can prepare and process their products in well-equipped and properly prepared facilities. This allows small processing

Given the growing interest in local food among consumers, particularly in Cracow, we have decided that there may be a space for a system based on product certification, connecting consumers and producers. The idea was to change the attitude of consumers and public institutions to small-scale, subsistence farms; we thought it was important that they were no longer considered a social problem, but rather a chance to organize local food supplies and to revive the economy of poorly developed rural areas.

Rafał Serafin, President of the Environment Partnership Foundation



companies to meet sanitary requirements. At the same time, apart from investing their own time, they do not have to invest their own financial resources in catering equipment which they can rent in the Incubator. In this way, they can significantly reduce the production costs. The producers sell their products directly to the customers and the local partners organize their own

fairs and sales events. The system is based on a voluntary, collaborative partnership that involves sharing costs, risks and additional benefits. Thanks to the launch of the IT platform in the “Małopolska Local Product” system, more and more sellers and buyers can participate in the initiative. The success of the project is due to the fact, that

it is a living system – constantly evolving and responding to the needs of its participants. New producers and customers keep joining in the system. The activities expand to include the supply of local products to schools and kindergartens, and there are plans to establish a partnership with research laboratories to improve the quality of the products sold.

Without the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme there would be no models and benchmarks for the organizational, legal and financial solutions needed to scale up local food systems which include, rather than exclude, small farms and small food producers.

How did the idea for creating the Parsley Market originate?

Paweł Kubisztal*

- Everyone would like to buy healthy vegetables directly from farmers, supporting at the same time local enterprises. Unfortunately, in Podgórze, there was no such place, so we had the idea to create it. For support of this initiative we turned to the Environmental Partnership Foundation, which acted as a distributor of funds from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. We have used this funding source to create the Parsley Market.

What has been achieved during the project?

P.K. - The funds were spent on the purchase of tents, tables, chairs and other objects which are necessary to organise the market. The support was



also used to cover the cost of renting the plot where the sale takes place. Over the two years, our activity has developed and we have become independent.

What are the reactions of the visitors to the Parsley Market? Did they miss such an initiative in their neighbourhood?

P.K. - The Parsley Market has attracted a lot of interest from the local

community. Initially, it was only run in the summer time, but the pressure and the needs of the local people were so great that in the winter season we rented a 160 m² space in the basement of a building next to the plot. Now, the Parsley Market is an all-year-round enterprise.

*** Paweł Kubisztal,**
Head of the Podgórze.pl Association
in Cracow

“Ourselves to Ourselves” in the Strug Valley

Project title

Multifaceted Development Programme “Ourselves to Ourselves” in the micro-region of the “Strug Valley”

Implementing organization

Regional Agri-Industrial Society “Dolina Strugu”

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,564,294

Project implementation period

August 2011 – December 2016



Cultivating traditions is one of the well-tested methods of supporting regional development. In order to be successful in the 21st century, such measures require the use of modern approaches: exploiting the opportunities of the information society, supporting local leaders, and investing in the improvement of occupational and organisational skills.

The multifaceted Development Programme “Ourselves to Ourselves” in the micro-region of the Strug Valley has been implemented in the territory of four municipalities of the Rzeszów powiat: Błażowa, Chmielnik, Hyżne and Tyczyn. These neighbouring municipalities have been cooperating for years, acting for the development and activation of their inhabitants. These most dynamic organisation in the area is the Regional Agri-Industrial Society “Dolina Strugu”, implementing the project “Ourselves to Ourselves” within the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP).

The project “Ourselves to Ourselves” has been based on three pillars. The first one provided support for the economic development of the micro-region. Under this pillar, an institutional incubator, a tourist cluster, and an entrepreneurs’ and producers’ cluster have been created; grants for small and medium enterprises as well as indirect business support have been provided; and the Strug Valley brand has been promoted. The second pillar comprised activities for the development of the information society in the micro-region - for instance, via the creation of a network of inter-clubs and of an information website. The third pillar supported trainings for adults, educational classes for young people

and the extension of the school for leaders.

Heritage and modernity

The project partners have based their strategy on strengths of the supported area. The Strug Valley is an area where tradition and affection for the local cultural heritage play an important role. There are many places here commemorating the past which are important sites on the tourist map of the micro-region. There are numerous social organisations that cultivate tradition and culture, trying to preserve the memory about the origins of the Strug Valley inhabitants. The project “Ourselves to Ourselves” has brought a number of positive results; some of them can be measured today, others are expected to bear fruit in the long run. They include, for example:

- construction of a warehouse for storage of fresh fruits and vegetables, honey and many other local products as well as processed products for further distribution,
- restoring the agricultural potential, including organic farming,
- providing the foundations for the functioning of agricultural farms by securing sales opportunities and ensuring profitability of production,
- creation of new work places



- for 19 people,
- increasing the supply of Strug Valley food products,
- extension of the tourist offer of the Strug Valley, increasing the number of tourists,
- improving the quality, developing and increasing the competitiveness of the tourist sector,
- increasing the revenues of agri-tourist farms,
- establishing cooperation with tourist operators and leisure institutions operating in the region.

Importing experience

Apart from the investment activities the project "Ourselves to Ourselves"

included a number of soft measures such as trainings in running an agri-tourist business and conducting other economic activities, organic farming, food processing, apiculture, personal development or marketing. The trainings provided under the project for the Strug Valley inhabitants foresaw the participation of trainers from Switzerland and were prepared based on Swiss solutions and experience, with particular attention paid to the Emmental-Oberaargau region. The trainings participants were particularly interested in what they should focus on in their activity to enter new markets, including foreign markets. Thanks to the acquired knowledge a number of farmers of

the Strug Valley have declared that they will switch to ecological farming.

Integration in Inter-clubs

During the implementation of the "Ourselves to Ourselves" project, 20 training sessions were held in Inter-clubs. The Clubs offered not only a possibility to take part in specialist computer courses, but they also played the role of places for integration and meetings of the local community. The trainings were addressed to young and to older people and altogether were attended by 1,400 participants.

School for Leaders

The trainings and the workshops conducted in the School for Leaders were addressed to young people, to the unemployed, to the employed and to senior citizens. The participants acquired vocational skills, learned languages and interpersonal skills which can be used both in business and in their private lives.



Following King John III Sobieski's footprints

Project title

Local brand as an opportunity for the development of entrepreneurship along the Knight's Trail in Lubelskie Voivodeship

Implementing organization

Mełgiew municipality

Project partners

municipalities: Gorzków, Piaski, Rybczewice, Spiczyn, Wólka, John III Sobieski Local Fund Foundation

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 5,284,955

Project implementation period

August 2011 – December 2016



The extraordinary life story of king John III Sobieski turned out to be an excellent leading motif for the brand and image strategy of the municipalities of Lubelskie Voivodship. Thanks to innovative methods of promotion - from a mobile application to an Internet game supporting the municipality

partnership - the John III Sobieski Trail may become a magnet attracting tourists to the Lublin Region.

The programme "Local brand as an opportunity for the development of entrepreneurship along the Knight's Trail in Lubelskie Voivodeship" implemented under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) has been designed to provide economic support to the sub-region of the John III Sobieski Trail (JIIIS), i.e. to six partner municipalities: Gorzków, Mełgiew, Piaski, Rybczewice, Spiczyn, Wólka. The principal objective of the project was to stimulate the regional development by supporting enterprise development based on local resources and potential. In each of the six municipalities, new facilities and spaces have been developed, e.g. in the centre of the Rybczewice municipality a new complex has been constructed including an outdoor gym, pitch for outdoor games, children playground, gazebo with a barbecue. The whole complex is lit and monitored. As part of the same project, an old gateway leading to the park has been renovated and 10 new shelters for tourists have been constructed throughout the municipality.

The detailed objectives included:

- development of the human

resources of the sub-region, including, first of all, diversification of the employment structure in the sub-region under the umbrella of the JIIIS Trail brand,

- supplying additional capital to the sub-region in the branches of key importance for the development of the JIIIS tourist product,
- maintaining the quality standards of the tourist and tourist-related products that constitute the components of the tourist product of JIIIS Trail,
- development of tourist and leisure infrastructure of the JIIIS Trail.

The project scale has been huge, matching the greatness of king John III Sobieski and the opportunities obtained by the entrepreneurs thanks to the Swiss Contribution funding for the sub-region comprising the partner municipalities.

First, a video and a promotional spot were realised, presenting the places on the trail where King Sobieski stayed, feasted, hunted and where he wrote letters to Queen Mary. The promotional activities began with a nation-wide campaign: the project was presented during the "Battle of Vienna" film premiere at the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw. Before



the show, the trail promotional video was presented to media representatives; during a press conference, the project coordinator presented the concept, the idea and the scope of activities of the project, and during the premiere with participation of government representatives and film makers, the trail advertising video was presented. A high-profile promotional campaign

of the project was also carried out during the opening of the Lublin Airport.

Sobieski in the digital version

The project tasks were based not only on the history, but also on a modern initiative of launching a new Internet game connected with an outdoor activity entitled: "Sobieski's Treasure". Fast-flowing

action, diversified tasks, interesting dialogues and accurate reflection of the 17-th century reality have made the game attractive. The outdoor version of the game was organized on the anniversary of King John III Sobieski's birthday. Solving mysterious riddles was rewarded with prizes. Under the project, vocational training has also been provided in pottery, stonework, cheese making and meat processing as well as making of liqueurs, jams and preserves. The participants took part in classes on marketing and running their own business. What is important, the funds have also been spent on tangible assets: e.g. new machinery for a meat processing plant was purchased and production of cold meat products was launched under the common brand "John III Sobieski's Cold Meat Products". In addition, a new product was successfully launched on the market - the Bystra water in a glass bottle. Cider production has been launched on one of the fruit farms; the product is now sold on the local market, apple juice is also sold. Thanks to the SPCP

▲▲ The residents of the municipalities have become natural ambassadors of the Knight's Trail brand. Thanks to their involvement, six large-scale events have been organised in the partner municipalities. Each of those events has been a unique, live history lesson. ▼▼

Monika Świetlicka, subinspector for promotion and development of Rybczewice Municipality Office



support, manufacturing of handmade aromatherapy candles is expected to be launched soon.

From a britzka to paintball

Thanks to the Swiss support, the agritourist infrastructure of the Lublin area has been better adapted to customers' requirements: a number of new offers for tourists have been prepared, from rides on a britzka (a horse-drawn carriage) to a possibility to take part in paintball tournaments.

Additional support, consolidating the previously introduced changes, is provided by a mobile application and a website for the JIIIS Trail sub-region: www.szlaksobieskiego.info, with a knowledge base for the visitors. A map of the sub-region with the attractions marked on it, split into different categories, is an important element of the website. With the application, it is possible to plan a visit route and to print out e.g. a mini guide or to use a selected route on the smart phone. The innovative solutions available thanks to the Internet site not

only help prepare a trip plan, but also allow calculating its time and registering for an event in the trail's event calendar.

The promotional activities within the project "Local brand as an opportunity for the development of entrepreneurship along the Knight's Trail in Lubelskie Voivodeship" were crowned with a campaign promoting the offer for tourists, created with the support of the SPCP, with a motto, "Spend your dream weekend on the John III Sobieski Trail". No more and no less.

Export, tourism and study tours

Project title

Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation Bridge

Implementing organization

Carpathian Euroregion Association
Poland

Project partner

Development and Promotion
of Podkarpacie Association
“Pro Carpathia”

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 5,217,903

Project implementation period

October 2011 – June 2016



Development of the international cooperation at the level of non-governmental organizations, local authorities as well as companies from the SME sector has been the main objective of the project “Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation Bridge”. The knowledge transfer and the Swiss know-how

have given the companies from Podkarpacie new opportunities to export and enabled the development of entrepreneurship in the Podkarpacie area.

The main objective of the project has been to stimulate the economic activity of the Podkarpackie Voivodship, to improve occupational skills of the residents as well as business skills of managers in companies. The development of local enterprises has been particularly important, including support of agricultural processing, which is popular in this area. The project has also been designed to provide support via grants to the public and non-governmental sectors in their activities aimed at stimulating the growth of exports grants.

The implementation of the project enabled the Carpathian Euroregion Association Poland to begin long-term cooperation with Swiss organisations. Oksana Petrynych, representing the Association, says, that the meetings with Swiss experts have been particularly important as they have provided the beneficiaries of the project with an excellent opportunity to learn about good practices in organizing international

economic exchange and promoting the development of various entities (non-governmental organizations, micro, small and medium enterprises, producers of regional, traditional and ecological products).

Within the the framework of the “Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation Bridge” project, four grant funds have been established:

- Study Tour Fund,
- Local Export Promotion Fund,
- Regional, Traditional and Ecological Product Promotion Fund for Entrepreneurs,
- Regional, Traditional and Ecological Product Promotion Fund for NGOs.

The funding from the Local Export Promotion Fund has enabled companies from the Podkarpackie area to expand and, in some cases, to start export activities. It was possible to introduce new products and technological solutions. A good example of the impact of the SPCP is the IT company Ideo, which has increased its exports to foreign markets. Project beneficiaries have invested in machinery parks, developed their own brands. Despite the limitations (already one year after the project completion, the companies were required



to show revenues generated with the help of the project support) the Fund has been popular and effective.

Implement the Swiss solutions smartly

A separate theme in the project has been the development of tourism in the Carpathian Mountains – based on the Swiss ideas adapted to the Polish reality and needs. Part of the training has been devoted to regional, traditional and ecological products, local marketing, and NGOs. An important practical issue has been comparing the methods of raising funds by non-governmental organizations in Poland and

Within the framework of the “Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation Bridge” 11 calls for proposals have been carried out and 187 projects have been supported (36 projects under the Study Tour Fund, 41 projects under the Local Export Promotion Fund, 110 projects under the Regional, Ecological Product Promotion Fund, for the total amount of PLN 9.6 million). Support has been provided for export, promotion, information and investment activities – in the areas of regional, traditional and ecological products and development of entrepreneurship in the Podkarpackie Voivodship.

Examples of results:

- The Carpathian Centre for Economic Cooperation and Regional Product has been established in Rzeszów,
- The International Trade Fair “Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation Forum” has been organized,
- The cluster “Podkarpacie Tastes” has been established, bringing together entities from the agri-food sector,
- The Podkarpacie Culinary Tastes Route, which brings together 50 entities (restaurants, taverns, inns) offering traditional regional cuisine, has been created,
- The Carpathian territorial brand “Carpathia” has been created, which has been used to label selected products, such as honey from the ecological Carpathian apiaries, wine from the Carpathian wineries.

Switzerland. Importantly, the training was not about listening to lectures, but it was an opportunity to ask questions directly or get specific, individual advice.

The study tours organized as part of the project were of particular importance. Their participants had an opportunity to take a close look at the functioning of the Swiss (and not only) organizations and to have direct contacts with their representatives. These relationships have evolved into trade agreements

and strategic agreements that can bring tangible benefits to the beneficiaries. The Carpathian Euroregion Association Poland has, through the project, developed the co-operation with the School of Management & Tourism of the HES-SO Valais-Wallis in Sierre and with the University of Bern, with which it plans to carry out further projects co-financed by aid programmes. Lastly, meetings with the Swiss provided a stimulus for the development of the territorial brand “Carpathia”, inspired by the solutions that

have functioned on the Swiss market.

Additionally, the Development and Promotion of Podkarpacie Association “Pro Carpathia” (partner of the project) has implemented many activities aimed at promoting regional, traditional and ecological products and culinary traditions of the Podkarpackie Voivodship. The Podkarpacie Tastes Cluster (including now 59 entities) and the Podkarpacie Tastes Culinary Route covering 50 restaurants have been created within the framework of the project.

Present inspired by the past

Project title

From a vision to the modern management of the Gotania sub-region

Implementing organization

Hrubieszów Municipality

Project partners

Dołhobyczów municipality, Hrubieszów municipality, Komarów-Osada municipality, Mircze municipality, Tomaszów Lubelski municipality, Trzeszczany municipality, Tyszowce municipality, Uchanie municipality, Werbkowice municipality, Foundation for Lubelskie Development

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 4,138,048

Project implementation period

August 2011 – July 2016



The history of the early medieval Goths supported the development vision of the Gotania sub-region. Thanks to the archaeological discoveries in this area, 10 communities of the Lubelskie

Voivodship have got a chance to create a new development strategy. Training and subsidies for business and non-governmental organisations have revived the region and increased the activity of the local community.

Gotania is an area in the south-eastern part of the Lubelskie Voivodship, near the Ukrainian border, covering 10 municipalities of 3 poviats: the town of Hrubieszów and municipalities of Hrubieszów, Mircze, Trzeszczany, Werbkowice, Uchanie, Dołhobyczów, Tyszowce, Tomaszów Lubelski, Komarów-Osada. Thanks to archaeological discoveries that revealed the ancient heritage of this region connected with the presence of the Goths, a new brand – namely Gotania – could emerge. The partnership of local governments that stood behind it, had some common problems to solve and a common goal: faster development.

Higher qualifications and more businesses

The area covered with the project is a typically agricultural area, without large industry and production plants, with a relatively high unemployment rate. Its inhabitants needed training

and courses to improve their qualifications and to increase the income of households from non-agricultural sources. Thanks to the grants, additional work places and attractive offers of services provided by new companies have appeared. Within the project, 88 subsidies have been granted for starting a new economic activity (82 such subsidies had been planned), together with advisory and educational support. As a result, the unemployment has decreased, the accommodation offer has increased by 127 beds. During the implementation of the project, 44 training sessions for 660 Gotania inhabitants have been conducted. Their participants have gained qualifications to perform new tasks, which will help them find jobs. What is more, the activity of non-governmental organisations has been boosted with the help of 52 grants.

Goths, Vandals and Slavs

The first people to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) were the inhabitants of Maślomęcz. "Thanks to the engagement of the inhabitants, the Maślomęcz Society – Goths' Village has come into existence, a flagship product of Gotania. It is a three-generation



reconstruction group, reconstructing the life of this people and its handicraft. The reconstructors make jewellery, leather products, weapons and year by year, extend the open-air museum of ancient buildings, with the so-called 'long house', houses of warriors, the blacksmith, the potter, the weaver," describes Anna Sydoruk, Project Office Manager.

Later on, in one of the municipalities of Gotania, Kotorów, the Vandals built their farm. The inhabitants had seen how the Goths from Masłomęcz fared and – thanks to the grant for the development of non-governmental organisations – the Vandal Society

– Vandal Farm in Kotorów has been founded. The local women produce pearl barley, weave and embroider. Men specialise in crafts, producing pottery and weapons. In the nearby village of Czeremno near Tyszowce, at the foot of old Czerwień settlement – the center of the complex of the ancient settlements called Grody Czerwieńskie, a Slavic camp has been put up, with high lookout tower and a Svetovid (a Slavic deity, in Polish Światowid) totem.

Modern marketing around the ancient culture

The low revenues of Gotania municipalities limited the possibilities of wider, more active and innovative

promotion, which was a real problem preventing the proper dissemination of the information about this interesting area to the wider public. Therefore, publications and promotional materials, websites and tourist trails marking have been developed for the 10 municipalities. Trips to international tourist fairs and study visits have also been organised. All that has contributed to increasing the number of tourists visiting this area. Taking this opportunity, a new event has been promoted: International Festival of Ancient Culture Gotania, attracting more and more tourists and reconstruction groups every year. The four editions of the Festival have been attended



by 41 reconstruction groups from Poland and abroad and over 17,000 visitors.

Tourism development, activation of local non-governmental organisations or increase of the people's activity are only some of the benefits of the project. Thanks to the funding from the SPCP the has been possible to increase the attractiveness and investment competitiveness of the area. New recreational and tourist infrastructure has been developed. Some neglected public spaces have been reclaimed to meet the needs of the local community and tourists, e.g. in Moroczyn, where using the grounds of the local farmers association, a tourist attraction

has been built, a village of bogeymen, full of strange houses and surprises in all nooks and crannies.

The most important, however, is the fact that the cooperation of the local governments has shown that people can share their experience and achieve together tangible results. This is a good sign for Gotania's future.

Where is the ancient land of Gotania actually located?

Tomasz Zajac * - The cultural and historical heritage of Goth's tribe of the 2nd to 4th century A.D. unites the municipalities of Hrubieszów, Tomaszów and Zamość poviats. Bearing in mind the potential of our sub-region we have built the brand of Gotania, on the basis of which the partner municipalities have been working for some time now. The intention to develop the region further both socially and economically resulted in the design of the project that has won the support of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme and made it possible to put our ideas into practice.

What was the project's impact on the development of the local tourism?

T.Z. - First of all, thanks to the project, numerous agri-tourist

farms have emerged as well as various kinds of reconstruction and rituals cultivating groups, brass bands or singers' groups. The most important element of the project remain, however, the 10 infrastructural projects in the Gotania sub-region, thanks to which new recreation and leisure sites and tourist trails have been created. The astronomic observatory and planetarium enjoy a lot of interest, as does the ropes course in Hrubieszów, visited by over 20,000 people in 2016.

How is the project perceived by the inhabitants and tourists?

T.Z. - The project co-financed from the SPCP is very popular among the local community of the Gotania sub-region. Thanks to this support, the non-governmental organisations and the inhabitants have had the opportunity to pursue their ideas and passions. As regards tourists, we have noted their great interest in the attractions developed under the project – tourist products and infrastructure related to the cultural heritage of our Goth people.

***Tomasz Zajac**
Mayor of Hrubieszów

Entrepreneurship Incubator in the Carp Valley

Project title

Carp Valley – chance for the future.
Partner Program for Socio-Economic
Activation and Promotion of
Entrepreneurship

Implementing organization

Zator municipality

Project partners

municipalities: Osiek, Polanka Wielka,
Brzeźnica and Przeciszów.
Grants operator – Zator Development
Agency

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,623,321

Project implementation period

September 2011 – March 2017



Start-ups are one of the pillars of an innovative economy. Small, ambitious companies from the Zator area can count on the support during their first, most difficult years of business activity thanks to the project financed from the Swiss-Polish



Cooperation Programme (SPCP).

From the point of view of the entrepreneur beginning his business activity, Zator Entrepreneurship Incubator means preferential working environment, modern facilities as well as consulting and training assistance and invaluable support. However, this is not the only effect of the project financed by the SPCP in the Carp Valley.

In addition to the investment, which was the Centre for Occupational Activation in Zator, an innovative program for school youth traineeships has been introduced and a completely new multi-profession educational institution for young people (WZS - Multi-Profession School Complex in Zator) has been established. Multithreaded and diverse pro-development activities planned in the frame of the project have posed quite a challenge, both

with respect to organization as well as finances and time.

"Swiss" = chance

The SPCP has become a symbol of opportunities for professional and educational development in the Carp Valley. The project, locally referred to as the "Swiss", has been anchored in its beneficiaries' minds as a source of good practice, positive emotions and experiences, rational spending of public funds, and above all, as a springboard to future business or development ventures.

The Secretary of the Town of Zator, Piotr Domagała, emphasized, that

at every stage of implementation, it was important to keep up with the surrounding legal and financial reality and sometimes even to stay ahead of it. Despite this challenge, during the implementation of the project activities, it was possible to create an excellent atmosphere and build a platform for cooperation and exchange of good practices for NGOs, entrepreneurs and public institutions. This has resulted in new ideas, including the development of an innovative tourism and economic development strategy of the Carp Valley and joint promotion on the Internet (www.caz.zator.pl), a broad offer and promotional campaigns, fairs and reviews of local culinary

and tourist products. New and enhanced regional brands based on the carp from Zator, which is a local speciality, agri-food products and leisure offer for tourists have been created and strengthened.

Due to the considerable time span and strong involvement of entities from all sectors of the society, the project has generated a number of good practices and solutions, for example in personnel recruitment. The joint activities have resulted in subsequent partnerships, projects and ideas that have impact on the development of the Carp Valley and are beneficial for its inhabitants.

The main effects of the Zator Entrepreneurship Incubator (Zatorski Inkubator Przedsiębiorczości):

- over 100 new jobs,
- over 250 internships,
- 5 state-of-the-art vocational training workshops,
- over 40 publishers promoting the region and its values,
- over 20 new companies,
- increase in employment in the region, increase in sales of local products, increased revenues of companies, residents and local governments.

Green triangle in the Lubelskie Region

Project title

EUROChance for Lubelskie Region
- building social consensus for sustainable development of the subregion in cultural landscape of tourism triangle: Nałęczów - Puławy - Kazimierz Dolny

Implementing organization

Puławski powiat

Project partners

Local Action Group "Green Ring",
Lublin Self-Help Center, Lublin
Agricultural Advisory Center in
Końskowola

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 4,000,000

Project implementation period

August 2011 – March 2016



Nałęczów, Puławy and Kazimierz Dolny form a well-known touristic triangle. Faster development of this area required activation of residents, self-governments and private entrepreneurs. The Swiss canton of Valais



became the inspiration for change.

Kayaking down the Chodelka River, walking along the loess gorges, relaxing in the beer SPA, participating in goldsmith workshops in Goldsmiths Museum – the only museum of this kind in Poland, oil pressing in the Zabłocka oil mill, producing handmade paper in Celejów, weaving wicker baskets in Strzelce, weaving with shuttles, making

pottery, creating blacksmith art in Wojciechów, pressing juice in Klementowice – these are just a few of the attractions that tourists can enjoy in the Green Triangle, with three popular tourist resorts: Kazimierz Dolny, Nałęczów and Puławy. The project "EUROChance for Lubelskie Region" strengthened the tourism in the area between these centers by involving the residents, local governments, private entrepreneurs from 10

municipalities of Puławski district and the adjacent municipality of Wojciechów in Lubelski district. The project was awarded the first place in the national edition of the "European Enterprise Promotion Awards 2016".

Together means better, and cheaper

The originators of the changes were inspired by the history of the Swiss canton of Valais, a formerly agricultural region with poor economic prospects, which today is thriving and has a well-known regional brand combining agriculture, industry and tourism. This has been achieved through the joint efforts of local entities, especially hotels, owners of tourist attractions and producers of regional products who have engaged in building a regional identity. This initiative paid off not only with dynamic development, which would be impossible to achieve individually, but also with greater competitiveness of the services and products offered.

Like in Switzerland, the partners of the project joined their efforts: the local "Green Ring" activity group, Lublin Agricultural Advisory Center in Końskowola and Lublin Self-Help Center as well as the leader of the whole project - the Puławy district. They created a tourism

development plan based on new trends, i.e. moving away from the passive leisure and promoting physical activity, entertainment and education combined. Hence, a number of thematic routes that take advantage of the dispersed monuments and provide various forms of leisure such as cycling, walking, horse riding, kayaking, ornithological tours were created. This also allows integrating remote tourist offers that now share a common network of services such as bicycles and kayaks rentals and horse riding schools. Apart from promoting already known locations such as Końskowola with its roses plantations or Wojciechów and its blacksmithing traditions, new tourist products were created, such as Strawberry and Sobótka Festivals.

Financial and substantive support from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme has resulted in nearly 150 grants for local projects involving the development of tourism infrastructure and services, emergence of new businesses, promotion of the culture and local customs and development of education in rural areas.

Cooperation creates community

The training in setting up your own company, using cultural and culinary heritage to start your own business and in

interpersonal communication have helped the residents, local businesses, institutions and organizations to prepare an offer based on local traditions, natural resources and the unique folklore. New companies received additional training in the principles of business operation and applying for co-financing. The project leader (Puławy district) and partners (the "Green Ring" Local Action Group, Lublin Self-Help Center, Lublin Agricultural Advisory Center in Końskowola) provided the entrepreneurs with additional support beyond the planned activities. Involvement of the leader and partners in solving problems arising at different stages of the project has also proved to be an effective solution.

As a result of all these activities, many accommodation places for tourists, educational trails, chambers of regional products and tourism equipment rental chains have been created. Local businesses have received financing for further development, and the residents of this relatively underdeveloped region have become involved in the use of local resources by creating new initiatives and thus jobs. Apart from a better standard of living and new development prospects, they have also gained something priceless – a sense of local community.

Responsible Migration Management

Project 1 title

Increasing the effectiveness of migration management in Poland

Implementing organization

Office for Foreigners

Project partners

International Organization for Migration

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 1,382,904

Project implementation period

July 2012 - March 2017



Every year, the number of foreigners in Poland increases, including those coming from countries as far away as India and Vietnam. In order to ease their first steps in Poland, the Office for Foreigners, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has implemented the project called "Increasing the effectiveness of migration management in

Project 2 title

Construction of the epidemiological filter at the premises of the Office for Foreigners in Biała Podlaska

Implementing organization

Office for Foreigners

Amount of Swiss co-funding

CHF 1,955,000

Project implementation period

July 2011 – December 2016



Poland", which has provided a series of training sessions for migrants, representatives of national and local authorities as well as employees of other institutions for whom contact with foreigners is part of the daily work.

In 2016, more than 150,000 persons applied for a residence permit in Poland, which is 30% more than in the previous year. Different reasons bring them to Poland: some of them are refugees, others

are looking for a better paid job. Workshops addressed to foreigners of different cultural backgrounds, organised under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), have helped migrants, lost in the meanders of Polish regulations, formalities and cultural intricacies, familiarize themselves with the functioning of Polish offices, health care system, education, state structures, work specifics, ways to look for accommodation and even with Polish history and weather.

Foreigners who know the practical aspects of living in our country are better prepared to integrate with the Polish society, and above all, they are more independent. An additional tool for moving around in the administrative labyrinths is an interactive map of migration authorities in Poland (available also in a mobile version), providing contact details to the Office for Foreigners, voivodship offices, Border Guard, and NGOs. Apart from the map, the website www.migracje.gov.pl offers some reliable migration statistics. Interactive residence application forms have also been developed together with tips, guiding instructions and tutorials.

Another tool facilitating the path to assimilation is The National Platform of Cooperation for



Integration, which brings together migrant organizations and various institutions supporting foreigners. This is a platform for exchanging information between migrant communities and integration initiatives and for enhancing the competence of the organizations for migrants. At the same time, a series of training courses on diversity and migration management has been addressed to the employees of voivodship

offices, Office for Foreigners, Municipal Guards, teachers from schools attended by foreign children, employees of social assistance institutions, NGOs and representatives of local authorities. They have initiated real changes that can be observed, for example, in Gdańsk, where a specially formed team has developed a model of immigrant integration, which aims at improving the quality of services

provided to immigrants through the effective cooperation between relevant institutions and organizations. For the same purpose, Wrocław has created the Inter-sectoral Migration Team based on public and private institutions, non-governmental organizations and migrant diaspora.

Innovative medical facility

The second project designed with immigrants in mind has been the construction of an epidemiological filter in Biała Podlaska, a medical facility enabling people seeking international protection to obtain medical care and to undergo appropriate medical tests.

The Office for Foreigners is responsible not only for granting the refugee status in Poland, but also for providing medical care to refugee applicants residing in Poland. According to the procedures in force, migrants at the border go through the registration procedure supervised by the Border Guard and are then directed to the Reception

▲▲ **The training has allowed us to learn more about the local environment of the organizations and people working with migrants, which helped to establish or carry on cooperation on a daily basis.** ▼▼

Wojciech Bauer, from the Poznań City Hall

Centre, the first element of which is the transition through the epidemiological filter, where each person is subjected to medical examinations and laboratory tests. Taking into account the obligations imposed on the Office for Foreigners and the lack of adequate infrastructure to cope with the intensified influx of migrants, in particular on the eastern border of the European Union, the Office for Foreigners has decided to build a new outpatient clinic, which provides sanitary, epidemiological and health services to migrants. This clinic benefits migrants that have just crossed the border and applied for the refugee status, those who are already staying at the Reception Center, the employees of the Reception Center as well as, indirectly, all inhabitants of Poland. Biała Podlaska has been selected as the location of the epidemiological filter because of the short distance to the border crossing in Terespol, where the largest number of requests for refugee status are filed nationwide.

Within the framework of the project financed from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, not only the facility of the epidemiological filter has been built, but also medical equipment has been purchased and medical staff trained in order to ensure that the epidemiological



filter becomes fully operational in 2017. As a result of the project, a modern facility with unique functionality has been constructed, intended for migrants applying for the refugee status, with the purpose of carrying out medical examinations and epidemiological and sanitary assessments of migrants. In the opinion of Iwona Paradowska-Stankiewicz, PhD, National Epidemiology Consultant acting as an external expert for the final project review: "Putting the facility into service is a huge step forward and means that our country is adapting to the current needs regarding the movements of migrants.

The study visits to Switzerland organized for the employees

of the Office for Foreigners have allowed learning about the standards of work in the Swiss centres and getting acquainted with the system of reception of foreigners and the rules of providing medical care. The results of the activities of the Office for Foreigners and the International Organization for Migration within the framework of these two projects include facilitating the integration of migrants, a greater involvement of their communities in intercultural dialogue and a more effective use of their potential, but also ensuring the provision of medical care to foreigners in accordance with all standards in force in Poland and in the EU.

More secure eastern border

Project title

Preparation of mobile Customs inspection teams for emergency response and crisis management tasks

Implementing organization

Ministry of Finance – Customs Service (currently the National Treasury Administration)

Project partners

Swiss Customs (informal partner), Customs Chambers in: Białystok, Biała Podlaska, Olsztyn and Przemyśl

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 2,847,755

Project implementation period

May 2011 – December 2016



The mobile Customs Service inspection teams must be perfectly prepared and equipped to perform emergency response and crisis management tasks. The Customs officers who control goods crossing the borders of Poland (and of the EU) should not only know how to find smuggled goods, but also how to react

when someone does not want to undergo control. The project supported under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) has made it possible to take care of both issues.

The X-ray images of cigarettes hidden in specially prepared barrels or spare wheels look different than guns, gold or explosives.

However, each of these smuggled goods may remain unnoticed if the X-ray operator is not well-trained. Experience in the recognition of such objects has been the subject of exchange between the Polish and Swiss Customs administrations. The Swiss trained Polish officers to identify the X-ray images of drugs, guns, money and gold bars, which are the objects most often smuggled through the Swiss border, while the Polish Customs officers have revealed the secrets of alcohol and cigarettes smuggling, which is something that they most often encounter at the border. The Polish officers could also introduce some of the technical solutions they came to know in Basel, because during the exchange of professional expertise, ten officers from both countries swapped places for a week, learning about the work realities of their counterparts.

First: training

These were not the only activities carried out under the project

“Preparation of mobile Customs Service inspection teams for emergency response and crisis management”. The Customs Service employees (currently the National Treasury Administration) during the one-week classes have been trained in specialist English and Russian language and slang used by criminal groups. Practical training has also covered action in crisis situations to help Customs officers to control their own stress in a situation where someone is putting up resistance.

A Customs officer must know how to talk to a person who does not want to undergo inspection; what to say to calm him/her down, how to keep safe while checking vehicles, where to stand so as not to be exposed to unexpected attacks. The training cycle, involving more than 500 Customs officers, has been supplemented with a field-based special driving techniques practice (special turning, dynamic car stopping, driving on gravel and in poor conditions), thereby increasing the efficiency as well as safety of the vehicle driver. In addition, there have also been useful first aid skills refreshing courses.

The Customs Service employees (currently the National Treasury Administration) can apply the new skills acquired during the



driving classes using the state-of-the-art equipment. Swiss funding has also allowed the purchase of 105 well-equipped vehicles for mobile Customs inspection team officers from Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships.

Professional inspections in the field

The Customs Service from the above mentioned voivodships have been equipped with 30 vehicles for dog

handlers each with a cage adapted for the comfortable transportation of tracking dogs as well as marked and unmarked police cars, four of which are equipped with a registration plate scanning system. The camera mounted on the vehicle automatically analyses the registration plate of the passing car and displays messages about possible reservations as to the status of the vehicle. The package has also included multi-purpose cars equipped with monitoring

equipment. It allows officers to appear incognito in a selected location so as to have an opportunity to act at the right moment. There are also two mobile inspection posts for a four-person crew with a mobile office in the middle, equipped with office equipment and power tools that allow full field inspection. Another of the purchased cars has been adapted to scan luggage and other small objects in the field. Mobile units have also been able to acquire four video-endoscopes to easily check the contents of the tanks or gaps between car construction elements without having to laboriously take the car apart.

The mobile inspection services move across the border and throughout the region, preventing potential smugglers' activity by conducting inspections practically anywhere on the road. The Customs Service, equipped with modern tools under the SPCP, work now more effectively. This has a positive impact on the security of the European Union border running along the eastern Polish voivodships.

▲▲ We had no problems with the implementation of this project. I would advise future beneficiaries of similar projects not to be afraid to enter into contacts with foreign partners. In our case, the relationship we have established has been maintained up to this day, despite the fact that the project has already ended. ▼▼

Marcin Kropisz, from the National Treasury Administration

Art of the crisis management

Project title

On the border of terrorism
– crisis response training

Implementing organization

General Police Headquarters

Project partner

Association of Polish Administrative
Districts

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 1,006,995

Project implementation period

June 2011 – June 2016



Police officers are dealing with crisis situations almost on a daily basis. In most cases, the threat is limited, but some threats may impact health and even life of large groups of people. In such cases, good procedures as well as the ability to respond flexibly and creatively to the changing situation are equally important. The Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP)

allowed strengthening the crisis management system in Poland.

A passenger train collides with a tank, from which a highly poisonous gas leaks and spreads within a radius of 2 km. What to do? Whom to notify? How to cope with the football hooligans, a bomb alarm at school or hospital? How to communicate when phones are not working? How to restore order when all terminals stopped working in the mall? How to secure the place where an unexploded ordnance has been found, until the bomb disposal patrol arrives? What can happen, if there is a shortage of electricity in the whole district? Or, there is a large number of migrants on the eastern border trying to cross it illegally? The training participants in 87 districts of the eastern border of Poland, which is also the border of the European Union, were looking for answers.

One crisis, many services

During the 97 two-day training sessions, which consisted of 11 hours of lectures and 5 hours of practical exercise, representatives of various cross-border crisis response services and agencies worked on the future cooperation on possible security threats

in their regions and on developing good practices, which in a crisis situation can mobilize, depending on the relevant emergency response, the following services: local authorities units, police, Border Guard, State Fire Brigade, emergency medical services, Mountain Volunteer Rescue Service and Water Volunteer Rescue Service.

Apart from the theoretical knowledge, the greatest value of the training were the face-to-face meetings among representatives of the crisis response services in particular areas. "Working with a person who is familiar, whom you know by sight, at least, and we know what he/she is responsible for, is totally different from using formal channels and talking to people we have never seen", explains the project coordinator, Sylwester Smoleński, Chief Commissioner at the Polish Police Headquarters.

It is worth listening to the participants of the training

The savings generated during the implementation of the project enabled the purchase of additional equipment such as pneumatic tents, which could serve as a command centre for crisis situations or boats needed during floods. The project



has also managed to organize a three day practical training using the crisis simulator and extend the training to other districts as requested by the participants and trainers themselves.

The training material was consulted with the Governmental Centre for Security. The trainings were highly evaluated by the participants. Thanks to the questionnaires distributed among them, valuable comments on possible improvements of the Polish crisis management system were gathered, among others on:

- detailed division

of competencies between different crisis management structures and civil protection structures,

- need to involve the village leaders in the crisis management system,
- practical training for children and school employees,
- covering all municipalities with the SMS hazard notification system,
- need to organize coordination exercises for various departments and institutions,
- developing and distributing detailed instructions to citizens on how to behave

in various crisis situations. The participants of the crisis response training were able to exchange valuable information and learn the specifics of the work of other services. In order to consolidate the knowledge gained during the training, the participants received the “Crisis Response Handbook” and printouts of the analysed training materials.

Over 2,000 persons have been trained during the project, who will be able to act quickly and efficiently in a crisis situation to ensure the safety of citizens.

Better infrastructure of the eastern border

Project 1 title

Contribution to the improvement of capacity and control of the railway border crossing in Siemianówka

Implementing organization

Voivod of the Podlasie voivodship

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 4,992,638

Project implementation period

November 2011 – June 2014

Project 2 title

Contribution to the improvement of capacity and control of road border crossing in Połowce

Implementing organization

Voivod of the Podlasie Voivodship

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 15,886,806

Project implementation period

July 2012 – November 2016



Border crossings between Poland and the non-EU eastern neighbours were not appropriately equipped. The Swiss-Polish Cooperation

Programme (SPCP) allowed investing in two border crossings between Poland and Belarus, in Siemianówka and Połowce, giving them higher capacity.

Today, when crossing the border in Połowce, it is difficult to imagine large queues of cars and drivers unloading goods for inspection on wooden benches, sometimes in the rain. Nowadays, there are pavilions adapted for passport and customs control, rooms for detailed control of cars, trucks and coaches, and luggage on the way to the roentgen control lands on the special counters. What is new on the Polish border, whole trucks and also passenger cars, can be screened by X-ray equipment.

“This is also a source of frustration for potential smugglers, the chance of transporting irregular goods has been significantly reduced. Nowadays, travellers aware of our highly professional equipment often resign from attempting smuggling,” says Ewa Stachowicz, Director of the Infrastructure Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, coordinator of two SPCP projects: “Contribution to the improvement of capacity and control of the road

border crossing in Połowce” and “Contribution to the improvement of capacity and control of the railway road border crossing in Siemianówka.”

Landing area, anti-escape system and video-endoscopes

The savings realised during the implementation of the first project allowed financing the extension of the infrastructure including three additional elements: a professional helicopter landing platform, which can also be used by emergency medical services, a truck wheels and chassis disinfection lane, and an insulator for persons with infectious diseases, in which they can wait for transport to another destination. In addition, the project enabled installing an anti-escape system, which is built into the pavement and is triggered when the driver’s behaviour indicates that he or she wants to leave the border crossing without control. This practical solution makes it impossible to escape thanks to barriers hidden in the pavement, which can be raised in case of need.

The second project has allowed the Border Patrol and Customs employees of the railway border crossing in Siemianówka to move from rented premises to a modern building with

laboratory equipment, which immediately after sampling allows for identification of the sample composition. The new border crossing is equipped with video-endoscopes, detectors against smuggling and other devices to control cargoes carried in containers. As a result, the number of trains daily crossing the border in Siemianówka has doubled - that means that, currently, eight trains per day can cross the border.

Many entrepreneurs also reported the need for clearance of wood transports, which required the construction of a phytosanitary control facility. The construction of such a building allowed the transport of products of plant origin and, consequently, the development of the whole district of Hajnówka. Fast and efficient customs control has helped the development of one of the sub-zones of the Suwałki



Special Economic Zone, which has been enriched with forwarding and reloading halls and wood storages and modernization of the road network. The local road has been upgraded from a district to a

voivodship road. The project to increase the capacity of the railway border crossing in Siemianówka has been well integrated into the whole development of infrastructure in this area.

▴▴ **Talks with the Belarusian side have turned for long time around one and the same issue: how to extend the status of the border crossing in Połowce in order to use it for international traffic. This required an infrastructure upgrade. Now, thanks to the funds from the SPCP, the border in Połowce can be crossed by passenger cars, trucks up to 7.5 tonnes, coaches and also citizens from other countries. Previously, even scientific groups with citizens of England or France visiting the Białowieża Forest had to cross the border over 100 km from here, in Bobrowniki or even further in Kuźnica.** ▾▾

Ewa Stachowicz, Director of the Infrastructure Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship

Safer roads

Project title

Safety in road traffic

Implementing organization

Polish Police Headquarters

Project partners

Swiss Police Institute, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, seven poviats from the Lubuskie Voivodship (międzyrzęcki, strzelecko-drezdenecki, sulęciński), Podlaskie Voivodship (siemiatycki, suwalski, wysokomazowiecki), Mazowieckie Voivodship (wyszkowski)

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,927,902

Project implementation period

July 2012 – October 2016



In 2016, 3,393 persons were killed in 33,350 traffic accidents in Poland. Many accidents happen in cities, but outside the built-up area. The Polish Police Headquarters has selected 50 places particularly

dangerous for pedestrians, which have been equipped with, for example, refuge areas and flashing LEDs at the pedestrian crossings, financed from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP). Trainings, public campaigns and purchase of police cars have also been financially supported by the SPCP.

Poviat roads, often straight and without traffic calming features, encourage drivers to drive fast, which is particularly dangerous near built-up areas, especially where the youngest road users are likely to cross the road in unsuitable places. Accidents frequently happen not only due to the drivers' speed or careless behaviour of pedestrians, but also because of inadequate infrastructure, narrow roads, lack of footpaths, bus platforms, road chicanes and marked pedestrian crossings.

Protection of pedestrians and cyclists

The project under the title "Safety in road traffic" has been implemented with the support of the SPCP by the Polish Police Headquarters and aimed at increasing road safety in

Podlaskie, Lubuskie and Mazowieckie Voivodships, which have been selected based on the accident statistics of the Traffic Office of the Polish Police Headquarters. Together with the Swiss side, 50 locations most dangerous to pedestrians have been selected near poviat roads, first of all in the vicinity of schools, churches, health centres and other institutions. These are the locations where the statistics for fatal traffic accidents are the highest in relation to the number of residents.

In order to protect pedestrians and bikers, whose chances to survive a collision with a car are the poorest, pedestrian crossings with refuge areas have been built, road signs have been equipped with flashing LED lights, traffic calming humps and reflective markers have been fitted in selected locations. In addition, the footpaths have been expanded in the sensitive areas, speed limited at the intersections of poviat and municipality roads and bus lay-bys have been created.

Thanks to these activities, young people from the School in Wola Mystkowska can now step safely onto the pavement, when

getting off the bus. This is the result of the construction of a rain drainage system that has widened the road and has made it possible to fit in a two-meter wide footpath. In order to improve the safety of the pedestrian crossing further, the speed limit has been reduced and active signs visible from afar have been installed.

In the municipality of Międzyrzecz, bus travellers did not have a place where they could safely get off – hence the decision to build two platforms. In addition, road chicanes slowing the traffic have been installed and pedestrian crossings have been provided with traffic lights.

"Vision Zero"

Persons involved in the work on these projects, both police officers and civilians as well as representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Health, General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways, Border Guard, Institute of Transport, Road Transport Inspection and Voivodship Road Traffic Centres took part in training sessions during which road safety solutions were discussed.



The trainers presented the "Vision Zero," assuming such improvements to the infrastructure that would not allow the road users to make mistakes. The training was divided into three thematic blocks which covered management of the road safety system at the regional level, systematic approach to road safety and selected issues of road engineering and road safety. In 13 editions, about 650 persons have been trained.

Changes in roadways were accompanied by changes

in the awareness of the road users, especially those most exposed to the risk of an accident – pedestrians, cyclists, seniors, and daring young drivers. The nationwide public campaign under the title "Act rationally" was prepared entirely by the Polish Police Headquarters. Police units from the affected areas have also received support – unmarked 300-hp four-wheel drive vehicles equipped with video recorders. Laser speed meters with built-in cameras that allow tracking a vehicle, but also distinguishing at long distance passenger

vehicles from trucks, have been purchased. Money has been also invested in training equipment for accident prevention classes that allowed the police to conduct several road safety information meetings and encourage children to participate in interesting activities using, for instance, an educational set “Autochodzik”, which enables children to get acquainted with the road traffic rules through playing. Visits to schools, universities of the third age, picnics were accompanied by educational spots, multimedia presentations, competitions run in the social media and on websites visited by seniors. Spots promoting safety, targeted at motorcyclists, pedestrians and seniors could be seen when travelling by public transport in Warsaw. An



extremely important element of the project was the cooperation with the the Swiss partners, which enabled Poland to benefit from Switzerland’s valuable

experience in improving road safety. The cooperation was primarily based on study visits in Poland and Switzerland, but it also involved consultations

►► The implementation of the project has shown that although the combination of soft measures, that is, in this case, public campaign, study visits to Switzerland, training and promotional activities with hard measures such as investment projects in poviats and purchase of equipment, is difficult to organize, yet it brings very good results and offers the best solution to the identified problems. ▼▼

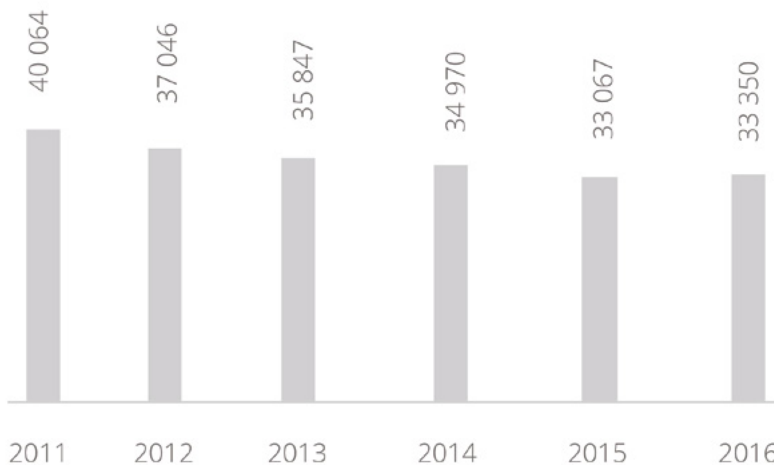
the coordinator of the project, **Robert Skibiński**, from the Finance Bureau of the Polish Police Headquarters



with the Swiss project partners of the activities undertaken under the project, in particular: road investment projects documentation, the programme of workshops, the scope of the public campaign.

The results of the project activities may be well illustrated by the statistical research conducted in the areas where the project was intensively implemented. For example, in the Podlasie area, 24% fewer motorbike accidents have been reported, and in Lubuskie Voivodeship the number of accidents in all groups targeted for information campaigns, i.e. pedestrians, motorcyclists and seniors, has decreased.

Number of road accidents in Poland



Source: Polish Police Headquarters

Environment and infrastructure



40.6%

● ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

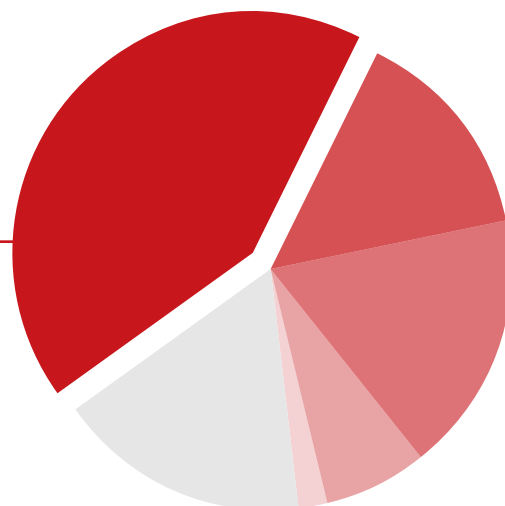
● Regional development and border protection

● Private sector

● Science, health and social welfare

● Civil society and partnership cooperation

● Project Preparation Facility, Technical Assistance Fund
as well as funds for the management of the SPCP by Switzerland



PROJECTS:

Addressing the asbestos challenge

Energy from the Sun

Ecological hospitals

Łęborg less dependent on coal

Warmly, efficiently, environmentally-friendly

Modern suburban trains for Warsaw agglomeration

Faster, safer and more comfortable trains

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Addressing the asbestos challenge

Area

Asbestos removal and disposal of asbestos waste

Projects titles

- A. Pilot system of asbestos waste management in the area of the Lublin Voivodship supported by the effective monitoring of its quantity and control of its disposal and neutralisation
- B. Developing a modern system of waste disposal, reclamation of unused landfill sites and removal of asbestos in the area of the municipalities belonging to the Association of Municipalities of the Lubartów region
- C. Removal and safe storage of products containing asbestos from the area of the Małopolskie Voivodship.

Implementing organizations

- A. Marshal Office of the Lubelskie Voivodship in Lublin,
- B. the Association of Municipalities of the Lubartów Region,
- C. Szczucin Municipality

Project partners

209 communes of the Lublin Voivodship, 69 communes of the Małopolskie Voivodship

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 35,751,283

Project implementation period

- A. January 2012 – December 2016
 - B. May 2012 - March 2017
 - C. June 2012 - March 2017
-



Houses and farm buildings covered with eternit (asbestos-cement roofing material) have been typical for the Polish landscape until recently. Thanks to the SPCP, three projects have contributed to the reduction of exposure to pathogenic asbestos in the Lubelskie and Małopolskie Voivodships.

Once commonly used in industry and in construction, today associated mostly with its pathogenic properties, asbestos is a fibrous mineral of high resistance to fire, chemical factors, abrasion and high temperature. Because of its low price it was applied on a mass scale, for instance to reinforce the eternit used in the production of siding and roofing sheets, for

reinforcing walls and hardening roads. Although its use has been prohibited, it is estimated that in Europe, 400 to 700 people a year fall ill with various diseases (lung cancer, mesothelioma, asbestosis) because of having been exposed to asbestos.

Harmful problem

In Poland, the use of asbestos was banned in 1997 and all the materials containing asbestos should be removed and neutralised by 2032. But the ban itself has not solved the problem. Until today, many houses and non-residential buildings are still covered with this mineral, especially in smaller towns, often economically weak. The inventory taken in the Lubelskie Voivodship in 2009 revealed the gloomy reality: 800 thousand tons of asbestos still required disposal. It is the highest amount per capita in Poland. The cost of removal and disposal of asbestos containing roofs is high and many families faced with financial difficulties simply cannot afford it. Disposal also poses a problem. At the moment, the only legal disposal method in Poland is stockpiling of asbestos on hazardous waste landfills – however the number of such landfills is not sufficient.

In 2012, three institutions received funding under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme for removing asbestos in their regions. The Marshal Office of the Lubelskie Voivodship in Lublin, the Association of Municipalities of the Lubartów Region and the Szczucin Municipality in Małopolskie launched separate but very similar projects, encouraging other local governments to join the efforts. Altogether, by 2017, 69 municipalities in Małopolska have expressed their willingness to solve the problem together under Szczucin's leadership. As many as 203 municipalities have done the same under the aegis of the Marshal Office of the Lubelskie Voivodship and 6 municipalities led by the Association of Municipalities of the Lubartów Region have followed suit.

Knowledge first

The first phase of the projects was devoted to increasing the local residents' knowledge about asbestos. An informational and promotional campaign was carried out in both voivodships and reached nearly 220 thousand people (during 690 events, including meetings with local communities and pupils). These activities triggered media interest – the press published a number of articles explaining



the problem and encouraging people to participate in the project.

In each subsequent year the intensity of works was increasing. The first year of the project implemented by the Lubelskie Voivodship Marshal Office in Lublin and its partners resulted in removal and disposal of only 2,600 tons of asbestos. Only in 2016 as much as 29,000 tons were removed. The difference resulted from the growing awareness among the inhabitants and the

engagement of subsequent municipalities which – seeing the results achieved by their neighbours – decided to join the project. As a result, the original targets have not only been achieved but largely exceeded. Over five years, 78,913 tons of asbestos (141% of the original target) has been removed under the Marshal Office's project. As regards the project coordinated by the Association of Municipalities of the Lubartów Region, it was over 3,600 tons (98%), and in Szczucin Municipality



- 48,813 tons (133%). In total, in the Lubelskie Voivodship, 82,516 tons of asbestos has been neutralised - 10% of the total amount of asbestos still remaining in the voivodship. As a result of all three projects, over 88,000 people in the Lubelskie and Małopolskie Voivodships can now enjoy better living conditions. In addition, the co-financing for the residents wishing to remove asbestos included an option of support for the families whose financial situation prevented them from installing a new roof – with the assistance addressed to the poorest, not only has the eternit roof covering been removed

and neutralised, but also new roofs have been installed. Mr. Grzegorz Taradyś, Director of the Regional Project Office of the Marshal Office of the Lubelskie voivodeship has no doubt that the people implementing the project have been the most important factor for success: they were able to work as a team and under the pressure of time. The second factor, in his opinion, was the regular contact and full engagement of the project partners.

Healthier environment

The activities of the three projects were focused, primarily, on fast and effective removal

of asbestos from individual buildings. However, the SPCP funds have also been used to support the establishment of a new Waste Disposal Plant by the Association of Municipalities of the Lubartów Region. The main role of this state-of-the-art facility is to dispose of municipal waste – up to 37,000 tons annually. Apart from that, the Association has carried out the reclamation of 4 landfill sites, constructed selective waste collection points and provided the Waste Disposal Plant with additional equipment and technology necessary to improve its operation.

The removal of asbestos from houses means healthier environment for people. “The concentration of asbestos dust suspended in the air is now smaller, which will certainly result in the reduction of morbidity, including lung cancer,” points out Director Grzegorz Taradyś.

The fight against asbestos is not over yet, a lot still remains to be done, but the effects of the activities carried out under the SPCP are very important – they provide a model and inspiration for other communes. The completed projects prove that joint action is the key to achieving challenging goals.

Energy from the Sun

Area

Increase of energy efficiency and reduction of emissions, particularly of greenhouse gases and hazardous substances.

Projects titles

- A. Installation of renewable energy systems in the municipalities: Niepołomice, Wieliczka, Skawina and Miechów on public and private buildings
- B. Programme for increasing the use of renewable energy sources and improving the air quality in the Natura 2000 areas of the Suski powiat.
- C. Installation of renewable energy systems in public and private buildings in the municipalities of Busko and Pińczów powiats.
- D. Infrastructure-related measures to improve the climatic conditions in public facilities in the Parsęta River Basin.
- E. Renewable energy sources in Mszana Dolna and in partner municipalities.
- F. Installation of renewable energy systems in public and private buildings in the municipalities that belong to the Association of the Municipalities of the Wisłoka River Basin.

Implementing organizations

- A. Niepołomice town and municipality;
- B. Suski powiat,
- C. Busko-Zdrój municipality;
- D. Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Parsęta River Basin;
- E. Mszana Dolna municipality;
- F. Association of Municipalities of the Wisłoka River Basin

Amount of Swiss co-financing
CHF 83,400,015

Project implementation period

- A. January 2012 – March 2017
- B. January 2012 – December 2016
- C. January 2012 – March 2017
- D. January 2011 – December 2016
- E. April 2012 - September 2016
- F. June 2012 – March 2017



The use of solar energy not only contributes to cleaner natural environment, but also addresses so-called fuel poverty. However, transition to renewable energy is neither easy, nor cheap. Thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), solar systems have been installed in 6 regions located in various parts of Poland - from Pomorze Zachodnie, through the Beskid Mountains, to the Wisłoka River Basin. The six projects have been the

largest of this type ever implemented by Polish local governments.

Renewable energy sources (RES) and solar installations have progressed from the category of ecological curiosities to important technologies that underpin the dynamically developing power industry branch, in response to the need to protect the environment and reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases emissions. Poland, similarly to other Central and Eastern European countries, has been gradually increasing the share of green energy in its energy mix.

Convenience, savings and clean air

Promotion of heat and electricity generation from solar energy has impact on many areas and aspects of life. One can say that each new RES installation is a small contribution to mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including CO₂. Solar energy provides an alternative to the air-polluting power plants and CHP stacks and household boilers. The statistics are alarming - according to the World Health Organization reports, every

year, nearly 50,000 premature deaths are a result of air pollution, caused mostly by the municipal and household sector (the so called low-stack emission).

Economic issues are also important as solar systems provide noticeable savings. They reduce the consumption of traditional fuels (in the areas where the SPCP projects were implemented, coal is the most common fuel). In summer, when the weather is good, solar collectors can cover up to 100% of hot water demand, resulting in observable savings on fuel. Finally, solar collectors improve the comfort of living: in the morning, one does not need to wait for the water to heat, which is particularly important for elderly people living alone or for large families.

Almost 15% of the total amount of the Swiss contribution for Poland has been allocated for solar energy-related projects. Supported projects included:

- purchase and installation of solar systems for heating domestic hot water, both in private households and public buildings,
- purchase and installation of photovoltaic systems in public buildings,
- comprehensive thermal renovation of multiple public



buildings, such as schools and cultural centres.

Six beneficiaries of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, operating at various local government levels (individual municipalities and poviats as well as associations of municipalities from a particular region) have taken up the challenge.

High standards

The SPCP has enabled the implementation of the biggest projects of this type ever implemented by Polish local governments: a single project involved the purchase and installation of 3,000 to 8,000 solar systems for domestic hot water. Photovoltaic panels

have been installed on public buildings, with application of highly sophisticated technology (e.g. as an integral part of a roofing over the town market square or as an element of balcony railings).

In order to reach the highest number of residents and achieve the ecological effect, financial support for residents covered 70-85% of the total installation cost. Additionally, due to the fact that the projects were implemented in relatively small areas, it has been possible to achieve the economies of scale effect. This makes it easier to monitor the environmental and social impact, which is particularly



important given the pilot character of the projects. The awareness of the residents and their interest in renewable energy sources have been raised and they can now better understand the need to protect the environment. So much so that even after the completion of the projects, a lot of people are still registered on the reserve lists and the local

governments, appreciating the benefits of the projects, wish to continue the activities and are actively looking for new funding.

Since a lot of emphasis has been put on the need to ensure that the projects should bring the best possible results and the installations should be in operation for many years to come, only the best quality

solutions could be taken into consideration (for example, all collectors had to have relevant certificates and be hail resistant). The representatives of all the projects have participated in several study visits in Switzerland to see how such technology works and what effects can be obtained. For instance, they had a chance to see systems that have been

▲▲ I believe that we should first listen, then listen again and then listen once more to what the residents want to tell us, what their needs are. The most effective way to identify the residents' needs is a questionnaire. ▼▼

Paweł Dyrzcz, Suski powiat

functioning well for as long as 25-30 years.

One of the main goals of the projects has been to improve the air quality. The areas covered with the co-financing suffer from considerable air pollution which is a result of the geographical features (mountains, valleys) and the sources of heat used.

Generally, the buildings in those regions are not connected to a gas network, and both water and houses are heated in a traditional way, mainly with the use of coal and wood.

Building trust

Despite the fact that solar systems bring obvious benefits, sometimes it is still not easy to persuade the prospective

users to have them installed. The coordinators of the solar projects have managed the task very well, which is evident, for instance, from the figures of the Suski powiat, where 3,007 installations have been mounted and 2,000 more people are still on the waiting list.

"In my view, in case of projects which require cooperation and contact with several thousand people, the most efficient solution is a website and meetings," says Paweł Dyrzcz, the Head of the Environmental Department in the Suski powiat.

Interesting ideas for educational campaigns have come from the Association of Municipalities of the Wisłoka River Basin. When the project was launched, the Association participated in an annual campaign called "Sunny Days" - an event attended by about 1,000 people every year. Another interesting solution introduced by the Association has been to engage so called "home advisors".



Young people, who have earlier learned about renewable energy, visited local residents in order to encourage them to take part in the project and to tell them about the benefits of the sustainable development of the region. Technical support for this activity has been provided

by the staff of the Institute of Environmental Sciences at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

150 % of the target

25,634 – this number best illustrates the projects' success. This is how many solar systems were installed under all projects

in this thematic area. More than 200 of them are large systems installed on public buildings.

Due to good cooperation and organization, nearly all projects met their targets - or even exceeded them - long before the deadline. As a result, 150% of the goal has been achieved.



▶▶ **Our advice is the following: don't be afraid to take risk, to use the experience of other European countries and to make informed decisions about your goals.** ▶▶

Anna Buras, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Parsęta River Basin

What has changed in the Busko-Zdrój municipality with regard to renewable energy sources?

Tomasz Mierzwa*

- Our municipality has the status of a health resort and therefore we have been caring for our environment for years, paying particular attention to air quality. It has been possible to take action in this respect thanks to the support from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, which we have used to implement this comprehensive project.

The basic goal was to install solar systems for water heating in residential buildings. Within the framework of the project, 6,200 such systems have been installed in the area of Busko-Zdrój municipality and its 11 partners. Thanks to the Swiss co-financing, 34 public buildings with installed photovoltaic systems can also use solar energy. We have upgraded the street lighting system, installing 10,000 new LED fixtures.

What are the greatest benefits of the project?

T.M. - We can talk about two types of benefits. First, there are benefits for the environment, because the project has made it possible to address air pollution effectively. Second, there are economic benefits, particularly for those residents who have so far heated their water using traditional boilers fired with fossil fuels. They are extremely satisfied because the new solution is very convenient and at the same time helps them save money.

How has the project influenced the local community's awareness of renewable energy?

T.M. - Before the project, many people were not aware of the adverse environmental impact that solid fuel boilers made, particularly when poor quality fuel was used. Therefore we have also carried out training and promotional activities that were initially addressed to young people and then, during the installation phase,

also to all the beneficiaries who had the systems mounted on their houses. As a result, the awareness among our citizens has increased significantly.

How do the residents respond to the introduction of the solar systems?

T.M. - Initially, the residents were rather suspicious. They did not know enough about solar energy and they did not know what the installation involved. However, when the first devices had been installed in the municipality, an increasing number of people got interested in such systems after they had talked to their neighbours. This resulted in a growing number of applications. Today, after a few years from the project launch, people are glad that the local government had decided to implement the project in cooperation with Switzerland.

*** Tomasz Mierzwa,
Deputy Mayor of Busko-Zdrój**

Ecological hospitals

Area

Energy efficiency and renewable energy systems in public healthcare institutions in Mazowieckie and Małopolskie Voivodships

Projects titles

- A. Improvement of energy efficiency by introduction of renewable energy systems and modernisation of heating installations in selected public voivodship healthcare institutions
- B. Construction of renewable energy systems - solar collectors in public healthcare institutions, for which the founding body is the Mazowieckie Voivodship

Implementing organizations

- A. Marshall Office of Małopolskie Voivodship
- B. Marshall Office of Mazowieckie Voivodship

Amount of Swiss co-financing
CHF 20,411,825

Project implementation period

- C. June 2012 – January 2015
- D. April 2014 – February 2017



Several hospitals in two voivodships: Mazowieckie and Małopolskie, now use modern heating, ventilation and cooling systems powered with green energy, as a result of two projects supported under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP). Bills for heating domestic water have been reduced and the generated savings can be used for further investments to improve patients' comfort and the medical services offer.

The interest in energy sources alternative to fossil fuels has been growing. Although the installations using renewable energy sources (RES) are still expensive, they enable substantial reduction of energy bills and, in addition, they do not pollute the environment.

More funds for treatment of patients

Solar collectors have some essential advantages - they are efficient, they generate and utilize energy easily and they do not emit harmful chemical substances which are formed e.g. during a combustion process. This is beneficial not only for human health and the environment

but also for one's budget as it is a cheaper way to heat water and buildings. For public hospitals, which constantly face financial challenges, this seems to be a perfect solution as it brings savings.

Thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, hospitals in the Mazowieckie and Małopolskie Voivodships introduced a number of energy upgrades. Those included:

- Renovation of heating systems and ventilation systems, including construction of gas heat pumps (in the Małopolskie Voivodship hospitals),
- Thermal renovation of hospital buildings,
- Replacement of heat sources and heaters,
- Installation of solar collector systems (in the Mazowieckie Voivodship hospitals).

The scale and the complexity of the projects as well as the implementation of the new technology, fitting it into the structure of the operating health care institutions have posed a challenge for the projects' beneficiaries. Special solutions had to be prepared for each of the hospitals in order to respond to their unique needs.

In total, both projects covered 15 hospitals, including three in Małopolskie and 12 in Mazowieckie Voivodship: L. Rydygier Specialist Hospital in Krakow, John Paul II Specialist Hospital in Krakow, St. Lukas Hospital in Tarnów, Specialist Voivodship Hospital in Ciechanów, “Children of Warsaw” Independent Public Healthcare Unit in Dziekanów Leśny, Mazovia Specialist Hospital in Ostrołęka, “Meditrans Ostrołęka” Independent Public Healthcare Unit, Emergency Healthcare and Medical Transport Unit in Ostrołęka, Voivodship Integrated Hospital in Płock, Professor E. Wilczkowski Independent Unit of Public Health Institutions in Gostynin, Barbara Borzym Independent Voivodship Unit of Psychiatric Public Healthcare Institutions in Radom, Mazowieckie Voivodship Hospital in Siedlce Co. Ltd, St. Anna Voivodship Hospital of Traumatology at Barska Street in Warsaw, Międzyziesie Specialist Hospital in Warsaw, Doctor J. Bogdanowicz Children Hospital at Niekłańska street in Warsaw and Mazovia Neuropsychiatry Centre Co. Ltd in Zagórze near Warsaw.

Flexibility and good cooperation

As the beneficiaries themselves



say, a few factors have decided about the projects' success. One of them is the flexible approach to the changes proposed during the project implementation, both on the part of the Swiss side as well as the Ministry of Economic Development, supervising all the SPCP projects. However, the most important factor was the exchange of valuable expertise through discussions with experts before selection of the specific solutions adapted to each hospital. Equally important was good cooperation between the supervising inspectors, project managers and promotion specialists. All that

served the purpose of achieving the greatest environmental and economic benefits.

“The hospitals themselves have played an extremely important role, including the staff that actively participated in acceptance inspections and approval of the design documentation, monitoring of the work progress, monitoring and acceptance inspections of installations and the thermal renovation works,” says Mr Marcin Przybysz, Project Manager, Departament of Owner Supervision and Investments, Marshal Office of Mazowieckie

▲▲ In my opinion the most important thing is to prepare the project well and to put together a good team. A well-structured pre-design stage is the basis for success in an infrastructure project. It makes no sense to economize on time and money for surveys, analyses, studies, which provide the foundation for the design documentation and then for the project delivery. Already at the pre-design stage it is worth benefiting from the knowledge and experience of professionals. ▼▼

Marcin Przybysz, Project Manager, Proprietor Department of Owner Supervision and Investments, Marshal Office of Mazowieckie Voivodship



Voivodship. "The medical personnel demonstrated great understanding for the project itself, considering that the works were conducted in buildings

which were in operation all the time," he adds.

Costs lowered by 35%

Positive changes were observed

soon after the collectors began operation - the bills for water heating were reduced by 25% to 35%.

The projects have also covered replacement of several thousand heaters and several thousand meters of central heating network. Funding has also been provided for modernization of the domestic hot water installation and thermo-modernisation measures. Innovative use of gas-fired condensing boilers, cogeneration units, gas heat pumps and a special heat recuperation system enabled effective energy management, at the same time, substantially reducing the emission of harmful pollutants into the air.

The hospitals encourage other interested parties to use the experience and the opportunities offered by similar funds.

Lębork less dependent on coal

Project title

Construction of a biomass Combined Heat and Power plant (CHP) as the base-load heat source for the district heating system

Implementation organisation

Municipality and town of Lębork

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 9,892,465

Project implementation period

June 2012 – October 2016



Development strategy for the town of Lębork by 2020 focuses on energy security and efficiency to be achieved through reducing the dependence on the resources not available nearby and efficient use of the existing energy resources. The funding from the Swiss Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) has provided support for pursuing these goals.



Lębork promotes and invests in measures that contribute to improving energy efficiency and reducing CO₂ emissions. Over the last few years, the town has carried out comprehensive thermal renovation of schools, kindergartens and public buildings (library, social welfare centre etc.), and has modernized over 3 km of the district heating network.

Until recently, heat in Lębork was delivered only by the local coal-fired plant. Seeking new

solutions, the town decided to use the energy potential of the local wood industry. And indeed, to use not so much what this industry produces but rather what it leaves behind, namely chips, wood residuals and sawdust.

A coherent system

Implementation of the SPCP project followed thorough feasibility studies. In cooperation with external experts the system for combined heat and power generation was selected to



increase the reliability of heat supply from the district heating network. An additional factor was to increase the stability of heat prices for the residents of Lębork. It was also important to reduce the environmental impact from heat production. The project's authors sought to improve the air quality

in the town and to add renewable energy to the local energy mix.

At the beginning of the project implementation, the issue of ensuring sufficient volume of biomass from local suppliers was a concern. However, after the first months

of the CHP plant operation, the biomass availability proved to exceed the expectations. Today, about PLN 2 million is earned by the neighbouring sawmills and wood processing plants every year, thanks to the operation of the CHP plant. Thus the town supports local businesses makes use of energy stored in wood residuals those businesses produce.

The combined heat and power plant in Lębork meets all the required gas and dust emission standards. At the same time, the biomass from local wood processing industry is burned, which ensures lower energy costs and less dependence on coal. The plant fits well into the trend for dispersed energy sources, that is, generation of energy in small production units located in the close vicinity of the energy users.

▲▲ Thanks to the use of biomass, our energy prices have become independent from the developments on the coal market. The combined heat and power plant fits well into the European Union renewable energy policy. The project has also created new jobs. ▼▼

Mariusz Hejnar, Lębork Management Director in the Town Heat Energy Company (pol. Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Energetyki Ciepłej)

Cogeneration means lower operational costs

As part of the project co-financed by SPCP, complete equipment for the biomass CHP plant has been provided and a biomass storage facility has been constructed. Thermal capacity of the CHP is 5,400 kWt, whereas electricity generation capacity amounts to about 1,250 kWe.

The cogeneration technology, namely, the simultaneous generation of heat and electricity, has reduced the plant's operational cost. In addition, it improved the energy security of the town. What is more, electricity is fed into the grid, thus providing additional revenue.

Within the framework of the project, education of residents about renewable energy sources has not been forgotten. It was particularly important to educate children and young people. A school information campaign about energy saving and renewable energy sources was prepared specially for them. In addition, Łębork provides support for the replacement of old coal boilers and connects the residential buildings to the district heating network.



In the summer months, hot water from renewable sources is supplied to residents. In other months, biomass combustion reduces the consumption of coal, thus reducing the emission of greenhouse gases, harmful gases and dust to the atmosphere. Combined with earlier pro-environmental projects (e.g. filters on coal boilers), it has significantly decreased the impact on the environment. Thanks to the comprehensive measures undertaken, CO₂ emissions

have been reduced by the amount of 24,508 t/annually, and 40% of the Łębork's heat now comes from renewable energy sources.

The Łębork's CHP plant project has been praised both in Poland and abroad; in 2016, Łębork was awarded the 1st place in the European edition of the Green Public Procurement Award - Green ProcA - in the category of towns with the population between 10,000-100,000.

Warmly, efficiently, environmentally-friendly

Project title

Replacement of group heating substations with individual substations and modernisation of the municipal district heating network in the densely built-up residential districts of the Capital City of Warsaw in the areas where the acceptable levels of air pollution are exceeded

Implementing organization

Veolia Energia Warszawa SA

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 10,628,746

Project implementation period

July 2012 – March 2017



Poland has a significant problem with air quality, in particular in large agglomerations and their surroundings. The level of harmful substances exceeds, often many times, the acceptable concentration levels. One of the most important aspects when

addressing air pollution is the reduction of emissions connected with house heating. Thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) support, Warsaw improves the energy efficiency of its heating network.

Heating substations to be replaced

The Polish district heating systems require urgent and substantial infrastructural investment. Residential estates built in the 1950' and 1960' usually consisted of buildings heated by local, coal-fired boilers. With time, the estates were connected, one by one, to municipal district heating networks and for this purpose, the network fragments connecting the former boiler-houses with the residential buildings were used, while the former boiler-houses were transformed into the so-called group heating substations. Most of those substations are over 40 years old and they often cause breakdowns and heat losses.

The majority of these substations supply hot water to the heat radiators located in the flats but not to hot water taps, so people have to use gas furnaces to have hot water for domestic

purposes. In addition a system based on group heat exchange substations does not allow proper management of the heat supplied to the buildings, which results in the lack of economic incentives for investment, e.g. in the thermal insulation of buildings and – in consequence – means that such investment projects are delayed.

Decisions lie with the building residents

The solution to the problem is to replace group heating substations with individual substations placed in each of the buildings. With such an arrangement, it is possible to have a real use of energy accounted for and the residents can decide themselves when the heat should be delivered to their heaters.

The individual substations may be used for heating domestic hot water and provide heat to the radiators, which eliminates the need to use gas furnaces in the flats, reducing not only the health risk (e.g. from carbon oxide) but also the emission of harmful combustion products to the atmosphere. Moreover, the new substations are fully automated and thus more efficient and economical.



Buildings in a poor technical condition, difficult to manage in an economically sound and ecological manner have been selected for the project. With the implemented solutions, it has been possible to reduce the losses in heat distribution – thanks to better insulation and the district heating network shortened. For the residents of Warsaw, this means lower heating bills. Thanks to the modernisation works, the frequency of the heating system failures will also decrease.

Plenty of benefits

Under the project, the systems that supply heat to over 800 buildings in Warsaw have been modernised. About 40 km of heat pipelines have been built using modern materials that not only will withstand 30 years of operation but are also neutral to the environment.

The heat network has utilized a technology that causes much less heat loss compared to the previous solutions. Additionally, new pipeline sections have been equipped with alarm and measurement systems to locate breakdowns.

In the buildings covered by the project, the individual gas heaters for domestic water heaters have been removed, which means reduction of the emission of harmful pollutants and smaller heat losses previously caused by the need to ventilate flats where combustion processes took place.

▲▲ **The project has become a part of the programme of air quality improvement currently implemented by the authorities of Warsaw. Our main goal is to limit the losses in heat distribution. For the entire city, the project means reduction of the emission of dust, harmful substances and greenhouse gases. It will certainly have positive impact on the residents' health and thus improve the conditions of living in Warsaw.** ▼▼

Ryszard Płotnicki, Director of the Project Execution Unit (JPR) of Veolia Energia Warszawa

Modern suburban trains for Warsaw agglomeration

Project title

Development of the public passenger transport in the agglomeration of Warsaw by increasing the efficiency, reliability and safety of Warsaw Commuter Rail (Warszawska Kolej Dojazdowa - WKD)

Implementing organization

Warszawska Kolej Dojazdowa Sp. z o.o.

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 19,353,841

Project implementation period

June 2012 – February 2017



Thanks to six new train units on the lines of the Warsaw Commuter Rail (Warszawska Kolej Dojazdowa – WKD) and a new electronic information and monitoring system on all its stations, the quality of travel on the routes Warsaw - Grodzisk Mazowiecki and Warsaw – Milanówek has substantially improved.

The quality improvement of the local public transportation systems is one of the aims of the support under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP). In this case, the project beneficiary has been Warszawska Kolej Dojazdowa sp. z o.o. (WKD) with the seat in Grodzisk Mazowiecki. The company belongs to the Local Government Consortium formed by: the Mazowieckie Voivodship, the towns of Pruszków and Podkowa Leśna and the municipalities of Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Brwinów, Milanówek and Michałowice. WKD provides rail transport to the inhabitants of these suburban communes near Warsaw. It is very important since it reduces the road traffic load in this area, near the capital, and less road traffic means fewer traffic jams and cleaner air. Thus the project has been a step forward in the implementation of the plan to reduce the road traffic in the centres of big agglomerations which struggle with smog. This purpose is served by the development of the Veturilo bicycle network, by improvement of the public transport system and projects such as the one implemented in WKD.

Unfortunately, before the project began, the best days of the WKD rail infrastructure had been long gone: the old rolling stock did not encourage people to use that form

of transport. In order to change this, it was necessary to improve the conditions of the rail transport so as to meet the expectations of users who wished to travel fast, comfortably and safely. A comprehensive modernisation was indispensable.

Trains for the 21st century

The investment project, financed to a great extent from the SPCP funds, has helped to achieve these goals. It is not a coincidence, since the Swiss railway system has served as a well-tested and widely admired model. Thanks to this cooperation, WKD has had an opportunity to use the long experience and good practices developed in Switzerland.

The project was implemented from 2012 to 2017. It had two stages, the first focused mainly on the renovation of the rolling stock. Six new modern electric traction units for regional connections have been purchased under the project. It has been the project's most expensive component, with the value of over PLN 98 million. The train units meet all the expectations of passengers. Their operational speed is up to 80 km/h, they take 505 persons in air-conditioned cars (including 164 seats), they have four places for people on wheelchairs and 8 stands for



bicycles, particularly appreciated by passengers travelling on this route.

Safe and easy to read

The second stage of the project, worth approx. PLN 5 million, was the placement of electronic information boards and cameras for the Passenger Information and Monitoring System on all stations and stops. In total, 101 boards and 86 CCTV monitoring cameras have been installed along the entire WKD route. It enabled the improvement of passenger service quality and safety. Now, the passengers waiting for trains are informed, regularly, about the actual departure times and possible delays. Information is displayed on electronic boards on each platform of WKD lines - nice, clear, and modern.

"We have taken the opportunity of project savings and equipped the level crossings with devices warning road users of forthcoming trains. They have been installed in 16 points located along the railway No. 47: Warszawa Śródmieście WKD – Grodzisk Mazowiecki Radońska," says Mr. Krzysztof Kulesza, the Project Coordinator at WKD. "In the course of 2016, complex repair works on the sections of a total length of 25 km between Warsaw, Komorów, Podkowa Leśna and Milanówek were carried out," adds Kulesza. The project has provided an opportunity to develop design



concepts for train halts architecture such as stops, benches, waste paper baskets or information boards. All these elements constitute the so-called WKD visual identification system that not only increases the comfort of travel but also looks good and is a perfect showcase of the changes implemented by Warszawska Kolej Dojazdowa, increasingly popular among passengers.

What challenges did WKD face before receiving the co-financing from the Swiss Polish Cooperation Programme?

Jolanta Dałek* - After the completion of the several-year process of privatisation of the company Warsaw Commuter Rail, we took steps to acquire funding for substantial

investment. The replacement of the old rolling stock and modernisation of the railway infrastructure were absolutely necessary. The financial needs related to that goal were enormous. Therefore the company decided to apply for funding from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme.

The Programme offered financial assistance for projects connected with infrastructure and environment, and the investment that WKD really needed perfectly fit that part of the Programme.

What is the biggest success of the project?

J.D. - I think that the biggest success of the project

is the satisfaction of our passengers whom we can now offer high quality services. We have significantly increased travel safety by improving the condition of tracks and level crossings. It is very important that the new trains we have purchased are also adjusted to the needs of people with disabilities and people with limited mobility. All that contributes to the positive image of Warsaw Commuter Rail, as well as the satisfaction of its users.

***Jolanta Dałek**

Finance and Economic Director,
Executive Board Member, Warszawska
Kolej Dojazdowa (Warsaw Commuter
Rail)

Faster, safer and more comfortable trains

Project title

Purchase of four engine-powered traction units for the railway line Malbork – Grudziądz to improve safety, management, efficiency and reliability of the local transport system

Implementing organization

Local government of the Pomorskie Voivodship

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 9,041,460

Project implementation period

May 2012 – December 2016



Four new diesel rail vehicles, one modernised electric train unit, a renovated viaduct in Brachlewo and 51 defibrillators installed in trains in the Pomerania region – these are the effects of a project implemented by the Pomorskie Voivodship

thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP).

One of the priorities for local governments is the improvement of people's safety, providing them with access to modern solutions and improvement of the quality of life. These goals are pursued in many areas, among others, in communications and transport. Local governments aim to reduce the road traffic load in Polish towns, which will result in better travel comfort and faster travel time (no traffic jams) and will reduce air pollution (less exhaust gases). However, this requires investment in modern means of public transport. The authorities of the Pomorskie Voivodship are fully aware of that.

The railway that provides equal opportunities

Because of its determination to improve the standard of the local transport system, the local government of the Pomorskie Voivodship took a decision to support one of the local lines connecting the towns Malbork and Grudziądz with the funding received from the SPCP. The investment was intended to not only improve the transport services for the

inhabitants of Malbork, Sztum and Kwidzyna poviats but also to reduce social and economic disparities between the dynamically developing city centres and the relatively underdeveloped part of the region.

The project implemented with the Swiss support has stimulated the launch of modernisation works on the entire line No. 207 – Grudziądz – Malbork. Since the towns are located in different voivodships, the work required coordination of the activities of the two local governments: Pomorskie Voivodship and Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship and successful management of related difficulties. The project team managed to overcome all the difficulties related to that.

Air-conditioning and other improvements

In order to improve safety and reliability of the rail transport, four diesel rail units have been purchased for this line. Each train has 120 seats, providing much more comfort for passengers than the old units. The cars are air-conditioned, adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and the travel comfort has



been further improved by a special suspension system which cushions the tracks roughness- this is important given the rather high speed of maximum 120 km/h. Thus, travel is not only comfortable but also shorter. The trains meet all the required standards, such as low

environmental impact and good fuel combustion parameters.

The new rail buses offer not only better quality for passengers but also higher work comfort for the staff. The train driver has at his/her disposal a modern steering system,

cruise control allowing them to maintain constant speed, and the panoramic wind-screen that ensures excellent view.

Each unit is equipped with two driver's cabins, so it does not need complicated manoeuvres of turning back or disconnecting and re-connecting the locomotive.

Value for money

The project is an example of prudent spending. During the project implementation significant savings appeared, which were allocated for the addition of several complementary tasks.

Those included renovation of the railway viaduct with access roads in the town of Brachlewo, on the line Malbork – Grudziądz, and modernisation of an electric train operating between Tricity (Trójmiasto) and Malbork. The latter improved both passengers' safety and comfort, and the working

Public transport is of a great importance for the economic development. When we were considering joining the Programme, unemployment in Malbork and Sztum poviats was very high. The Swiss support has given us a chance for positive changes on the labour market: time of travel has been considerably reduced and thus work availability has improved.

Ryszard Świlski, member of the Executive Board of the Pomorskie Voivodeship

conditions of train drivers. The modernisation has also resulted in the reduction of electricity consumption and reduction of train failure. Finally, as many as 51 AED defibrillators have been purchased for the trains operating in the voivodship. These often indispensable life-saving devices are placed in well-marked and easily accessible places and the trains equipped with them are specially marked. The defibrillators are under supervision of train managers who have received relevant training and in a situation of a sudden circulatory arrest will be able to launch the so-called chain of survival. Additionally, an instructional video made during training courses on the use of defibrillators is displayed on the screens inside the trains, educating passengers about life saving techniques.



What are the main benefits from the project for the local community, for passengers?

Ryszard Świlski*

- The quality and comfort of travel have changed entirely, people with disabilities can travel easily in new railway cars, travel time has been considerably reduced and – consequently – the access to the labour market has improved.

have carried out a questionnaire among passengers and it has shown that today they cannot imagine travelling in any other train vehicles than the ones we have purchased. The perception of the Grudziądz-Malbork line has changed entirely. These rail cars are new, air-conditioned, accessible and they considerably reduce the travel time.

What is the reaction of travellers to the implemented changes?

R.S. - The travellers like using the rail vehicles very much. We

***Ryszard Świlski**

member of the Executive Board of the Pomeranian Voivodeship

Public transport hub

Project title

Transport hub in Legionowo

Implementing organization

Legionowo Town Hall

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 9,634,464

Project implementation period

June 2012 – March 2017



For years, Legionowo inhabitants had been complaining about problems with public transport, lack of parking spaces near the railway station, traffic jams during rush hours and insufficient quality of passenger service. Thanks to the support from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), this Warsaw suburban town has leapfrogged, with regards to transportation, from the 20th to the 21st century.

“It had been our problem for nearly 20 years. We always knew how much the town needed this investment, but we did not have enough funds, there were always some more urgent expenses to cover. Eventually, our dream could come true thanks to the funding from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme,” says Robert Feruś from the Unit for Strategy and External Funding of the Legionowo Town Hall, who has supervised the implementation of the project. The whole project cost has amounted to about PLN 43 million, of which 36 million has come from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme.

Transport that did not link

The starting point for the project was to correctly identify problems affecting all Legionowo inhabitants. The list of those problems was long. People complained about lack of proper integration of various forms of public transport, low quality of services for travellers, lack of parking places and poor connection with Warsaw (old roads were jammed, they did not correspond to the needs of the developing, mobile population). The provisional building of the railway station did not match the town’s aspirations concerning the

quality of public space. The town authorities were fully aware of those problems and as early as in 2009 they commissioned an initial outline for the project “Transport Hub in Legionowo”. At that time it was only a vision. Now, thanks to the SPCP, the vision has come true.

Snow-ball effect

First of all, the Transport Hub planned by the local government authorities was expected to solve the travel-related problems of the inhabitants of Legionowo and the adjacent area: reduce congestion, allow convenient transfers, make it possible to park the car in a convenient spot and change to a bus or train. But that was not all. Such projects provide a strong stimulus for the development of the town – they attract investors, improve the quality of the common space, contribute to better integration of people, encourage the most active inhabitants to stay in the town. The town authorities had such hopes and expectations when they submitted an application to the SPCP for financial support.

Functional, modern, friendly

The new Hub is one of the first railway station complexes in Poland built by the local



government. It is a project planned and implemented on a grand scale, modern and multi-functional.

It is not an ordinary railway station. The facility has been designed as a main transport hub not only for the town but for the whole poviato of Legionowo, and even for the surrounding poviats. It contains a railway station, a bus station together with the complete infrastructure. i.e. multi-storey garage, platforms for buses, one-level car park and a new access road to the centre of Legionowo.

The travellers, waiting for connection, can spend time in comfortable conditions and apart from the modern waiting room, they have at their disposal

a rich multi-media library, with traditional paper and electronic books and access to the Internet. It is nice and tidy, so it is visited not only by the travellers but also by local residents, for whom the Hub has become a place to meet with friends and have a good time. The Hub has already improved the integration of the local community.

The appearance of the surrounding area has also improved. There are clear symptoms that – as the local authorities expected – the Hub has caused a snow-ball effect, because the entire surrounding area is steadily improving. The authorities assume that the higher attractiveness of the town will

translate into better conditions of social and economic development; that the local trade will benefit, that new service outlets will be opened since money usually comes to the places where there are many people and many potential customers. The real estate prices have also risen. Everybody benefits from such projects.

... environmentally friendly

Through a “Park and ride” facilities available for passengers, the town authorities would like to encourage people to use public transport. Thanks to the large car park, travelling by train has become a good alternative for using a car. One does not wait in traffic jams, does not get frustrated, one is not afraid of speed-cameras ... Instead, one can relax with a newspaper or a book, take a nap or simply admire the views, looking out the train window. In addition, one saves time: travel by car from Legionowo to the centre of Warsaw, in rush hours, takes at least an hour and by train – 30 minutes. Therefore, one can earn an hour each day, which, with the average of 22 working days in a month, comes up to as much as 22 hours.

And there is another benefit – for the natural environment. Every car left in the multi-storey car park means less exhaust gases and less pollution in the capital and its surroundings.

It is a priceless benefit – especially now, at the time of alarming news about air pollution in Poland, including Warsaw and the vicinity. And last but not least – travelling by train leaves much more money in one's pockets.

Where did you get the idea to apply for funding from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme?

Roman Smogorzewski*

- Legionowo has been in need of a new railway station for years and that was why we were looking for funds to finance such investment. Thanks to the Swiss support we could make our dreams come true and satisfy the needs of the inhabitants. The new railway station is now a showcase of Legionowo and it has significantly changed the perception of the town.

What changes have taken place in the area around the railway station thanks to the project implementation?

R.S. - Apart from the station with the surrounding infrastructure, we have also constructed a ring road around the town which allows cars and buses to reach the railway station quickly, without crossing the railway tracks. It is important in particular for the inhabitants of the districts



that had poor transport connection with the railway station.

Efficient transport to and from Warsaw is – for the town within the agglomeration – a key priority for the local government. Thanks to the project, we could achieve that goal. I hope that even more people will be getting to Warsaw using the new Transport Hub in Legionowo and I encourage them to do so.

What are the reactions of the inhabitants to the changes?

R.S. - The reactions are different as the inhabitants of Legionowo are different. Many of them are delighted with "Poczytalnia"

(a pun, using a combination of the Polish words for "waiting room" and "reading room" - a "Wait-and-Read" facility), enabling them to get in direct contact with culture. Others enjoy the comfort of the new multi-storey parking garages. Before, there were many conflicts about parking and the Municipal Guard had to intervene because the cars left in restricted areas caused problems for the residents. Today, a car can be left in a safe, monitored, roofed car park.

***Roman Smogorzewski**
Mayor of Legionowo

Towards better protection of birds in Poland

Project title

Survey of the key bird species of the Polish Carpathians and creating of a system for their monitoring and protection.

Implementing organization

Polish Society for the Protection of Birds

Project partner

SVS BirdLife Schweiz

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 1,070,000

Project implementation period

May 2011 – December 2016



A white-tailed eagle, eagle owl, kingfisher, white stork - many people can name at least a few of the best known bird species inhabiting Poland, not too many, though, are aware how many of them require special attention due to the fact that they are at risk of extinction. Thanks to the activities of the Polish Society for the Protection



of Birds (OTOP), supported by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), we know much more about the wild fowl living in the area of the Polish Carpathians.

The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) embarked upon the scrupulous job of performing the inventories of the key bird species in the area of the Polish mountains. "The Carpathians are one of the most valuable natural areas of Poland, remaining at the same time one of the least explored regions as far as the natural environment is considered," explains Dr. Tomasz Wilk, the Project Coordinator. "This lack

of sufficient nature inventory data with low level of knowledge concerning hazards and poor awareness of the society results in incomplete and ineffective environment protection," he adds.

The job was performed not only by the OTOP members, but also by over one hundred of trained volunteers who included bird watchers and self-made ornithologists. They had to inspect 20 thousand square kilometres of the Polish Carpathians in the area of Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Śląskie Voivodships in order to collect the data concerning 40 key bird species. In total, over 230 thousand of bird observations have been



performed in 500 specified areas. They have spent thousands of working hours on the task.

The counting itself has not been the ultimate objective, though. This knowledge was documented and used amongst others to develop strategies of bird protection in the areas covered with the Natura 2000 programme and it has been included in the report concerning bird migrations in the area of the Polish Carpathians.

The collected data allowed to identify hazards for the birds and their habitats in the South of Poland. This information has been presented during trainings organised for farmers, foresters, local government members and teachers to increase the awareness of the need to protect the environment in the local communities. In total, over 1000 persons extended their knowledge, a result that would not have been possible without the SPCP support and the experience

gained in the project has been recorded in study papers, specialist publications and also in popular guidebooks, such as “The Nature of the Polish Carpathians”. Thanks to the knowledge thus gained and disseminated, it is now not only possible to protect better the unique avifauna of the Polish mountains, but also to increase the attractiveness of the region. In this way, the OTOP has promoted the Carpathians’ position as an area of high biodiversity.

▲▲ **It is worth remembering that well preserved nature also means benefits for people. We all need clean air, unpolluted water, healthy food and a place to rest.** ▼▼

Tomasz Wilk, Project Coordinator

Think globally, act locally

Project title

Protecting the diversity of species in naturally valuable habitats on agricultural lands at the territory of Natura 2000 in the Lubelskie Voivodeship.

Implementing organization

Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation - State Research Institute in Puławy

Project partners

Institute of Technology and Life Sciences, The Polish Bird Protection Association (OTOP), University of Natural Sciences and Humanities

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 2,424,874

Project implementation period

August 2011 - February 2017



Sustainable agriculture without damaging the nature? Can modern farming actually support the organisms that form the natural environment? The Lubelskie Voivodeship proves

that it is possible, and it sets the example for other regions.

Despite the fact that agriculture ranks behind the industry and the service sector as regards the share in GDP, agricultural lands are still an important element of economy and cover up to 60% of total country area. Such proportions can be especially seen in the eastern Poland - the Lubelskie Voivodeship itself comprises 9.5% of all agricultural lands area in Poland.

Our understanding of the importance of biodiversity and the complex character of the relationship between people and nature is growing. Over millions of years, nature has created the balanced ecosystem, in which the existence of every species has its reason and is essential to the existence of other species, which in turn are vital for the existence of the next. Nature is a network of interdependent elements of which the human being is only a part. That is why agriculture, which turns meadows, forests and marshes into agricultural lands, now faces the task of reconciling food demand of humans with the protection of biodiversity. Long-term human activity makes a substantial impact on the surrounding

nature – often to the detriment of plants that suffer because of the changes in the properties of soils and water management, and animals, as for example birds that are deprived of their breeding grounds. However, benefiting from the richness of nature does not have to be in contradiction with the protection of the environment. The Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation – State Research Institute in Puławy responded to the challenge defined as the improvement of the protection of the diversity of species in the naturally valuable habitats on agricultural lands.

Science and practice

The project's goal was to check how the different types of agricultural practices influence nature, especially birds, insects and spiders. Another goal was to develop practices enabling farmers to produce healthy food free from artificial plant protection products and pesticides, i.e. using only the support of nature itself - using the natural enemies of the pests that destroy crops.

The project had two stages - a research and an education stage. When experts and scientists were reviewing

the situation of selected plants and local fauna, the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, simultaneously, conducted training and prepared publications, in which it shared its own experience and conclusions from the review.

The Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation was not the only active participant of the project (the Institute focused on the condition of orthopterans and monitored the diversity of landscape with the use of flying drones equipped with video and photo cameras), also the Polish Bird Protection Association made a contribution to the project (examining the breeding grounds of birds), the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce (performing the inventory of spiders) and Department of Nature Protection and Rural Landscape of the Institute of Technology and Life Science in Falenty (conducted botanical studies to systematise the knowledge of the condition and changes in plants in particular agricultural areas).

Workshops for farmers

The project required further continuation at the local level. To do so it was necessary



to share the knowledge and encourage the people whose economic activity interferes with nature to apply good practices. Hence, 40 training sessions have been conducted for farmers who declared their readiness to pass the knowledge on to others, as well as 40 workshops for institutions dealing with biodiversity protection on agricultural lands. The project activities and results have been presented at an international conference held at the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation in Puławy, combined with workshops in Kazimierz Dolny. The experience and knowledge

gained have also been disseminated in the form of an extensive report, the Code of Good Agricultural Practices supporting the protection of biodiversity (it can be downloaded from www.agropronatura.pl), the recommendation for changes in the agri-environmental programmes, and the methodology of creating the system for monitoring the biological biodiversity on agricultural lands. Each publication supports positive changes to the relationship between humans - agriculture and nature.

Business in accordance with nature

Project title

People-friendly Carpathians - local partnership initiative for the sustainable exploitation and protection of the mountain areas in the Podkarpackie Voivodship.

Implementing organization

Carpathian Foundation - Poland

Project partners

Partnership for Environment Foundation, Bieszczady National Park
The Voluntary Mountain Rescue Service - the Bieszczady Group

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 794,162

Project implementation period

January 2012 – October 2014



Economic growth or environmental protection - these two terms are usually set against each other as completely incompatible and impossible to reconcile. A grass-roots initiative from the Podkarpackie Voivodship has proved that it does not have to be so.



When one looks at the history of mankind, it is evident that human activity is based on the environment exploitation, to lesser or greater extent, and that its character becomes increasingly intensive with technological progress. By their activity people disturb the natural rhythm of life. However, it is possible to reconcile the interests of man and the protection of valuable natural resources. Activities that confirm such view are undertaken in the area of the Carpathians, a region attractive for its charm and biological diversity.

Discipline does not have to be limiting

The Carpathian Foundation – Poland, which promotes the natural value of the Bieszczady National Park, has undertaken a project aiming at further improvement of the protection of valuable natural assets, through guidance for the inhabitants about how they can use the natural resources in their business activities and do it safely – contrary to the common belief that natural environment protection must limit the economic activity, because it imposes certain discipline on it.



According to the core principles of the Natura 2000 scheme, the protected areas are not completely excluded, isolated or covered with business activity prohibition. Protection usually covers particular elements of flora and fauna, for instance, certain animal species and their habitats are protected. There is opportunity for business activity in such areas – provided that at the same time nature is respected. Moreover, tourists visiting such areas expect to get the real experience

of nature and not of an area completely transformed by uncontrolled and often destructive human activity. Therefore taking care of such places is in the interest of everyone.

Such approach may be successful when there is will for cooperation on the part of the local government, local community and business.

“Most local governments participated in the training and used the technical support

available under the project,” explained the Foundation Chair, Zofia Kordela-Borczyk. “Local businessmen and people planning to start business activity are interested in expert training, for instance, in viticulture and related wine tourism, cultivation of honey plants, apiculture and using herbs for cosmetic purposes,” she adds.

There are many ideas for business activity adapted to the character of a nature-rich region.

Educational activities and more

As a result of the project co-financed under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, 262 hours of individual consulting services have been provided, as well as 15 training sessions for nearly 250 participants, an international conference and a study visit to Switzerland for 19 participants. Two partnership contracts have also been signed, and the Natural Education Centre has been established in Wołosate. Apart from this, Information Service website of the Green Investment Service Centre has been launched by the Carpathian Foundation - Poland, www.cozi.org.pl, that has had 68,000 hits.

However, education itself cannot solve all the problems, e.g. logistic problems. Therefore, construction of footbridges on walking trails



has also been financed, as well as tourist shelters, ecological toilettes in the Alpine style or a special parking system. A monitoring system for tourist traffic has also been installed in the Bieszczady National Park, which enables real time tracking of the tourist traffic intensity in the key spots of the protected area. Everybody is satisfied - tourists, the local community,

investors, whereas the flora and fauna can still live in safety.

“People-friendly Carpathians” is a type of initiative that shows that human business activity may be compliant with the natural environment requirements and may even support the protection of biodiversity.

During the project implementation, the biggest challenge was to overcome the distrust and the stereotypes surrounding the European Union’s Nature 2000 Directive. The local community was successfully persuaded that business can be made in compliance with biodiversity and that the seemingly opposite interests resulting from the need to grow and the need to protect nature can be reconciled.

Zofia Kordela-Borczyk, Chair of the Carpathian Foundation Poland

United for the Carpathians

Project title

Carpathians Unite – Mechanism of consultation and cooperation for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention

Implementing organization

The National Foundation for Environmental Protection – The Environmental Information Centre UNEP/GRID – Warsaw

Project partners

Ecopsychology Association, Polish Office of Regional Ecological Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Local Tourist Organization “Beskid Zielony”, Tatrzańsko-Beskidzka Producers’ Cooperative Gazdowie; Department of Geography at the University of Geneva

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 1,943,054

Project implementation period

January 2012 – December 2016



A view of the sheep on the mountain pastures again becomes a symbol of the

Beskidy and Podhale regions - to the joy of the shepherds and tourists. The history of the project “The Carpathians Unite” shows how the slogan ceases to be a slogan and becomes an inspiration for everyday activities of the region’s inhabitants.

The UNEP / GRID Environmental Information Center at the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management undertook the task of coordinating practical actions aimed at implementing some of the provisions of the International Carpathian Convention ratified by Poland in 2006.

Together with the partners of the project: Ecopsychology Association, Polish Office of Regional Ecological Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Tatrzańsko-Beskidzka Producers’ Cooperative in Gazdów and the Local Tourist Organization “Beskid Zielony”, numerous project activities have been carried out, including thematic works of the workgroups, workshops, conferences, occasional events and shepherds’ festivals, bringing together the social partners involved in the cooperation initiative for the implementation

of the ideas embodied in the Carpathian Convention.

Broad consultation

Special teams, composed of experts, scientists and practitioners, shared their knowledge and experience in the practical aspects of observing the provisions of the Carpathian Convention, including i.a. the management of the Carpathian space and the protection of the landscape. There were 11 lectures at the Carpathian Open University with the participation of students, including third age students, three editions of the Carpathian Municipalities Forum, a Coalition for the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention “The Carpathians - Our House” was formed, bringing together more than 70 entities (local governments, NGOs, businesses and individuals). Apart from that, three International Shepherds’ Conferences have been organised, bringing together 500 people (scientists, local community leaders, activists).

Research teams have been addressing some selected aspects of life in the Carpathians including e.g. traditional pastoral economy.



With proper rules, the sheep grazing in the pastures is conducive to the protection of biodiversity. That is why 15 pastures, with a total area of nearly 1000 hectares, have been subject to active protection of biodiversity through sheep grazing. In addition, support has been provided for the renewal

of pastoral infrastructure. 65 objects were renovated or made available, including 18 shepherd huts. And obviously the sheep themselves, 730 sheep have been purchased by Coopeative Gazdowie and handed over to shepherds. Five years after the start of sheep grazing, special monitoring of

the pastures confirmed that pastoralism has a positive influence on the preservation of natural diversity. The developed pastures began to stop the spontaneous, secondary succession of the forest, which took place in abandoned areas.

Lastly, revival of the traditional pastoral activity also had a cultural impact - it has been possible to preserve the traditional landscape and improve the tourist attractiveness of the region (e.g. the "Oscypek" Trail), including support for handicrafts and local products.

Sustainable tourism for preservation of natural values

At the same time, a strategy was drawn to promote the region's tourist value in a sustainable manner, i.e. through maintaining natural values. In cooperation with the 38 municipalities of the "Magic Land of Lemkos and Pogórzanie" a tourism development strategy has been

▴▴ **Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge for us was to win the trust of the local communities. The first months were practically entirely devoted to building relationships with local governments, businessmen, residents, including the shepherds whom we wanted to help.** ▾▾

Patrycja Adamska, project coordinator



prepared, taking into account the natural, educational and cultural values of the region. The result of this work is a coherent strategy for 2015-2020.

The effects of the project include e.g.:

- development of a code of good practice for spatial planning in the Carpathians, which aims at developing positive principles that change the spatial development of the Polish part of the Carpathians and implement of the principles of sustainable development. This activity has been addressed to a broad audience - local governments, local communities, entrepreneurs,

non-governmental organizations;

- development of the National Action Plan for the Biological and Landscape Diversity Protocol (Biodiversity Protocol in short) to the Carpathian Convention, which implements seven strategic objectives for the wider conservation and support of the Carpathian flora and fauna and preserves its biodiversity. This proposal has been elaborated in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and the Carpathian Convention Secretariat in Vienna;
- creating a Map for Carpathian visitors, covering more than 800 points, including places

or events worth seeing and experiencing.

All documents and design materials are available on the website www.informatoriumkarpackie.pl.

However, it is most important to emphasize that, despite the completion of the funding and the formal closure of the project, the initiative itself has survived. In the Carpathians, individual communities continue build on the developed ideas. The same people who spoke a few years ago, as if they were using different languages, now act together to protect nature and to pursue the common good. The Carpathians really unite.

Raba: more natural and less dangerous

Project title

The Upper Raba River Spawning Grounds

Implementation organizations

“Ab Ovo” Association

Project partners

Regional Water Management Board in Kraków

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 1,240,827

Project implementation period

January 2012 – December 2016



Many land development methods focused on human needs are invasive to nature. An example can be hydrotechnical methods of reducing the flood risk that often destroy natural habitats of fish. The project “The Upper Raba River Spawning Grounds” proves that the fish habitat can be protected with significantly lower financial inputs, without increasing the flood risk.



Development of currently uninhabited areas, particularly in the river valleys, results in a situation when mountain rivers begin to pose flooding danger. Such risk increases also in the case of excessive extraction of sand, rock and river gravel. In such cases houses are usually protected by artificial regulation of rivers. However, all such structures must be continuously monitored and repaired, which requires significant financial outlays. Additionally, such solutions often destroy the fauna and flora in the water, and the regulated river is much less attractive than a natural one.

Gravel and rocks instead of concrete

Thanks to the support from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, the “Ab Ovo” Association has implemented a project to restore the natural functions in a part of Raba, a river in the Małopolskie Voivodship, in the section located near Lubień and Pćim, that is, a Natura 2000 area. Under the project, the renovation of hydro-technical reinforcements was abandoned and the river was allowed to follow the migration corridor formed in a natural way. At the same time the river bed was strengthened with gravel and other natural elements slowing the velocity of the river current. The direct goal of the project was to reconstruct

the natural, alluvial river bed and its tributaries and to restore and protect the floodplains (here two aspects were important: river bed retention and biological river recovery). Whereas, the indirect goal was to decrease the maximum temperature of water in summer (excessively hot water negatively influenced the fish population in Raba river).

One Raba tributary was a great challenge, namely the Krzczonówka stream, that required the reconstruction of a dam and development, with the use of rock debris, of so called rapids, the elements causing locally accelerated water flows. As a result, tributary's mouth in the river has diversified speed of water flow and depth, which supports the restitution of flora and fauna. Following

the free rotation of groundwater and river waters, the flora and fauna can be rebuild, free migration of fish to spawning grounds in the upper parts of the stream has become possible, whereas the rapids are favourite places for strong current fish to rest and feed. Trees and other riparian plants grow on the river banks, and the flood risk has not increased.

Good practices in the river maintenance

The project also covered the organization of a series of training sessions on river maintenance, biological development in river valleys, applied geomorphology, spatial management and natural retention in the valley as a form of flood prevention, as well as making wildlife inventory

of the area and extensive analysis covering, for example, environmental protection issues, social equality, economic activity and efficient use of natural resources. Moreover, in cooperation with the Regional Water Management Board in Kraków, new interesting publications were issued, promoting and supporting the revitalisation of mountain rivers:

- "Good practices in the maintenance of mountain rivers and streams",
- "Good practices in planning the water management in the areas with natural quality".

"Ab Ovo" Association points out that the effects of the project implementation include the improved safety near the river banks, as well as the improved quality of water and improved river habitats and habitats on the banks. According to the project coordinator, Józef Jeleński, the required financial outlays to the project were relatively small, when compared to previous methods for regulation and maintenance of river beds. It has also been possible to reverse devastation of the environment that results from the construction of river channels and elimination of the river bed retention during routine river regulation works. And fish have got their spawning grounds back.



Wildlife corridors operation

Project title

Protection of Carpathian wildlife habitats - migration corridors

Implementing organization

Association for Development and Promotion of Podkarpackie "PRO CARPATHIA"

Project partners:

11 forest districts, Regional Directorate of State Forests in Krosno, Magurski National Park and Bieszczadzki National Park

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 1,421,717

Project implementation period

January 2012 – December 2016



Podkarpackie is a region that boasts not only the rich cultural heritage, but also the unique fauna - there live almost all species of large mammals native to our country. The project, which aimed to support the

conservation of habitats of these animals, included the designation and protection of existing wildlife migration corridors, and increasing knowledge and awareness of the authorities and residents of the region.

Wildlife migration corridors are extremely important elements of nature - they allow the movement of different species of animals and plants, thus preserving biodiversity. Unfortunately, human activity, such as the development of a transport network or chaotic development of suburban and rural areas, poses a threat to the natural environment.

To counter this, Association for Development and Promotion of Podkarpackie "PRO CARPATHIA" initiated the project "Protection of Carpathian wildlife habitats - migration corridors", within which, not only the routes of the animals are identified, but also the criteria necessary for the designation of migration routes have been defined. Since it is not possible to simultaneously take into account the requirements of all species of forest fauna for which the existence of

migration corridors is particularly important, the designation has been based on the monitoring of selected species with particularly high habitat requirements (umbrella species), i.e. large predators (wolves, lynx, bears), hoofed animals (deer, boars, bison, elks) and predatory birds (lesser spotted eagle).

Cooperation first

The project was implemented in partnership with 17 institutions: Bieszczadzki and Magurski National Parks, Regional Directorate Bieszczadzki and Magurski, Regional Directorate of State Forests in Krosno, 11 forest districts: Baligród, Bircza, Cisna, Dukla, Komańcza, Kołaczyce, Lesko, Lutowiska, Rymanów, Stuposiany and Ustrzyki Dolne, Carpathian Landscape Park Complex. Given a large number of participants, coordination of joint activities was necessary.

A well coordinated project has brought the expected results. Thanks to the purchase of GPS transmitters, we have managed to acquire a lot of important information. Other devices used: photo-traps, video cameras, and equipment such as binoculars and night vision. For example, in the case of the



lesser spotted eagles, scientists are now able to determine home ranges and feeding grounds.

“Today, we know what components of the landscape play the fundamental role in assessing the attractiveness of lesser spotted eagles’ feeding grounds and what is the level of birds’ tolerance for human functioning in their environment,” says Damian Nowak, head of the Nature Conservation Committee of the Magurski National Park.

Further action

This valuable knowledge has allowed national parks to take steps to better protect the areas inhabited by particular species.

▲▲ **A partnership with numerous and diverse members needs to reconcile the different positions, concepts of implementation and different approaches to problem solving. Certainly, the implementation of the project was facilitated by the establishment of a steering committee consisting of representatives of the regional authorities, selected districts and municipalities involved in the activities and institutions responsible for planning processes, road investments, nature conservation activities as well as representatives of scientific centres and other entities, whose presence was important at various stages of the project.** ▼▼

Agnieszka Pieniążek PhD, project coordinator for the “Pro Carpathia Association”



“Thanks to the new information, we know where the animals cross the road barriers, including the sections of roads that run within the home ranges of the family groups of wolves,” Bartosz Pirga PhD, the technical coordinator of the Bieszczadzki National Park, explains. Newly acquired knowledge has already

been disseminated through brochures and maps, press articles and educational film releases.

The “Protection of Carpathian wildlife habitats - migration corridors” project has been a success not only because it has allowed to gain

new knowledge increasing the chances of survival of endangered species. It is also an example of good co-operation between many entities. This type of professionalism and dedication can inspire others to take on similar challenges.

The rescue of the Vistula

Project title

Revitalisation, biodiversity protection and utilisation of the natural values of the Vistula's oxbows

Implementing organization

Society for Earth

Project partners

Institute of Nature Conservation,
Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 923,500

Project implementation period

May 2012 – December 2016



The Vistula River requires human help. Restoring the original character and the biological diversity of the old river beds and their surroundings will bring benefits not only to the ecosystem but also to people visiting the area. Revitalisation is possible - the Vistula's old oxbow lakes in the Małopolskie



Voivodship provide an example.

The days when the Vistula River was clean enough for safe bathing are long gone. Despite the fact that the number of sewage treatment plants in Poland is growing, the past negligence still has impact on the slowly rebuilding flora and fauna in the biggest Polish river. The current condition of the river can also be blamed on the regulation works, as well as the development of heavy industry and

agriculture before 1989. Society for Earth decided to prove that the Vistula River can be saved, even if the process had to be long and divided into stages. The first stage is to restore the natural functions of the river.

The Vistula oxbows in the Małopolskie voivodship are particularly important – the river meanders separated from the main river bed form river lakes called “wiślicka” which provide natural habitats for various animal and plant



species. Among them are several endangered species, such as *Nymphoides peltata* or water caltrop. The old river lakes are an important component of the Vistula River Valley, considered to be the most important Polish ecological corridor. The activists supporting the river revitalisation have argued from the start that the regeneration will not only be good for biodiversity but will also attract visitors – the lakes will become attractive areas to spend leisure time. It should also be added that when the project was launched, the oxbows were often littered, full of weeds and were running

dry because of the disturbance of water conditions and low groundwater level.

Restoration of oxbows

In cooperation with the “Institute of Nature Conservation of Polish Academy of Sciences” in Cracow, the Society for Earth selected 16 oxbow lakes where small tourist infrastructure was installed, whereas three of them, located at Nowa Huta Grasslands in Cracow and in the area of Oświęcim and Zator, underwent a more thorough restoration. Using the knowledge gained from regeneration of other rivers in Poland and on the basis of Swiss experience, desilting was conducted (this enabled protection of birds breeding areas) with regular monitoring of the regenerated oxbow lakes. At the same time, the media were informed and press conferences were organized (e.g. in Oświęcim), educational activities were conducted, presenting the arguments that the unique character of the “wiślicka” oxbow lakes would improve the overall picture of the region and create new recreational opportunities, including the return of angling to the area. The beauty and diversity of the old river beds was presented during fifteen photo exhibitions. Several



educational paths have been constructed around the “wiśliska”, with total length of 75 km; footbridges enabling people to cross the lakes have been constructed and information boards have been mounted. 260 people in total participated in 36 thematic study visits carried out in the project area.

Saving the oxbow lakes is possible. Today, the Vistula valley is visited by a growing number of people and a substantial part of the degradation effects has been reversed. To be able to carry out the project measures, it was necessary to work hard to increase people’s awareness and promote a more responsible attitude to the environment.

How were the oxbow lakes in the Małopolskie voivodship’s section of the Vistula formed?

Karol Ciężak* - In a natural ecosystem, oxbow lakes are formed by the current direction changes in the river. In the Małopolskie voivodship, artificial regulation and establishing of the upper Vistula cascade took place in the 20th century. It created many additional

old river beds which meant that more fragments of the old river bed had been separate from the mainstream. According to the European Union’s Directive, old river beds are priority habitats, and as such they are protected by law. In 2011 under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, we began the implementation of the project which focused on the preservation and maintenance of old river beds in good condition, restoring their vitality and water level.

What has been done under the project?

K.C. - The whole project was divided into three main parts. The first part involved nature inventories in the area of 210 oxbow lakes. The second part was of promotional and educational character. It involved production of videos, brochures and albums, as well as the construction of an educational barge. The third part was the regeneration of the oxbow lakes.

How have the activities influenced the development of tourism?

K.C. - In each oxbow lake we have left a note with a contact phone number in order to collect information about the operation of those touristic facilities. Thus, we have learned, for instance, about anglers using the new infrastructure. In fact, angling competitions have even been organised on the old river beds.

What are the greatest benefits of the project?

K.C. - When it comes to natural effects, in all three desilted sites amphibians, whose number was already dwindling, have now reappeared. We have also observed the presence of the western marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), that has not been seen there for over 50 years. The “Szwajcarka” barge is a very interesting educational tool used as a mobility aid in our classes and workshops. It is a great attraction that definitely raises people’s interest in the Vistula River.

*** Karol Ciężak,**
Society for Earth Foundation

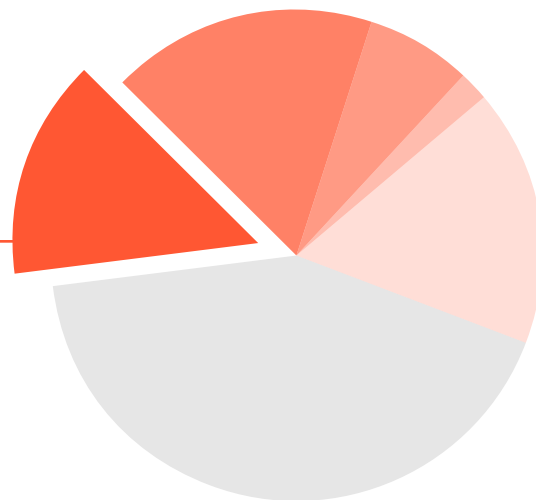
Private sector



13.9%

● PRIVATE SECTOR

- Regional development and border protection
- Environment and infrastructure
- Science, health and social welfare
- Civil society and partnership cooperation
- Project Preparation Facility, Technical Assistance Fund as well as funds for the management of the SPCP by Switzerland



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Access to capital for SMEs

Project title

Improvement of access to capital for SMEs

Implementing organization

National Capital Fund (in Polish KFK)

Partner

State Economy Bank (BGK)

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 53,000,000

Project implementation period

December 2009 – March 2017 /
December 2021



Polish micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the driving force of the economic development. They account for nearly 99% of all enterprises and provide jobs to 70% of all employees. They have plenty of interesting, innovative ideas for business but they need capital to implement the innovations and consolidate their position

on the market. That is why the support for micro, small and medium-sized companies is so important. Therefore, CHF 53 million have been assigned for improving access to financing for Polish SMEs, in the framework of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP). The funding was used towards investments by the National Capital Fund (KFK) in venture capital/private equity funds, and the bank guarantees offered by the State Economy Bank (BGK).

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and technologically advanced start-ups are the foundation of an innovative economy. Although large enterprises and corporations spend far more on research and development, they are usually focused on their core business and their complicated structure and size are not conducive to flexibility – which is necessary when investing in innovation. Start-ups are not subject to such limitations but they usually do not have enough capital to go from the idea, through evaluation of its business potential to market launch. Their own (or family) savings are not sufficient and high-risk capital is needed.

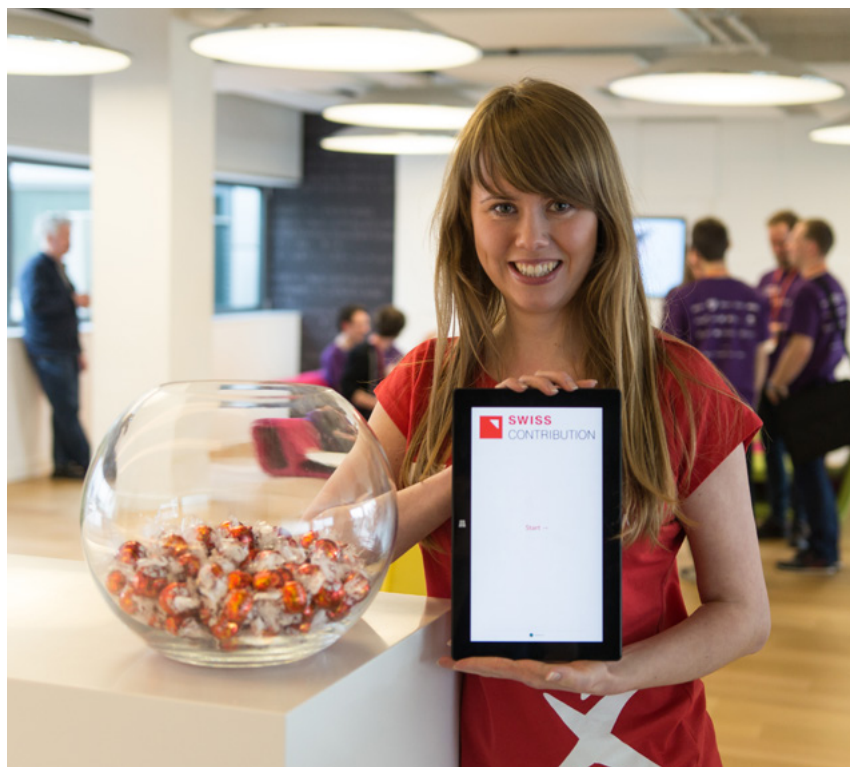
This can come from venture capital/private equity funds and so-called business angels – individual investors looking for promising projects. Poland faces a shortage of both. Therefore, the direct goal of the project was to improve the access of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises at an early stage of business development to external funding. The indirect goal was to increase the level of investment in innovation and improve the competitiveness of Polish enterprises and the economy as a whole.

The above mentioned goals have been pursued not so much by providing financing directly to the innovative enterprises but through providing capital to venture capital/ private equity funds operating on the Polish market. An important value added of this approach is that the supported funds provide not only financial support for entrepreneurs but also but also offer a possibility of using knowledge and experience of their investors. Their assistance is particularly important for the entrepreneurs who have innovative ideas but lack of knowledge about the specific market.

“Today, the start-up sector is the most rapidly growing investment sector, it is an inspiring experience to be here, to work with highly motivated and interesting business people, to share with them the experience which they lack of and which is necessary to build a robust business,” says Kinga Stanisławska, Managing Partner in the Exporior Venture Fund, one of the funds supported by the SPCP.

Fund of venture capital/private equity funds

National Capital Fund (KFK) is the first Polish fund of high risk capital funds. It was established in 2005. 100% of its shares is owned by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego – a state-owned bank whose role is to support the economic



Venture capital/private equity funds are entities that support with their funds companies that need financing for the implementation of new ideas – in return for company equity. In return of the risk of losing money, the fund is usually represented in the management of the company. Therefore the entrepreneur can benefit not only from the financial support but also from the knowledge and experience of representatives of the fund.

development of the country. The task of the KFK is to invest in venture capital/private equity funds. Thanks to this capital, the funds can support Polish micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. That is why the KFK, whose operations, by definition, cause a multiplying effect in the Polish economy, has received support from the SPCP.

Innovation in the KFK portfolio

Within the project financed from Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme, four venture capital/private equity funds have increased their capital. They, in turn, provided support to over 30 new entrepreneurs. Among them were companies which, thanks to that support, were able to enter international markets.

One of the beneficiaries is a new generation furniture company **"Tylko"**, offering responsive design. The company was established in 2012 by a group of five people with different backgrounds, such as architecture, parametric design, branding and business development. The company founders understand the world of new technology very well. Before founding **"Tylko"**, four of the founders managed an agency called **"Bridge"**, offering creative services on the basis of the extended reality, 3D printing,

digital production and other new technologies. Although **"Tylko"** is still a young enterprise, already now, the MoMA in NY exhibits a chair designed by one of the company founders, printed in 3D technology.

"Zencard" company is a platform for creation of discount and loyalty programmes by sellers. The company was founded in 2013. It has been developing solutions assisting companies in running loyalty programmes and is supporting them reduce the costs of implementing such measures. The solution also allows companies to measure the activity of their customers and evaluate their needs more accurately.

"All the technology applied in loyalty programmes comes from the 20th century," says Jarosław Sygitowicz, Vice-president of **"Zencard"**, responsible for marketing. "We do not believe that this approach is still suitable for the behaviour of modern clients, as the period between making a decision to the actual purchase is decreasing quickly," he adds.

The solution proposed by **"Zencard"** allows integration of many loyalty cards into one mobile application, which also serves as payment instrument. The system operates in real time, which makes it possible to calculate the discount automatically, already at the stage



of payment. In 2015, the company was awarded for the innovation of the year on the VIth Poland & CEE Loyalty Summit. It was also awarded the title of the most innovative company during the presentation of start-ups from Visegrad Group countries We4Startups in Redwood City – the heart of the Silicon Valley. In 2017, the Zencard platform was purchased by PKO Bank Polski.

The engagement of venture capital/private equity funds and private investors in the development of companies made it possible to channel the support into the projects with big development potential.

“Thanks to the mechanism of support from the National Capital Fund, we are able to encourage more and more business angels to engage their funds and unique experience. We want to build in Poland a group of informed business angel investors, who – with the mechanisms such as the National Capital Fund and the currently developed mechanisms of support via the Polish Development Fund – will be ever more eager to invest more and more funds, in a professional way, in technological projects which are the core interest of the ZMV fund,” emphasises Jacek Błoński, Manager of Zernike Meta – Ventures (ZMV) fund, which



has also received support from the National Capital Fund. The ZMV fund has so far invested in more than ten projects involving various industries. In the ZMV fund portfolio there are now projects such as e.g. **“The Batteries”**, whose team has developed, on a laboratory scale, a unique technology for producing thin-layer lithium batteries with the capacity twice as high as those currently available on the market. With the funding of ZMV, they are now planning to launch the production of such batteries.

Another technological project is the **“Retixa”** company, which has developed its own solution combining a highly advanced IT platform and devices enabling big data analysis in real time. New products for different markets may be developed e.g.:

mobile phones, insurance or retail sales based on this big data analysis.

“Inovamed” is a medical project, aimed at the development of technology for the fast production of limb prostheses thanks to the application of industrial 3D printers.

Credit repayment guarantees

In 2016, State Economy Bank (BGK) joint the project. The Bank offers to Polish SMEs guarantees of repayment of working capital loans and investment credits (de minimis guarantee). By the end of 2016, BGK had granted 556 guarantees for the total amount of PLN 87.1 million. Thanks to that 508 companies have received support.

The total value of the support for this project from the SPCP has amounted to CHF 53 million.

In accordance with the original assumptions of the project, 30% of all funding is to be allocated for capital support for enterprises in the Lubelskie, Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and

Świętokrzyskie Voivodships. Thus the support reaches, in particular, entrepreneurs from the less economically developed areas of Poland. The support of venture capital/

private equity funds and loan repayment guarantees will also be available after the completion of the physical implementation of the project and will be monitored until 2021.

Promoting of venture capital/private equity

The projects, apart from providing capital to the VC/PE funds, has also promoted knowledge-sharing among the funds and micro, small and medium-sized enterprise.

Learning by entrepreneurs was essential and it required an honest discussion about wide range of benefits, but also potential risks, resulting from partnering with VC/PE funds. The promotional and educational activities were performed both directly by the KFK and with the participation of the capital funds created with the SPCP support. During meetings with entrepreneurs, the funds described – in a practical way – the benefits from the cooperation with venture capital funds.

As part of the project, KFK together with Rzeszów Regional Development Agency organised a conference on “Venture capital – a chance for innovation in the region”. Held at the Technological Incubator of the Podkarpackie Science and Technology Park in Jasionka near Rzeszów, the event was dedicated to the role of venture capital/private equity in supporting and developing entrepreneurship and innovation in the Podkarpackie Voivodship. The conference triggered a series of educational meetings aimed at knowledge-sharing about the venture capital market.

Auditors to audit better

Project title

Building institutional and legal capacity at the national level with regard to financial reporting and auditing in the private sector

Implementing institution

World Bank, Centre for Financial Reporting Reform

Intermediary Body

Ministry of Finance

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 10,000,000

Project implementation period

December 2009 – December 2016



In the dynamically changing international tax and legal environment the continuous improvement of professional skills of accountants and auditors is of key importance. They are the guardians of reliability and good quality of financial reports. Thanks to the project implemented by the World

Bank, practically all the persons active in the auditor profession have had an opportunity to improve their skills. The project has also contributed to introducing important changes in the Polish law.

Financial statements are usually the first documents examined by a potential investor or a company interested in cooperation. A reliable statement, certified with the name of an experienced auditor, often gives “green light” to further negotiations. High level of reporting increases the transparency and security of economic transactions and helps to take investment decisions. In a word, good quality reporting is highly conducive to growth of economic activity.

Necessary standards

The profession of an auditor – as a profession of public trust – entails the need for continuous life-long learning. Every day brings new changes in local and international standards and regulations, as Polish companies belong to the global system. The knowledge of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and International Standards

on Auditing (ISAs) becomes essential for every accountant. Individual countries choose various models of supplementing and updating knowledge. Poland, thanks to the support of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme has organised a series of free of charge training sessions on an unprecedented scale.

The project was implemented by the Centre for Financial Reporting Reform (a World Bank Group organisation located in Vienna) with the participation of the Ministry of Finance. About 4,330 auditors and public administration representatives have taken part in the training courses on IFRS and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). The training devoted to the ISAs has attracted 4,304 specialists. The best evidence of the scale of the project is the fact that practically all active auditors in Poland have participated in the training. The qualifications of future specialists have also been addressed – four workshops promoting new methods of teaching the IFRS for academic teachers have been organised. Within the project, a series of conferences dedicated to the changes in the IFRS, good practices of effective cooperation



between audit committees and auditors as well as the promotion of active participation of Polish stakeholders in shaping the IFRSs have been held, too.

The establishment of a consultation helpline for auditors has been greatly appreciated

by the target group. The Polish-English "Compendium of accounting, finance and banking", explaining complex specialist terms in a concise, clear form has become a practical tool providing everyday support.

The seven-year project has been invaluable in its contribution

to the creation of a new, friendlier and more transparent business environment. For instance a maintenance support programme for the register of auditors in the National Chamber of Statutory Auditors has been created. Numerous reports have also been prepared, including an analysis of the accounting services market in Poland and a report dedicated to the alignment of the Polish tax law with the accounting standards. The legislative proposals developed on the basis of the report will allow to eliminate, at least partially, the necessity to maintain separate registers for accounting and tax purposes. This is good news for all the persons keeping financial accounts.

Thanks to the Swiss support we could offer effective assistance to auditors. Each of them could get acquainted, free of charge, with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) that at the time of the project implementation became the basis for performing this profession. A special consultation helpline has also been organised where every auditor can get instant professional advice. It certainly makes the auditors' work easier and improves the quality of the audits they perform.

Michał Bareja, Chief Specialist, Department of Accounting and Auditing, Ministry of Finance

CSR for competitiveness

Project title

Increase of the competitiveness of regions through corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Executing agency

Polish Agency for Enterprise Development

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 4,866,117

Project implementation period

August 2011 – February 2017



Market economy may easily turn into rampant capitalism. But there are many examples showing that private enterprises can earn profit, at the same time supporting local communities, acting to protect the environment and helping people in need. With the assistance of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development supports such entrepreneurs and encourages others to



to launch Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies.

Business is usually focused on profit. According to this principle, the capital invested by the shareholders should bring more profit than a similar investment with the same level of risk.

So much for the theory, but in practice it usually means that entrepreneurs are not sensitive

to the needs of the environment in which they operate. The idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) addresses this issue. Nearly everybody has heard about it but in practical terms it is still not very widespread in Poland. Only 25 companies are listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange's index of socially responsible companies, while at the same time, in the world, a view is becoming increasingly popular that it was the focus on profit and the



complete disregard for the needs of the local stakeholders that was one of the reasons of the latest financial and economic crisis. What is more, the areas of activity in which responsible companies operate are usually more competitive than those where CSR is not applied.

Reputation = competitiveness and thus higher income

Social responsibility brings benefits for people, for the natural environment but also for the entrepreneurs themselves. Thanks to CSR, the reputation of an enterprise improves, it

becomes more innovative and more easily adapts to the changing market conditions. The employees of socially responsible enterprises are better motivated and get more satisfaction from their work. Thanks to that, the enterprise can earn more profit and create more stable jobs.

That is why the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) has made it its goal to promote CSR both among entrepreneurs and in the public administration – especially voivodship Marshal's Offices and centres for investor and exporter services, directly

cooperating with the business community.

The main challenges that PARP faced when beginning the project included:

- Improving the entrepreneurs' knowledge about CSR;
- convincing the entrepreneurs from the SME sector that CSR is not just for corporations;
- explaining to the entrepreneurs that the implementation of the CSR principles brings a lot of benefits – not only those related to reputation.

During the project

implementation another challenge appeared – growth of interest in corporate social responsibility among entrepreneurs of five voivodships underrepresented in the first two calls for project applications. The project was designed so

as to respond to these challenges – from activities aimed at the promotion of knowledge about CSR, to financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises that implemented their pilot CSR projects, to the promotion of the best CSR practices presented in videos and publications.

It is worth emphasising that within the framework of the projects implemented by entrepreneurs, funding could be obtained for services of CSR advisors, which enabled the beneficiaries to take advantage of professional assistance while selecting and implementing CSR

Project beneficiaries

Apiculture

The honey market is not easy for real beekeepers. The honey-like products, easier and cheaper in production, find many buyers not aware of the fact that the cheap product they have bought has nothing in common with the real honey, carefully removed in apiaries from the propolis scented honeycombs. The change of the consumers' approach, good for beekeepers, first of all requires information but also promotion of good practices among honey producers

Such an initiative has been taken by Joanna Pawłowska-Tyszko, owner of a microenterprise in Lubień Kujawski – Kujawski Apiary APICOM. Thanks to the support from the PARP, the company organised a competition for "The Beekeeper of the Year" promoting good apiculture practices. The contest has promoted knowledge about the advantages of biodiversity and has provided an opportunity to present the science of apiculture and talk about the threats to bees caused by environmental pollution. About 60 beekeepers took part in the first edition and now Joanna is working on the third edition of the event. She knows that responsibility for the quality of the products delivered to her customers is an essential part of her business.

solutions. A lot of promotional activities including press articles, publications and TV programmes made it possible to showcase the most interesting projects

and benefits gained by the support beneficiaries. Under the project, information meetings and training in corporate social responsibility were held in each of the

16 voivodships. As a result, over 200 representatives of local governments responsible for the development of entrepreneurship and investment

Project beneficiaries

Toys and furniture made from wood snippets

The history of the Ragaba brand, created by the carpenter's workshop Mega in Wojcieszów, in the Dolnośląskie Voivodship started with ecological toys made of post-production wood snippets.

The company – wishing to modernise the equipment and to meet current environmental standards – replaced its polishing machine with a new model. The new equipment, thanks to the application of vacuum technology, allowed also more precise elaboration of small elements. Thanks to that, snippets could be formed in new shapes and used for the production of both toys and furniture.

The approach showing responsibility for the environment and for the employees, allowed the Mega company not only to make savings but also to enter a new market. The toys obtained the FSC Reclaimed Wood certificate proving that they are manufactured of materials that otherwise could be used only as a firewood. The new product has provided an excellent opportunity to step up the good relations with the neighbours. The company organised an integration event for the neighbours and environmental protection was the main theme of the event.

"In our opinion, the pro-environmental activity is not only good for public reputation and customers' opinion but it simply brings financial profits in the long run," says Justyna Bielawska, the commercial representative of the company.



in Marshal's Offices and centres for investor and exporter services have been trained. In addition, the training sessions were attended by nearly five hundred representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises.

CSR means chance for development

First of all, the project aimed to support small and medium-

sized enterprises in their CSR activities. That is why competitions for entrepreneurs were organised where they could try to win co-financing of pilot CSR projects related to the core business of the enterprise. The support covered projects from the areas such as environment, relations with employees and social engagement of a company. In effect, not only has the

knowledge about CSR among the PARP target group increased but also 177 entrepreneurs from the SME sector have implemented their individual projects. As a result of their implementation, the entrepreneurs have gained business benefits and the additional call for project applications has been a great success in the region previously

less active in the area of CSR. As the evaluation study shows, for the majority of the beneficiaries the implementation of the CSR project has become a chance to expand – more than a half of the beneficiaries have found new customers and introduced new products and services, and nearly a half have developed new areas of activity. Every fourth enterprise has entered new markets.

The companies implementing projects in the area of environmental

protection have reduced their consumption of raw materials and energy as well as the volume of waste they generated. And the companies that have focused on the improvement of relations with employees emphasise the growth of employees' satisfaction and commitment – which has translated into improved efficiency and willingness to propose ideas for improvement of the operation of their organisation.

Thanks to the CSR projects, the enterprises have

strengthened their relations with the community and have established cooperation with social partners that supported them in other activities.

To summarise the activities implemented thanks to the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP), the PARP has issued two publications: "Responsibility pays, CSR in SMEs" and "Good business, CSR in SMEs", which present good CSR practices in Poland and guide the reader through 55 out of 177 supported CSR projects.

The benefits gained by the companies participating in the project (in % of the participants):

- 51% companies have gained additional net revenues;
- 44% enterprises have created additional full time jobs;
- 25% companies have been able to enter new markets thanks to the project;
- 23.2% beneficiaries have reduced their operating costs;
- 58.3% enterprises have found new customers;
- 47.5% beneficiaries have developed new areas of activity;
- 41.4% companies have introduced new services;
- 20.2% enterprises have introduced new products;
- 64% companies have observed shortening of the time needed for performance of tasks by their employees.

What exactly is CSR?

Anna Kacprzyk* - CSR - corporate social responsibility – is a concept according to which enterprises, at the stage of creating their development strategy, take into account relations with their environment, their social impact as well as the influence on and relations with the broadly understood stakeholders operating outside the enterprise.

Is the raising the CSR awareness of Polish entrepreneurs an important task?

A.K. - It is an extremely important issue since corporate social responsibility is not a concept widely known to entrepreneurs in Poland and the extent of its application and implementation of CSR projects is low, in particular, in small and medium-sized enterprises. Therefore, considering the possibilities created by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme related to the reduction of social and economic disparities between Poland and other countries, we have decided to submit a comprehensive project proposal including awareness raising, promotion of CSR and implementation of this strategy in micro, small and medium-sized enterprise

What activities have been implemented within the framework of the project?

A.K. - In all voivodships we have organised series of training sessions for Marshal's Offices and centres for investor and exporter services as well as for entrepreneurs. As a result, we have improved the participants' knowledge about what CSR is and about the possible ways to apply its principles. Following these activities, we organised three competitions as a result of which 177 CSR projects referring to the three CSR areas received co-financing. These were, first of all, investment projects improving the impact of the enterprise on the environment, secondly – improving the relations with employees. And finally, the projects touching upon the issue of relations with the environment surrounding the company.

How has the application of corporate social responsibility influenced the business and the surrounding environment of the companies participating in the project?

A.K. - The overwhelming majority of the entrepreneurs have recorded real advantages from the implementation

of CSR in their enterprises. About a half of them pointed out that by the implementation of the projects they have improved their relations with their business environment, introduced new products to the market, increased the scope of their influence and about 25% of the enterprises have also entered other markets. The projects implemented in the area of environmental protection have resulted in the reduction of raw materials consumption and reduction of the negative impact on the environment, whereas the projects touching upon the issue the relations of the company with its surrounding environment have resulted in the strong engagement of local partners and the cooperating partners in the enterprise. Another very important effect is a substantial improvement of internal relations and employees' influence on current activities and operation of enterprises in the companies implementing projects with an element referring to the relations with employees.

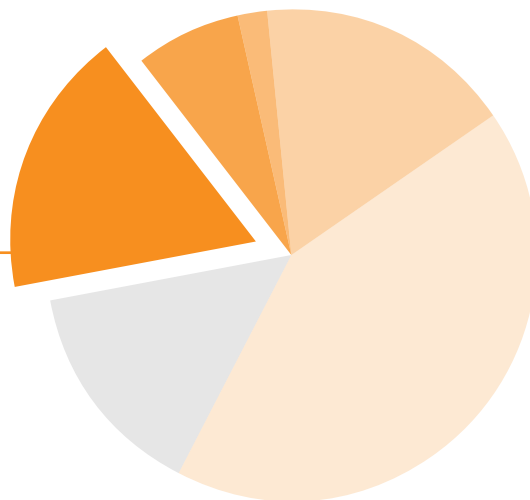
*** Anna Kacprzyk,**
Director of the Department
of Pro-innovative Services of the Polish
Agency for Enterprise Development

Science, health and social welfare



14.3%

- **SCIENCE, HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE**
- Regional development and border protection
- Environment and infrastructure
- Private sector
- Civil society and partnership cooperation
- Project Preparation Facility, Technical Assistance Fund as well as funds for the management of the SPCP by Switzerland



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Children's beautiful and healthy smiles

Project title

Education, promotion and prevention regarding oral health care addressed to small children and their parents, guardians and educators

Implementing organization

Poznań University of Medical Sciences

Project partners

Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, Medical University of Gdańsk, Medical University of Białystok, Medical University of Warsaw, Medical University of Lublin, Medical University of Silesia, Jagiellonian University – Medical College, Public Higher Medical Professional School in Opole

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 5,139,919

Project implementation period

July 2012 – March 2017



Teeth and oral cavity need to be looked after since the first years of life. Yet, not everyone remembers

about it. In order to show the significance of the problem and to change the habits, a project “Education, promotion and prevention regarding oral health care addressed to small children and their parents, guardians and educators” has been designed by Poznań University of Medical Sciences and funded by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP).

Almost everybody knows that permanent teeth need to be taken care of. However, it is not so well known that baby teeth, which appear a few months after the child's birth, also require proper care. Although we use them only for some years and the young person loses them at the age of 6-12, it is a grave mistake to ignore their care just because they are temporary.

Half of three-year-olds have caries

Unfortunately, many people, not only children but also adults, do not know how to take proper care of their teeth. According to a research conducted by the initiators of the project before its implementation, 58% of the three-year-olds and 85% of the six-year-olds

had dental caries. This is worrying because dental caries affects not only the oral cavity but can also be the cause of sinus disease, diabetes or high blood pressure. That is why the biggest dental preventive-educational project in Poland has been implemented, addressed both to the youngest ones and to those who have influence on shaping the dietary and hygienic habits among children.

The project “Childhood without dental caries” was an idea of the Ministry of Health and Poznań University of Medical Sciences and has received the acceptance and support of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme. Several other colleges were invited to participate: Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, Medical University of Gdańsk, Medical University of Białystok, Medical University of Warsaw, Medical University of Lublin, Medical University of Silesia, Jagiellonian University – Medical College and Public Higher Medical Professional School in Opole.

A bunny will help

The project, which was launched in the middle of 2012, adopted a dual approach: direct



education (by educators during the meetings with children and their parents) and indirect education (training courses for kindergarten teachers who could then share their knowledge with children under their care). The project's mascot was Pampiś, an adorable rabbit, with whom educators have visited approx. 6,000 kindergartens all over the country. While playing, they passed the knowledge to 360,000 children about why it

is so important to look after their teeth. In addition, 2,900 kindergartens have benefited from professional education of their personnel.

Forming proper habits in children is one thing, but another thing is that parents should watch over how the young ones follow the rules. That is why the project has also included education of guardians and teachers: appropriate

information has reached more than 700,000 parents of children up to the age of 6, 15,000 educators, 285 paediatricians and almost 1,400 nurses and midwives. For this group, as well as for representatives of non-governmental organisations and local governments, a guidebook "The health of small child's oral cavity" has been prepared by leading experts of paediatric dentistry. In order to consolidate

the knowledge, within the framework of the project, an information and education website www.zebymalegodziecka.pl has been created, where one can find a lot of information and advice regarding children's dental care. It also contains educational videos, brochures, leaflets, colouring books and puzzles for small children available for download, as well as a blog with texts addressed to their parents.

Play and learn

The activities of the project designers were not limited only to education in kindergartens. For instance, a tour "The Magical Journey of Pampiś Bunny" has been organised, which promoted taking care of teeth and oral cavity among children. It combined education and entertainment to show children that looking after the teeth might actually be good fun. Numerous attractions for small children have been planned during picnics, including a specially prepared illusionist's show, competitions with prizes, and stands with games that teach the basics of oral hygiene. In addition, the participants had an opportunity to take a free dental consultation.



To promote the effects of the project, the organisers have made use of a new technology: a mobile application "Pampiś – a Dental Adventure" has been developed, addressed to children between 3-6 years of age, which, for example, contains a game that teaches regular dental care and proper teeth brushing techniques with an option of setting reminders at certain hours. A different game prepares a child for a visit at a dentist's office. In Dr. Beaver's office, a child learns about dental instruments and what they are used for. It is also possible to do special exercises, which include keeping

one's mouth wide open for some time. Thanks to Gramps and friendly Tooth Fairy, another game helps the children get necessary knowledge about how to take care of their teeth and prepares them for the loss of baby teeth.

Finally, a public campaign "Small teeth, great power", including TV and Internet spots and e-mailing campaign, has completed the project. The effects of these activities have been evaluated: over four years, the percentage of wrong answers in the oral hygiene test has dropped nine times among the parents and six times in the case of teachers.

The fight against overweight and obesity

Project title

Prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases by education of the society on nutrition and physical activity

Implementing organization

National Food and Nutrition Institute

Project partners

Children's Memorial Health Institute in Warsaw, Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Polish Association of Dietitians (Voivodship Department in Warsaw)

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 4,500,000

Project implementation period

June 2011 – March 2017



Overweight and obesity, because of their nature, are described as civilisation diseases. The National Food and Nutrition Institute has implemented a project whose aim was to promote healthy nutrition among adults, especially pregnant women,

children and adolescents.

The latter group, in particular, is currently at serious risk of suffering from the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles.

Maintaining a proper body mass and its correct growth during pregnancy are extremely important for the health of both mother and her child. Proper nutrition and regular physical activity have positive impact on the conditions of a pregnant woman and help prepare her body for breastfeeding, which is beneficial for the child. Maintaining proper weight is also very important for children and adolescents. A young body burdened with additional kilograms does not develop properly and inappropriate eating habits acquired in the youth are difficult to change at a later age.

One of the objectives of the National Food and Nutrition Institute has been to implement in Poland the global strategy of the World Health Organisation for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the prevention of obesity and chronic non-communicable diseases by educating the public on proper nutrition and physical activity. The project has promoted making informed choices, for example,

when shopping. It has also aimed at disseminating knowledge among consumers about the food ingredients, nutritional values and product labelling.

The project activities were addressed to specific social groups, such as pregnant and breast-feeding women, children and adolescents, adults with excessive body weight and, what is especially important, food producers and manufacturers and healthcare workers.

Healthy mothers

Educational materials have been prepared in order to show women how to keep a proper diet or to exercise safely during pregnancy. 128 health care workers have been trained in giving nutrition advice to pregnant women. Thanks to that, over 12,000 patients have received the necessary information.

An useful tool is a mobile application "Healthy mother" which includes a glossary of the most important terms regarding nourishing and pregnancy as well as a shopping planner. It answers questions about behaviour during pregnancy and dispels some nutrition myths. A calculator of body weight growth visualises weight gaining in the subsequent weeks of pregnancy.



Healthy children

During the project, a programme has been implemented “School / kindergarten supportive of proper nourishment and physical activity”. 1,683 kindergartens and schools with 400,000 children and young people have taken part in the programme. Furthermore, in this case, making knowledge more accessible was a key objective: a training for programme coordinators has been conducted and packages with educational materials (leaflets, brochures and posters) have been shared with the involved kindergartens and schools.

In collaboration with experts from the University of Physical Education

in Warsaw, short educational videos have been prepared. “Hyperactive institute of experiments on physical activity” is a video which shares ideas about physical activity and promotion of healthy nutrition. Pascal Brodnicki, a famous TV chef, has featured in videos promoting balanced diet among adolescents. The videos have been disseminated mostly over the Internet.

Healthy adults

Thanks to the project 14,000 patients could receive specialist advice at dietary consultation points. 42 editions of a 12-week body mass reduction programme have been carried out, with 2,111 patients entering the programme and 1,739 successfully

completing it. A special mobile application “Healthy Eating Assistant” teaches proper nutrition and taking care of one’s health; it is addressed not only to the people who struggle with excessive weight. Several functions have been introduced, assisting the users in making decisions about healthy eating. They include a calculator of nutritional value which encourages users to pay attention to products’ labels while shopping for food. The application includes a glossary of nutrition terms and some useful advice, such as a sample menu and exercises to burn a specific number of calories. The users can also take part in a special quiz to check their knowledge. Every answer is accompanied by a commentary consolidating the acquired knowledge. Food sellers have also joined the fight against obesity. In the biggest Polish supermarket chain, a campaign “Let’s Read the Labels” has been conducted. Dieticians were available for consultation in the chain stores helping consumers to choose food products consciously. The campaign partner has placed information materials and a proper body mass calculator on its website. The project funded by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) has received an honourable mention in the 18th edition of the Report “Social

Responsibility of Business” prepared by the weekly magazine “Gazeta Finansowa”.

Is obesity a serious problem in the modern times?

Professor Mirosław Jarosz* -

Obesity is the biggest health hazard and threat associated with the progress of civilisation in Poland and the world. It is the source of many complications, such as diabetes, cancer, but it also affects the psycho-social development. The raising wave of obesity, especially among children and adolescents, but also among adults, is the main reason why we have submitted an application for project funding under the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme.

Why is it so important to promote good eating habits already at an early stage of child's development?

M.J. - It is extremely important in the context of preventing the obesity epidemic. Children who eat properly and do physical exercises fall ill less often. Besides, proper nutrition has an impact on the intellectual development. Children, who eat five meals per day, eat fruit and vegetables and follow the rules of a balanced diet, can concentrate better



and that often means better learning performance. It also affects the emotional development, because children with unhealthy have problems with hyperactivity, sometimes even with aggressive behaviour. Promoting good eating habits is important not only from the point of view of health but also education.

What are the biggest benefits of the project?

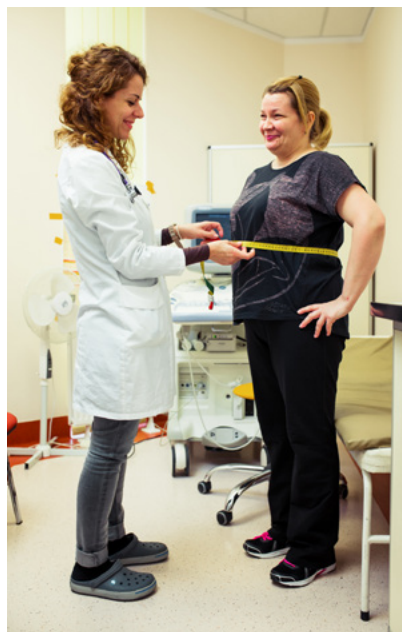
M.J. - The biggest achievement of the project is the decrease in the overweight and obesity incidence by 3% among pupils of elementary schools which have taken part in the project. It is a very promising result. We have changed the eating habits of many children

and their families and have increased their physical activity. We have also increased the knowledge of teachers and school headmasters, that is, the entire school community, about proper nutrition and the role of physical activity in the education and upbringing of children and adolescents.

Has the project also covered adults struggling with overweight?

M.J. - Yes, the reduction of body mass among adults is another important achievement of the project. We have created a model solution that can be implemented in the primary

healthcare, either public or private. 95% of the participants of the project have reduced their body weight, on average, by 5 kilogrammes. At the same time, in many of those people, it has been possible to reduce dyslipidaemia and carbohydrate metabolism disorders and to stabilise the blood pressure, all of which are risk factors for cardiovascular diseases such as myocardial infarction or cerebral stroke.



Have the participants of the body mass reduction programme changed their lifestyle and managed to maintain the achieved results?

M.J. - People who have taken part in the project have changed their eating habits and increased physical activity. Together with nutrition educators and the programme organizers they have also formed support groups, which makes it more probable that they will keep the positive effects of reducing their body mass and will continue leading healthy lives.

The next stage is the launch of the National Centre for Nutrition Education. The Centre will organise various forms of educational assistance as well as workshops with psychologists, physiotherapists or healthy cooking classes. It will give the patients a platform for dialogue, sharing ideas and finding answers to their questions.

***Professor Mirosław Jarosz,**
Director of the National Food
and Nutrition Institute, coordinator
of the project

HCV: stop the epidemic with prevention

Project title

Prevention of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infections

Implementing organization

National Institute of Public Health -
National Institute of Hygiene

Project partners

Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology
in Warsaw, Medical University
of Lublin, Chief Sanitary Inspectorate

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,969,421

Project implementation period

April 2012 – March 2017



Asymptomatic diseases are often downplayed. We usually learn about them when they are in the advanced stage, which makes them more difficult or even impossible to treat effectively. That is why prevention and accurate information are so important. The support from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme

(SPCP) has made it possible not only to carry out wide-ranging screening tests among the potential Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) carriers, but also to conduct educational campaigns which increased public awareness of the health hazards.

According to the data provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO), in Europe, there are annually 86,000 deaths as a consequence of HCV infections, which is twice more than the number of deaths caused by AIDS. Although the virus was identified many years ago, the asymptomatic character of the infection makes it more difficult to detect it at an early stage, that is to say, before it causes serious health complications or even death.

The HCV systematically damages the liver, which leads, in some cases, to steatosis (fatty liver), cirrhosis or even hepatocellular carcinoma (the most common type of liver cancer). Early detection of the virus allows the infected person to seek advice of a hepatologist before any serious symptoms of the organ damage appear. It is crucial because the introduction of new drugs has not only improved

the effectiveness of treatment, but has also significantly increased its safety. The drugs currently registered for use, affect the virus directly and make it possible to cure over 90% of patients. The sooner the treatment begins, the more effective and less expensive it will be.

A “silent epidemic”

Although detecting the HCV does not require any specialised diagnostic methods (blood screening for the presence of antibodies is enough), the lack of awareness of the risks resulting from a potential infection means that many people who are at risk, do not take the appropriate preventive measures. That is why Hepatitis C has been called a silent epidemic.

In order to change the situation, the National Institute of Public Health – National Institute of Hygiene has implemented the project “Prevention of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infections”, funded by the SPCP. Its main goal has been to create foundations for a long-term strategy of preventing HCV infections and fighting against Hepatitis C in Poland.

In order to make it happen, it was essential to determine



what the epidemiological situation was, to evaluate the risk of infection in medical facilities and the service sectors with increased exposure to blood-borne infections (e.g. tattoo studios). Another issue was the preparation of the routine diagnostic tests' guidelines, especially for users of intravenous psychoactive substances, and the design and implementation of an educational programme which emphasized the seriousness of HCV infection and popularised the rules which help prevent the infection, with the special focus on healthcare staff.

Problem analysis

The National Institute of Hygiene estimates that in Poland there can be up to 200,000 people infected with HCV, of whom 80% do not know that they are HCV carriers.

The biggest challenge of the project was the extent of the planned actions. That is why finding appropriate project partners was so crucial. The activities within the project "Prevention of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infections" have covered all areas where there is an HCV risk. In addition, a public campaign has been carried out.

As a result, over 26,000 randomly selected patients and over 8,000 pregnant women have been tested for HCV. To evaluate more accurately the risk of infection with HCV in medical facilities, 1,580 basic questionnaires in healthcare establishments and over 50 targeted questionnaires for hospital infection control units have been filled in and evaluated. 1,319 field studies have been conducted to determine the presence of HCV antibodies among injecting drug users (IDU). All these activities have made it possible to precisely evaluate the level of HCV infection risk in Poland and the collected data has allowed the scientists to better target efforts to reduce the future risk of the infection transmission.

Another objective of the project has been to increase the knowledge and skills of the medical staff (doctors and nurses) and non-medical personnel (beauticians, hairdressers, tattoo artists), especially in the area of disinfection and sterilisation of all reusable tools. 134 free direct training sessions have been conducted specially for these groups, with 6,000 people attending them, of whom 1,500 have been healthcare providers. In addition, e-learning training has been carried out, ending with a test and certification.

Education is the key

The public campaign “HCV – I am aware” has helped to increase the general level of knowledge about HCV and promote proper pro-health behaviours. Its preparation was preceded by a research focused on Polish people’s knowledge about HCV. The results were not satisfactory. Only 51% of the respondents identified HCV abbreviation and only 5% knew that there are drugs available that enable to effectively eliminate the virus.

One of the goals of the campaign has been to familiarise the public with the symptoms of the infection, the consequences of the disease and the treatment. It has also promoted habits that help avoid the infection. The website “HCV – I am aware” (www.jestemswiadom.org) has been created for education purposes, information spots have been broadcast on TV, discussions between experts have been included in news broadcasts, the subject has also been addressed during outdoor events such as the “Summer with the radio” picnic. Educational

campaigns have also been visible on the Internet, e.g. on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. The campaign has been supported by bloggers and YouTubers.

The project was launched in 2012 and lasted until March 2017. Today, it can be treated as a model of integrated pro-health activities to reduce the incidence of blood-borne infections in Poland. Thanks to the achieved effects, it is possible to design comprehensive measures leading to reduction or even elimination of HCV infections in Poland.

▴▴ **Due to the significant cost and the extent of the planned activities, their implementation would not have been possible without the support from Switzerland. Thanks to the funding from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme we have screened over 30,000 people for HCV infection. The objective of the screening was to identify the infected people who were not aware of this fact. They were properly selected in order to be representative of the entire population. It is also crucial to raise the public awareness of the HCV problem. That is why, as part of the project, we have run a a campaign in which the public could learn about what HCV actually is. We have also tried to show that the infected people should not be socially stigmatized.** ▾▾

Professor Rafał Gierczyński, MD, Ph.D., Head of the Department of Bacteriology in the National Institute of Public Health – National Institute of Hygiene in Warsaw

Maternity without stimulants

Project title

Programme for the prevention of addiction to alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substances

Implementing organization

Chief Sanitary Inspectorate

Partners

Institute of Rural Health in Lublin, Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine in Łódź, National Bureau for Drug Prevention, State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,438,691

Project implementation period

July 2012 – March 2017



Drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco or taking narcotics and designer drugs during pregnancy is a great threat for the child's development. Many women do not realise what harm could the stimulants inflict upon their

future offspring. A training and educational project prepared by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and funded by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) is expected to change this situation.

Although the information about the necessity to exclude all types of stimulants during pregnancy is available, the awareness of the influence of alcohol, tobacco and drugs on the child's health during its prenatal development is so low that it cannot be considered a marginal problem. According to a research conducted by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate in 2012, 2.2% of Polish pregnant women take tranquilizers or sleeping pills, and 3.35% use other psychoactive substances (narcotics, designer drugs, stimulants), 7% smoke cigarettes and 10% drink alcohol. Furthermore, 22.5% of the pregnant women are passive smokers, usually inhaling tobacco smoke at home.

What is crucial, even though 90.2% of the women acknowledged that smoking is a high risk factor for a developing foetus, the awareness of harmful effects of drinking even small amounts of alcohol

is far lower. Only 45.8% of the examined women were certain about the potential risks for the mother and 62.1% knew about the hazards for the foetus. What is worse, 56.5% of the pregnant women did not receive any information about the effects of drinking during the pregnancy from their attending doctor. As a result, in 2012, 0.5% of the examined children with inborn defects had features of foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). The conclusions of this research were so worrying that the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate was urged to prepare the "Programme for prevention of addiction to alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substances", which received funding from the SPCP. The partners of this initiative include: the State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems, the National Bureau for Drug Prevention, the Institute of Occupational Medicine, the Institute of Rural Health.

Nine healthy months

The main objective of the project, which was launched in the middle of 2012, has been to limit tobacco, alcohol and other psychoactive substances usage among the women of childbearing age, that is, between the age of 15



and 49. But not only to the women – messages and activities have also been addressed to the members of their families, doctors, teachers, students of upper-secondary schools, employees of certain selected working establishments, and the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate representatives. In order to raise the awareness among doctors, the Inspectorate prepared for them 10 two-day training courses, attended by 897 primary

care physicians, gynaecologists, nurses and obstetricians. The trained medical personnel has been prepared to monitor the behaviour of healthy women. In addition, in gynaecology and obstetrics hospital departments, the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate's employees have conducted a survey. Its aim was to assess the scale of the problem. Companies have also been encouraged to take part in the health promotion campaign

and to help design programmes for fighting addiction among their employees. 209 companies operating in Poland have joined the cause.

Three information and education websites and an e-learning platform have been created to provide substantive knowledge for the project. The main Internet site of the project is zdrowiewciazy.pl, where one can find a set of research



and educational materials for all target audiences, especially for the pregnant women. e-zdrowiewpracy.pl is an information and education website for employers and workers, with information how to design an anti-addiction programme in a company and how to implement it effectively. Another website, e-stawiamnazdrowie.pl, also provides information and education, but is addressed to adolescents. Finally, szkolenia.zdrowiewciazy.pl is an e-learning platform for medical staff, the Chief Sanitary

Inspectorate's workers and upper-secondary school teachers. Numbers clearly show that there is interest in increasing the knowledge about the effects of addiction during pregnancy – about 6,600 e-learning accounts have been created on this site.

Destination: adolescents

Preventive measures have also been supported by teachers implementing an education programme for adolescents. It focused on the consequences of taking psychoactive substances for health, relations with the family and on parenting.

Addressed to the students of upper-secondary schools, the programme “ARS, how to care about love?” reinforced examples of good behaviour at an age when young people often come in contact with various stimulants.

The programme has been prepared meticulously. Before its launch, one-day training sessions were organised for voivodship and poviast coordinators to familiarise them with the programme details. In total, 356 persons have taken part in the sessions. Teachers have also been prepared to implement this part of the project – 49 training sessions have been conducted for 1,783 school staff members. Schools have received educational materials and information leaflets for the pupils and the parents. The fact that an overwhelming majority of the upper-secondary schools implementing the programme have declared their will to participate in the next edition shows how important this subject matter is. The project has received positive feedback from both young people and school coordinators.

As part of the project, a nationwide campaign “Party Hard. Expectations vs Reality” has been conducted. Its main goal was to make young people

more aware of the hazards of addiction to various substances, to show them the negative effects of using stimulants, and to promote healthy lifestyle. 10 videos have been launched and viewed by over 5 million young people. An equally important element of the campaign was a website www.melanz.tv, which has been visited by over 1.3 million people. Trend-setters popular among adolescents have also participated in the project. Another campaign, "Don't let your happiness fly away", has been addressed to women and their families.

A great value of the project is not only its content but also its range. The evident benefits include training of 900 doctors, reaching 58,000 workers in 200 working establishments with relevant information and more than 8,000 events organised at the local and regional level, attended by 1.2 million people.

Is the usage of stimulants by pregnant women a big social problem?

Marek Posobkiewicz*

- In 2009, the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate in cooperation with its partners conducted a research concerning the use of psychoactive substances, such as alcohol, tobacco and narcotics, by

pregnant women. The study showed that the problem of using psychoactive substances did exist among women in childbearing age. The problem is serious and it challenges us to design comprehensive efforts, including educational campaigns addressed to women in childbearing age as well as training for medical staff who are in regular contact with the women throughout their pregnancy. After completing the research, we tried to secure funds for carrying out comprehensive set of activities. Our proposal has been supported by the Swiss party and it is thanks to them that, since the year 2012, we have been implementing the project within the framework of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme.

"ARS, how to care about love?" is an element of the project addressed to young people from upper-secondary schools, could you tell us something more about it?

M.P. - The programme "ARS, how to care about love?" focuses on prevention of the use of psychoactive substances, such as alcohol, tobacco, narcotics, designer drugs. About half a million

adolescents have been involved in this programme. Each school receives a special package with educational materials and information leaflets for the students and their parents. In addition, students, teachers and programme coordinators can use an e-learning platform which contains a lot of interesting information.

What other activities have been implemented during the project?

M.P. - We have completed a public campaign called "Don't let your happiness fly away", and we have also launched a campaign on the Internet, addressed to young people between the age of 16 and 19. The message these people currently get in the traditional media is insufficient and not very effective. It is the first project of this kind and of such scale implemented in our country. The campaigns mentioned above aim at increasing the public awareness and changing the behaviour to avoid the harmful effects of the use of psychoactive substances.

***Marek Posobkiewicz,**
Chief Sanitary Inspector

Multiplying by dividing

Area

Improvement of quality of services and infrastructure of social welfare homes and care and education centres and education centres

Projects titles

- A. Improvement of quality of services provided in social welfare homes care and education centres
 - B. Improvement of infrastructure of social welfare homes and/or care and education centres and improving the qualifications of staff, including female and male nurses
 - C. Raising the quality of services provided in social welfare units in order to increase empowerment and improve life activities of patients
 - D. Helpful hand under the safe roof
 - E. Improvement of life quality of disabled persons by modernisation of the Special School Complex and construction of the Cultural Integration Centre in Łodygowice
-

Implementing organisations

- A. Regional Social Policy Centre in Lublin
 - B. Regional Social Policy Centre in Rzeszów
 - C. Świętokrzyskie Voivodship Governor through the Social Policy and Health Department of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship Office in Kielce
 - D. Regional Centre for Social Policy in Cracow
 - E. Łodygowice Municipality
-

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 22,431,907

Project implementation period

- A. January 2012 – September 2016
 - B. January 2012 – October 2015
 - C. January 2012 – December 2016
 - D. January 2012 – July 2016
 - E. July 2012 – June 2014
-



Social care projects seem to defy the arithmetic principles: although they involve

distribution and therefore division of funds, in fact, they also multiply – they enhance the quality of life of those who are in greatest need of support. While implementing social care activities it is worth using the Swiss experience of sensitivity to other people. It is not a coincidence that it was a Swiss citizen – Jean Henri Dunant, a famous merchant and philanthropist, the founder of the Red Cross – who in 1901 became the first winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.



Thanks to the investment component we have managed to develop the infrastructure inside and outside the the Social Welfare Homes buildings, to purchase the equipment necessary for work with the the Social Welfare Homes (SWHs) buildings residents. The additional equipment has improved the efficiency and the quality of work of the staff. We have also improved considerably the living conditions of the residents and the quality of our services. The educational component has been greatly appreciated by the beneficiaries. The training courses have allowed us to introduce new methods of working with the patients. The most useful have been the training courses that we could use directly in our work with the SWH residents and the training in first aid, but we have also appreciated workshops on the Eden Alternative and oligofrenopedagogy.

Damian Zając, acting Manager of the Administration and Organisation Branch of the Regional Centre for Social Policy in Rzeszów

Demography shows no mercy: with the society ageing, the institutions supporting elderly citizens, dependent persons and people with disabilities will become more and more important. The more so because this area has been underfunded in Poland for many years. That is why the support granted within the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) – first of all financial, but also technical – was so important.

The social care projects supported by the SPCP have naturally become reference points showing how to introduce change on a big scale in this sensitive area. Nevertheless, all the people engaged in the SPCP have emphasised that behind

the impressive figures and the quantitative results there are always concrete people and their specific needs.

Like Eden

We will start the journey along the trail of Polish-Swiss social solidarity from the Podkarpacie region. The project “Improvement of infrastructure of social welfare homes and care and education centres and improving the skills of the staff, including nurses”, implemented in the years 2012–2015 has completely transformed nine social welfare homes (SWHs) and one care and education centres (CEC). The total project value amounted to nearly PLN 19 million. Thanks to the SPCP, people in the region have got access to high standard SWHs,

with numerous modern therapies available. The SWHs, appreciating the importance of physical activity in the therapy, have made substantial investments in out-door recreation and sport infrastructure: walking trails, playing fields, gyms, all easily accessible for their residents.

An interesting idea, introduced in Poland for the first time in the SWH in Krosno and then in Moczary, is the Eden Alternative. It is a holistic model of a centre which assumes substantial participation of the inhabitants in creating the unique character of the SWH. The inhabitants can influence their environment, they tend the garden and take care of the animals. Hortitherapy,



treatment through physical gardening work, helps to treat a number of diseases, including those with mental background. It has been known for years that contact with nature releases the hormone of happiness.

Innovative therapies

A sister project has been implemented in the Lubelskie Voivodship. A three-and-a-half-year project, with the value exceeding CHF 6 million, covered 11 facilities: 8 SWHs and 3 CECs. Like in the Podkarpacie region, here too, the changes have had a comprehensive character.

They have included improvement of infrastructure and extension of buildings on a total area of 14,000 m², improving the skills of the staff working directly with the residents and of nurses. Equipment has also been provided to the SWHs: 152 specialist medical appliances and 224 medical sets.

In the SWHs, 103 new places for residents have been created. Several hundred training sessions, courses and other forms of training have been

attended by 562 employees of the SHWs and CECs and by 300 nurses. Thanks to the project, the Lubelskie Voivodship has got the first specialist ward for people with Alzheimer disease and memory disorders. "Apart from the modern infrastructure and the equipment for the social welfare home, the personnel has also been trained and thanks to that, it has been possible to apply some innovative methods for nursing care and working with patients suffering from memory disorders, Alzheimer disease and similar conditions," emphasises Damian Kozik, an employee in the Regional Social Care Centre in Lublin. Now the residents can use renovated rooms for sensory integration, art therapy classes and can benefit from modern therapy methods such as biofeedback, NDT Bobath, garden therapy.

The Regional Social Care Centres pay much attention to the inter-generation integration, they organise picnics for children from CECs, residents of SWHs and local communities. For the home residents and the children from the centres it is a form of therapy and an opportunity to spend time in an attractive way, and for their neighbours – it is an invaluable sensitivity lesson.

Where there is a will...

Among the problems characteristic for the social policy area, the issue of the low percentage of SWH residents participating in therapy and rehabilitation exercises is often mentioned. The residents can only rarely improve their life so as to have a chance to return to independent life. That is why the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship has decided to encourage increased activity of the residents of SWHs.

Empowering the residents and improving their active life can be achieved in many ways. The innovation that has been successfully tested in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship is the concept of activation facilities. "They are a form



of support that is half-way between the permanent stay in a social welfare home

and fully independent living. In addition, the activation facilities will be used to increase

►► **The project "Improving the quality of services provided in the social welfare units in order to increase empowerment and improve life activities of the residents" have been focused on the improvement of the physical living conditions of the residents and raising the professional skills of the staff employed in individual social care units. In the years 2012–2016, nine units in the voivodship have been modernised. As a result, the so called activation facilities have been created – an innovative form of assistance to the people who require support.** ◀◀

Mariusz Pasek, Deputy Director of the Social Policy and Health Department of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship Office

▲▲ **As a result of the implementation of investment and educational sub-projects, in all 15 [social care] homes substantial changes have been made, transforming these units into benchmarks for other centres and their achievements have become a stimulus for others. The homes participating in the project have received new or renovated residential premises, rooms for medical rehabilitation and occupational therapy, together with modern equipment. A lot of adjustments have been put in place to facilitate mobility of people with disabilities. The safety of the residents has also been improved. This has resulted in the better quality of services offered by these homes.** ▼▼

Aneta Kosiba, Social Policy Department Manager in Regional Centre for Social Policy (ROPS) in Kraków

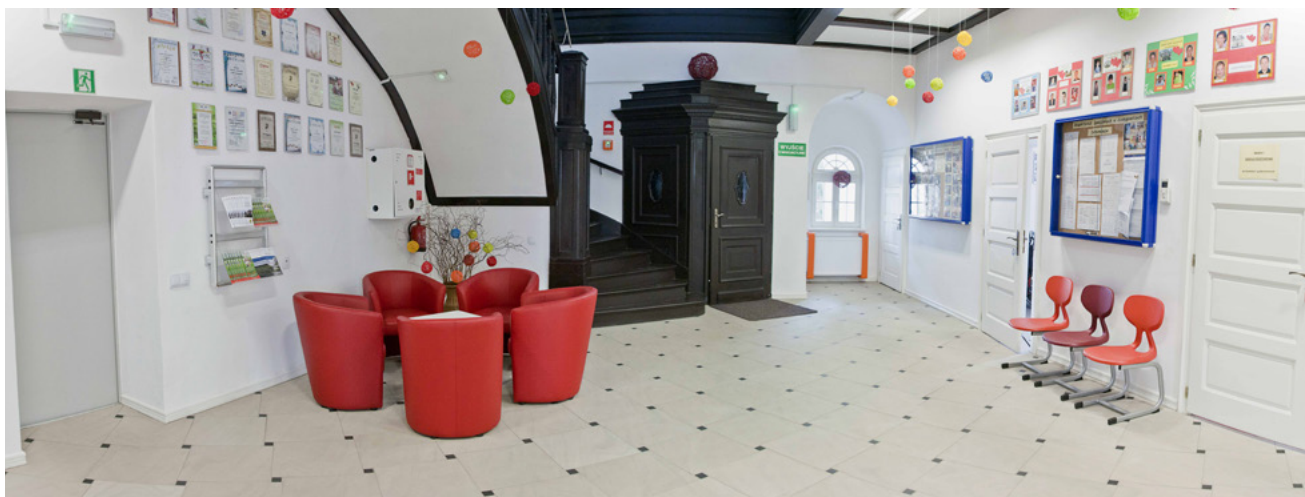
independence of the people whose health condition allows that,” explains Mariusz Pasek, Deputy Director of the Social Policy and Health Department of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship Office.

This project, following the example of other regions, has consisted of three components. The care providing personnel and the medical staff have taken part in over 200 training courses, sessions and post-graduate studies. Over 300 employees have acquired new skills. 9 units have been modernised; the SWHs in Zgórska and Łagiewniki

have received new sports infrastructure. In other supported centres, the offer of therapeutic and rehabilitation services has been considerably expanded. At the same time, the pilot program of developing resilience mechanisms in tutors and residents of care and education centres in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship has been implemented. This activity is innovative on the European scale. It consists in developing and building in relevant mechanisms and behaviour patterns, both in children and their tutors, in order to make them prepared

to coping with difficult challenges in future. The project has supported about 150 participants from 16 family-type CECs.

In addition, all the social welfare units (JOPS) from the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship have had a Boccia tournament, specially organised for them. It is a sports discipline apt for people with various disabilities, including quadriplegia. This sport discipline enjoys great interest among the JOPS residents. 132 participants with their tutors have taken part in the tournament.



Helpful hand

In the Małopolskie Voivodship, under the project of the Regional Social Policy Centre in Kraków “Helpful hand under the safe roof”, 15 sub-projects have been implemented – in 10 SWHs and 5 CECs. Thanks to 259 new places in SWHs, mostly for people with chronic mental diseases (160 created within the project; 99 with the beneficiaries’ own funding) the waiting list has been considerably reduced. Under the project, 2 sheltered flats with 6 places have also been created. They are a very valuable extension of the support offered so far by SWHs and play an important role in the preservation of the capability of the patients to live a relatively independent life.

Various training courses (in more than 200 forms) have been provided to over 1,000 employees and have contributed to the improvement of care and higher quality of therapeutic, rehabilitation and nursing services. Moreover, the investment component has made it possible to create or modernise the therapy and rehabilitation rooms. New workshop offer has appeared: pottery, joinery, IT, photography, arts, choreotherapy, music therapy or culinary therapy, i.e. therapy through cooking. 18,000 square meters of recreation grounds and gardens around the centres have been created or renovated.

The additional challenge has been the scale of the project – the financial value of

the project “Helpful hand under the safe roof” has been the highest of all projects in the area of social care within the SPCP over the entire period of Programme implementation. It reached nearly PLN 25 million. “An important form of support for SWHs and CECs has been the advisory services provided at the stage of applying for the co-financing and implementation of sub-projects. The experience of the Regional Centre for Social Policy (ROPS) project team and the procedures developed on that occasion have not only facilitated the smooth implementation of the individual sub-projects, but have also enabled implementation of additional activities, going beyond the original plans,” emphasises Aneta Kosiba, Social Policy



Department Manager in ROPS in Kraków.

School without barriers

An interesting effort from the broadly understood social area has been the educational project of the Łodygowice Centre. Thanks to the special allocation (CHF 500,000 of co-financing from the SPCP), Łodygowice in the Żywiec powiat has now got its “dream school”. The local special school complex is the only such establishment in the area offering the possibility to study to people with mental and physical disabilities, at the age of 7 to 25. The old building has been entirely transformed – its

comprehensive renovation has allowed the widening of corridors, assembly of lifts, elimination of barriers – thanks to which every spot is easily accessible for wheelchairs. The whole premises are painted in vivid, optimistic colours, stimulating the sense of sight. A new gym and the outdoor recreation grounds with a summer house, a swing and a barbecue are joy to look at. A valuable component of the project is the modern, newly constructed glass covered Cultural Integration Centre – with modern gym equipment, the venue of many local cultural and educational events.

What was the reason

for changes made in the Social Welfare Home in Moczały?

Stanisław Leszega*

- The idea to modernise our centre originated a long time ago. It was born from interviews and conversations during which the staff and the residents talked about their needs. Therefore we decided to apply for funding from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Program, thanks to which we have implemented this very much needed project. Our own contribution has been financed by the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, which made it possible to implement the project in full.

What has been done under the project?

S.L. - First of all, the therapeutic garden has been created. It is about 2.5 ha of the enclosed area in which garden therapy is practised. Moreover, we have thermo-insulated 30-year old residential buildings and have painted the roofs thus protecting them against corrosion. Thanks to the Swiss support, the purchase of garden and snow clearing equipment has been possible – we are located in the Bieszczady Mountains so we have big snow falls in winter. In summer, the tractor



and lawn mowers we have purchased help us to keep our garden tidy.

What are the most important benefits resulting from the project?

S.L. - The money from the SPCP has been extremely beneficial for the comfort of living

of the residents and the working conditions of the Social Welfare Home staff. What is important, the funds have been spent, first of all, to meet the needs identified by those two groups. In addition, the project has also had some economic effects since thanks to the thermal renovation we now spend less

money on heating oil. The appearance of our building has also greatly improved, which has a positive impact on our surroundings.

***Stanisław Leszega,**
Director of the Social Welfare Home
in Moczary

Research and development in practice

Project title

Polish-Swiss Research Programme

Implementing organization

National Information Processing
Institute - State Research Institute

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 30,200,000

Project implementation period

December 2009 – March 2017



Information and communications technology, renewable sources of energy, nanotechnology, health and environment – these are five thematic categories in which scientific research has been conducted thanks to the support of the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP). The main criterion for selecting projects has been their innovation and research potential.



The Polish-Swiss Research Programme (PSRP) is a wide-ranging initiative which aims to develop the R&D (research and development) sector in Poland, integrate it with the international arena and build cooperation between scientists from Poland and Switzerland. The National Information Processing Institute was responsible for its implementation and promotion. Recruitment to the programme began in 2010. An essential condition for receiving financing was a joint research project proposal of Polish and Swiss scientists. 31 projects were

selected and received financial support. In total, 31 Polish and 17 Swiss institutions have taken part in the project.

7,000 research studies

The collaboration between 500 Polish and Swiss scientists in the Polish-Swiss Research Programme has resulted in 7,000 research studies. New opportunities have materialized to create new medicines, cleaner environment and innovative technologies.

The cooperation has borne fruit: 22 patent applications, almost 170 international publications,

over 240 seminars, workshops and scientific conferences which presented the effects of the researches. Over 200 people have participated in study visits.

Thanks to the publications in international academic journals, the results of the joint research have been acknowledged by the international scientific community. Moreover, a number of master's theses and doctoral

dissertations have been prepared as a result of the project.

The Polish-Swiss Research Programme has contributed to the development of scientific potential in both countries and to knowledge and technology transfer. Polish research units have acquired the financial support for the development of their scientific infrastructure. The programme has not only supported the development

of relations between Polish and Swiss scientists, but has also helped to establish contacts with the broad international scientific community. Additionally, thanks to the project, the cooperation between research institutions, business, public administration and local government institutions has been established.

An important element of the Polish-Swiss Research Programme has also been

Programme beneficiaries

Managing multimedia

Despite the great technological advancement, for computers, photos are just a set of pixels. Polish scientists from the Częstochowa University of Technology together with the Swiss partners from the University of Geneva have worked on a project "New perspectives of intelligent management of multimedia used in medical and privacy protection systems. The aim was to teach the machines how to interpret the received images. The algorithms which have been created in the project can be divided into two groups: those that search for similar pictures in huge databases and those that classify photographs, that is, determine which kind of object class they represent and what the picture shows (buildings, horses, walking people etc.). These solutions can be used not only in the systems which segregate information on the Internet, but also in medicine, where one can compare the patient's picture with the database to diagnose the disease.



the dissemination of knowledge about the results of the conducted researches. The conferences organised as part of the project, have been attended by almost 13,000 people. Moreover, 59 workshops have been prepared for nearly 1,300 participants. A number of scientists have taken part in the popular science events, such as the Scientific Picnic or science festivals.

Contacts, knowledge and equipment

Obviously, the support for buying laboratory equipment is priceless for Polish research facilities. Yet, the participants of the project point out that the biggest benefit has been the possibility to make new contacts in the scientific community and share experience, knowledge and skills.





One of the most important successes of the project is the intensification of relations between the countries in the area of science and scientists exchange. The programme participants emphasise that thanks to the initiative, new standards have been introduced in the Polish research facilities, possibly providing a benchmark for future scientific activity.

The summary of all the promotional activities and, in a sense, an added value of the PSRP (the idea was born during the final conference which concluded the programme) has been the publication "The Art of Promoting Science". The book contains advice and tips for scientists, doctoral students and students who would like to enhance their skills in the public presentation of their own scientific research.

Is asthma a serious civilisation challenge today?

Professor Marek Sanak*

- When 30 years ago



The result of the scientists' work are 22 patent applications.
The achieved scientific breakthrough is an investment in the Polish economy based on knowledge.



Olaf Gajl, Director of the National Information Processing Institute - State Research Institute

I began my medical practice as a paediatrician, I regularly had patients with shortness of breath who needed to be given oxygen, required a change of treatment or air humidifying. Today, such an acute stage of this disease happens very rarely. Currently, around

8% of people in Poland suffer from asthma. The number of patients with the disease is growing but there are proportionately fewer severe cases. We have made enormous progress in medicine and thanks to our project the benefits will be even greater.

What does your research involve?

M.S. - We have introduced an entirely new technique of evaluating the type of resilience which appears in the case of exacerbation of asthma. This method is based on the flow cytometry. It allows us to find out if there are any

Programme beneficiaries

A smart bridge

Contemporary engineers assume that a bridge should not only be durable and safe, but also smart. These expectations have guided Polish and Swiss scientists who implemented the project “Innovative monitoring systems in the strategy of sustainable infrastructure development”. The project resulted in modern reinforcement and monitoring of the bridge in Szczercowa Wieś.

These are pioneer solutions not only in Poland, but also in the world. Experts from the University of Łódź worked together with EMPA Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology. Apart from the technology of quick and effective strengthening of reinforced concrete bridge by using unanchored prestressed carbon fibre reinforced polymer (traditional materials have not been used), the researchers have developed a system of monitoring tensions and bridge deformations which occur due to cars passing through.

The innovative monitoring system is used for the analysis of the applied reinforcement.



cells present which suppress inflammation. We have proved that in exacerbation of asthma, there is an insufficient amount of such cells. This is the first step in the development of a new way of treatment which can help us control the disease.

Simultaneously, we have been examining substances, lipid mediators, which are responsible for the intercellular signalling. The study has been designed in such a way that, during the creation of a model of the disease, we investigate the immune response and also substances which influence the lymphocytes. We have discovered a new substance which provokes bronchoconstriction and is probably the basis of a certain form of asthma with intolerance to nonsteroid anti-inflammatory drugs.

Where did you get the idea of cooperation with Switzerland on this project?

M.S. - Actually, our partnership started a long time ago. The initiator of our research was Professor Andrzej Szczeklik, who for 20 years had been visiting Davos and its famous mountain

clinic specialising in lung diseases treatment, especially the ones with allergic background. I also worked in Davos for a few months in 1996. It was natural for us to initiate

the cooperation. Even before the project, we had already shared experience and exchanged samples, paid visits to each other and written joint publications.

***Professor Marek Sanak,**
of the Jagiellonian University – Medical College, head of the Polish team taking part in the project “Participation of the immune system and lipid signalling in the persistent viral infection of asthma”, conducted in partnership with the Swiss Institute of Allergy and Asthma Research (SIAF).

Programme beneficiaries

Flood risk on the northern foothills of the Tatra Mountains

Few decades ago, when Podtatrze (a sub-region in the southern Poland, bordering the Tatra Mountains) was poorly populated, flood was not considered to be a serious threat. Nowadays, intensive rains mean a risk of destroyed houses, hotels, roads, schools or sports facilities. In order to prevent flooding, Polish scientists from the Institute for Agricultural and Forest Environment of the Polish Academy of Science in collaboration with the University of Bern and University of Silesia in Katowice, have conducted a joint project “Flood risk on the northern foothills of the Tatra Mountains” (FLORIST). An interdisciplinary research within the fields of climatology, hydrology, dendrogeomorphology, dendroclimatology and historical geography has made it possible to systemize the knowledge about the factors which cause floods and have influence on their course. In addition, during the project, the scientists investigated how the flood risk changed in the past on the northern foothills of the Tatra Mountains and tried to answer the question about the possible future risks of flooding.

Supporting young researchers

Project title

Sciex-NMS^{ch} Research Fellowships
for Junior Researchers

Implementing organization

Rectors' Conference of Swiss Higher
Education Institutions (CRUS)

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 12,000,000

Project implementation period

April 2009 – April 2016

**135 PhD candidates
and young scientists**

**conducting research
in various scientific fields
have received scholarships
for the amount of almost
CHF 12 million. Thanks
to these funds, the fellows
of the “Sciex-NMSch
Research Fellowships for
Junior Researchers” project
have been able to carry out
their innovative scientific
projects in the best research
facilities in Switzerland.**



Project beneficiaries

Decision-making

Dr Szymon Wichary is an assistant professor at the SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities' Interdisciplinary Centre for Applied Cognitive Studies in Warsaw, which carries out research in the fields of decision-making psychology, cognitive psychology, psychology of emotions and physiology. During his stay at the University of Basel (Centre for Economic Psychology) he was able to, using the empirical research, describe the relationship between the emotional stress and decision-making. He has created a computer model of the decision-making mechanism which explains how people process information before making their decision under the influence of stress and what decision strategy they use.

During my 6-month stay in Switzerland I was able to acquire new organizational skills. I learnt how to build relationships, how to create new things from scratch. The fellowship has enriched my professional life without impeding my private one. I have also established new contacts, I have learnt how to communicate in a foreign language and I have got to know the new country.

Aleksandra Dziuros, Ph.D., a fellow at the Zurich University of Arts

Switzerland dedicates significant part of public funding to research and development. Thanks to this support, Swiss universities regularly reach top positions in international rankings. Switzerland is also one of the leaders among the most innovative states in the world. What is more, Swiss research facilities can regularly share their potential with researchers from other European countries.

Funds for knowledge transfer

The Sciex-NMS^{ch} Research Fellowships for Junior Researchers was established in 2009. Its aim was to reinforce the links between the research fellows from Switzerland and the new EU member states, Poland included. The fund has supported the scientific progress and innovation by developing the scientific

Project beneficiaries

Shame in the culture context

Karolina Krawczak, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Department of Cognitive Linguistics at the Faculty of English at the Adam Mickiewicz University. The project, which was carried out at the University of Neuchâtel (Université de Neuchâtel), has examined the concept of shame in the context of three different cultures: British, American and Polish. One of the objectives was to identify the social and cultural trends in using the language in the area of the research (i.e. shame). As the result of the project, Dr Karolina Krawczak has described three profiles of the concept of shame which are typical for the studied language groups.

partnerships between Polish and Swiss scholars and has created a unique opportunity for the development of Polish researchers. The programme's objective was to forge research partnerships and to share the results of research projects. In addition, the fund

encouraged the researchers' personal development, the advancement of their interpersonal and social skills and promoted the use of new research techniques.

During the application process, the fellows of the Sciex-NMSch

were selected in accordance with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct. It is worth mentioning that funding has been granted to the researchers representing all academic fields – from natural sciences, to social sciences,

Project beneficiaries

Early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease

Dr Artur Marchewka is the head of the Laboratory of Brain Imaging in the Neurobiology Centre at the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology, a part of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The project which he carried out at the Lausanne University Hospital concerned the methodology of structural brain research with the use of magnetic resonance imaging in the Alzheimer's disease. The scientists evaluated the potential of the structural brain scans in the early diagnosis of this disease – even before the onset of the behavioural symptoms. It has been shown that it is possible, using the structural data of the brain and the method of voxel-based morphometry, to analyse the information from different scanners and centres. It has also been proved that this method can be applied to various sources, which allows the scientists to draw conclusions about the entire population, regardless of the country the data comes from, and to show the full spectrum of the disease's progress.

to the humanities.
The researchers had an opportunity to obtain a fellowship in a Swiss host institution for a period from 6 to 24 months where they carried out research projects under the guidance of their mentor.

135 scientists have participated in the project – 60 Ph.D. candidates, 73 doctors and 2 assistant professors. They represented 44 colleges and universities from 18 Polish cities. The vast majority,

80% of them, work in exact and natural sciences. For almost half of the researchers supported by the Sciex-NMSch, it was the first exchange programme in their scientific career. Many of the participants continued a previous scientific cooperation, but some did not have any prior relationship with Swiss research institutions.

Almost all fellowships have resulted in, at least, one scientific publication.

Furthermore, some of the project's participants emphasized that, thanks to the established contacts, they clarified their scientific interests and, in some cases, they changed them. It is worth adding that, after their return, the Sciex-NMSch's fellows have not only become the initiators of new research projects, but have also won new grants for further research carried out by their research institutes.

Project beneficiaries

Milk replacers

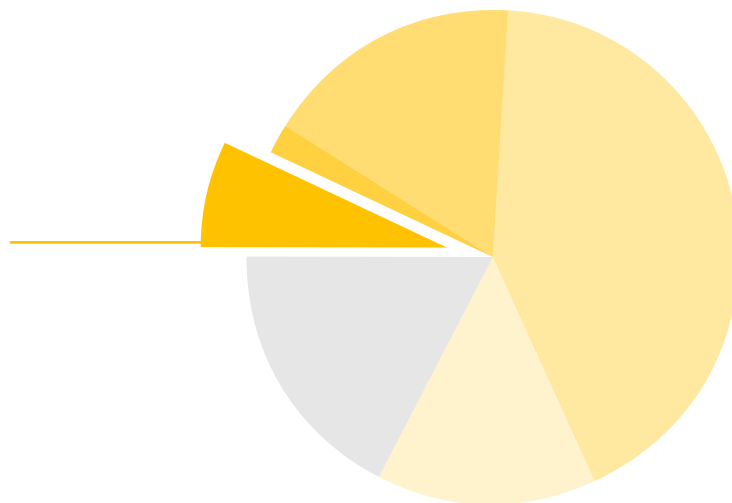
Joanna Bryś, Ph.D. Eng. is a lecturer at the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Food Sciences at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW. During her cooperation with the ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich) she tried to obtain breast milk fat replacers from different fats, e.g. lard, cow or goat milk. The project has been successful and has provided an opportunity to get practical knowledge about the subject of fat modifications and methods of their analysis.

Civil society and partnership cooperation



8.2%

- **CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTNERSHIP COOPERATION**
- Regional development and border protection
- Environment and infrastructure
- Private sector
- Science, health and social welfare
- Project Preparation Facility, Technical Assistance Fund as well as funds for the management of the SPCP by Switzerland



PROJECTS:

"Yes" to the Common Good	164
Partnership for the quality of life	170

“Yes” to the Common Good

Name of the Fund

Fund for Non-Governmental Organisations

Block Grant Intermediary

Ecorys Polska Sp. z o.o.

Main Beneficiaries

Non-governmental organisations

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 24,701,153

Project implementation period

December 2010 – March 2016



There are about 100 thousand associations and foundations operating in Poland - from the giants such as Polish Humanitarian Action, Caritas Poland, or the WIOSNA [literally SPRING] Association, to small associations, with just a few members, founded as a heartfelt gesture to solve a specific social problem. They are as the soil in which the civil society takes root. More than 24 million Swiss

francs from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (SPCP) has been allocated for 336 projects which support the development of the civil society by Polish NGOs.

How to build a society of citizens involved in public activities?
Where to look for models of civil society, if not in a country with a high referendum turnout?

For years Switzerland has had one of the highest happiness indicators - according to the ranking of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). One of the factors contributing to the results of the ranking is a developed civil society. Projects implemented within the framework of the Fund for Non-governmental Organizations have made the Polish environment a little more similar to that in Switzerland - thanks to the experience, the know-how and the funds used by Polish NGOs to implement the projects.

Firstly: children and young people

Lessons on civic activity began with schools. Thanks to the project “A Young Citizen on the Scene of Life” young people over the age of 13 who participated in performances held in 10 lower secondary schools of the Świdnica powiat, learned how to exercise

their rights and how to engage in activities for the benefit of the local community. A similar initiative, under the project “One, two, three – your turn to act! Increasing social participation of teens”, addressed to people aged 16-30, helped to activate and raise the civil awareness of over 100 training participants from the Lubelskie, Wielkopolskie and Łódzkie Voivodships.

By playing the game “Gminowo” (“Communityville”), young people from 20 municipalities all over Poland learned how to exercise control over the activity of local governments and how to influence their work. Managing this virtual town showed the participants the specific nature of the functioning of the local government. An Internet game “Gramy w RADE, damy RADE” (“We play “Do it” we can do it”), developed as part of another project, was also made available to young people, who could design their own civic initiatives and use the virtual skills gained from the game in real life.

Secondly: the excluded

The age does not exclude citizens from conscious exercising of their rights, nor does homelessness, which is what homeless people from 14 towns from Lubelskie, Małopolskie and Podkarpackie

Voivodships saw for themselves. Under the project "Advocacy - strengthening the voice of the homeless", they could also use the assistance of Homeless People Ombudsmen.

Among the projects aimed at ensuring equal opportunities, there was an initiative addressed to blind people "The Aware Blind". One thousand visually impaired citizens from all over Poland participated in integration meetings devoted to self-organization people with disabilities. They have also received the Civic Guide, written in the Braille system, accompanied by a CD with the recorded contents of the guide. With the

same people in mind, the Civic Information Service for the Blind was created, where they can find important information about social benefits, rehabilitation allowances, concessions and consumer rights.

Students from 16 lower secondary schools participating in the project "School Volunteers Groups for the Blind Students" joined in the activities designed to benefit visually impaired people. During the training, young people were taught the audio description techniques which will let their visually impaired schoolmates find out what is presented in the illustrations that accompany the textual information in their

textbooks. This has provided equal opportunities in education to 650 disabled students and helped 300 of the students with normal eye-sight to understand the needs of their visually impaired schoolmates.

Thirdly: public officials

The development of the civil society is also supported by friendly public offices. In the Małopolskie and Śląskie Voivodships, a study was carried out where questions were addressed to all 349 municipal and city offices of the two voivodships over the phone, by e-mail and via registered letters. The questions sent by post, for instance, about renting flats,

Project beneficiaries

Senior citizens

In Poland, there are over 8.5 million people above the age of 60. A number of social initiatives implemented thanks to the funding from the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme show that senior citizens, after retiring, more and more often actively participate in social life and acquire new skills. For example, the Social Initiatives Support Centre in Jaworzno organised a computer course where senior citizens learned, among other things, how to join a social website, how to use messenger applications, how to open and manage an on-line bank account or do shopping on the Internet. The course participants could also learn how to find opinions about a particular physician before arranging a visit or how to search for the cheapest trip options.

were answered in full by most of the offices, yet the indicators were not fully satisfactory. The study was conducted together with training sessions about access to public information which were attended by almost 350 representatives of municipal and city offices and the same number of local residents. Under the project "A Friendly Office - access to public information on request in the municipal and city offices of the Śląskie and Małopolskie Voivodships", the participants learned how to write appeals against administrative decisions

and demand replies to their inquiries.

Fourthly: leaders

Leaders are needed to effectively stimulate citizens to take initiative. Beneficiaries of the project "It's impossible without the leaders! Releasing energy in local communities" were involved in educating the leaders, teaching them, for instance, how to use modern technology in dialogue and how to mobilise local residents to action. Similar activities, under the project "Action - Activation", were addressed to activists from parishes, schools, NGOs

and local councils' members from the Lubelskie Voivodship. As part of the follow-up activities, the 45 graduates of the Academy of Civic Leaders managed to engage about 600 residents in various civil initiatives.

150 thousand citizens

The residents of Lublin had an opportunity to take part in the project "Lublin Forum - Active Citizens", whereby the Lublin Association of Non-Governmental Organizations was formed, which helped to activate local communities. A website Observatory of Social

Project beneficiaries

Assisting people suffering from Tourette Syndrome

People suffering from Tourette Syndrome are at risk of social exclusion and intolerance. They frequently do not exercise their civil rights and are discriminated - it is also the case in public situations, e.g. in public offices. In 2013-2014, the Tourette Syndrome Association of Poland carried out a large education project "Tourette de Pologne - a programme aimed at activating people suffering from Tourette Syndrome and their families", which included a public campaign. Three videos were created with the participation of people with Tourette Syndrome to demonstrate that, in spite of this illness, it is possible to do well, to be successful, to pursue one's passions. Apart from that, persons with Tourette Syndrome got involved as volunteers in direct meetings with people to whom they talked about their illness. In general, under the "Tourette de Pologne" project, 42 training sessions were organised all over the country.

Initiatives was also created, to present the findings of the research studying local social initiatives. Residents could visit Local Citizen Advice Points, providing advice about possible forms of public participation.

The large number of beneficiaries implementing the projects as well

as the number of final beneficiaries, amounting in total to almost 150 thousand people, combined with the enormous scope of activities within the category of civic activity, has been a huge challenge but at the same time a source of big satisfaction for the Fund Operator, the consulting company Ecorys Polska Sp. z o.o.

The Swiss Contribution has made it possible to implement as many as 336 projects in the field of civic education, public control and monitoring and participation in public policies, particularly at the local level: in schools, parishes, villages, municipalities and poviats. That is where the civil society and engagement in local affairs originate.

▲▲ **An assistant/mentor was assigned to each project to ensure the success of the project, to correct any possible mistakes, made mainly by young, inexperienced organizations, which included, for instance, creating an inadequate group of recipients or setting inappropriate time limits for the planned activities. Every beneficiary felt that they were well looked after at every stage of their project.** ▼▼

Violetta Korkuś, of Ecorys Polska Sp. z o.o.

Project beneficiaries

“Action - Consultation!”

The main goal of the project implemented by the Stabilo Foundation was the informed participation in public consultations by the residents of Toruń. A number of educational activities were carried out promoting civic engagement among the residents of the city, there were also training sessions for local leaders, officials and students. An interesting effect of the project were also public consultations held in the open air, about subjects selected by the residents.

What are the problems that most often affect people suffering from Tourette Syndrome?

Katarzyna Wróbel*

- They are the problems of social exclusion, intolerance. People with TS also come across problems in public offices. This results mainly from the lack of knowledge about what this illness involves.

What can be done to raise the awareness of the public?

K.W. - First of all we must educate people. The videos featuring people suffering from TS made with the support of the SPCP have been viewed on the Internet by a lot of people, they were also shown, for instance, at film festivals or shows. Thanks to that, the public awareness has really increased.

What else have you managed to do?

K.W. - The aim of the Project was to mobilise the people with TS to become citizens fully exercising their rights, so that they can pursue their passions - following the message "I have Tourette, but Tourette doesn't have me". We began by recruiting volunteers. We managed to recruit 12 people all

over Poland who acted as leaders. Their role was to carry out activities addressed to local communities, such as talks at schools, social support for people with TS, organising integration meetings. A lot of people participated in the training sessions we organised: kindergarten children, students from primary, lower and upper

secondary schools, university students, teaching staff (teachers, counsellors, psychologists, school headmasters), academic teachers, adults, municipal guard and police officers. Local leaders and their assistants organised, co-organized or participated in about 20 local events - such as family picnics or film shows, during which they distributed educational



materials. As part of the “Tourette de Pologne” project, an updated version of the www.tourette.pl website was prepared as well as numerous publications: leaflets, miniguides for TS patients and the people living around them. These materials were also supposed to assist the volunteers during the meetings, as a matter of fact, they are still used in the Association's activities.

What challenges have you come across during the implementation of the Project?

K.W. - We had to find and persuade people with Tourette Syndrome to devote their time and to get involved, as volunteers, in direct meetings during which they would talk about their illness. The volunteers had earlier undergone a series of incentive trainings - in communication,

developing leadership skills but also about the syndrome and its impact on the person suffering from it and those around them as well as about possible forms of assistance, e.g. rules of forming support groups and operating a helpline.

***Katarzyna Wróbel**

Deputy Chairperson of the Tourette Syndrome Association of Poland



Partnership for the quality of life

Name of the Fund

Partnership Fund

Block Grant Intermediary

Ecorys Polska Sp. z o.o.

Main beneficiaries

Local government units

Amount of Swiss co-financing

CHF 3,400,000

Fund implementation period

December 2010 – December 2015



In Switzerland, cultural and ethnic differences are skilfully used to develop the community, whereas innovative methods of managing economic microprocesses help the residents succeed in the market economy. In Swiss cities one can admire roof gardens. The transfer of knowledge and experience related to such different areas has been supported by the Partnership Fund, based on the direct cooperation between partners,

often twinning partners, in Poland and Switzerland.

Gardens on roofs

Trees, blooming flowers, bees, not to mention rare birds on rooftops of buildings in big cities, this is not a phantasmagoria, but a reality experienced, for instance, by the residents of Basel. Under a partnership project "Garden over the head - Swiss 'green rooftops' and 'living walls' as a model and inspiration for innovative action by Polish local governments aimed at energy conservation and protection of the climate", rooftops began to bloom, for instance, in Bielawa, Warsaw and Niepołomice.

Basel, a city ten times smaller than Warsaw, can boast two million square metres of green rooftops, which accounts for as much

as 1/4 of the entire roof area in the city. All that is due to the fact that in Basel, no flat-roof design can be approved without a garden planned on the rooftop. If, in Polish cities, plants covered the rooftops, we could save even 30 percent of energy, we could handle excessive precipitation, reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air, reduce city noise and, at the same time, support the flora and the fauna. "Garden over the head" is only one of 31 projects (21 projects and 10 subsequent miniprojects, reinforcing the results achieved by the first 21) carried out under the SPCP Partnership Fund. Another project engaged the Cracow City Hall, the Foundation of Cracow University of Economics, the Cracow Festival Office and University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland Valais, to examine the impact



of tourist events: conferences, conventions, seminars, congresses and various fairs and exhibitions, on the economy of Cracow.

Tourism management

The project "Controlling the meetings industry in Cracow: the evaluation and monitoring of the influence of the economic meetings industry on the economy of Cracow, using best practices from Switzerland" involved presentation of solutions

applied by Geneva, a city famous for the largest conference and exhibition centres. Studies of the trends in bookings and choices of business meetings and conference venues supported the operations of organisers of tourist events, training companies, enterprises, hotels and other conference facilities. The final beneficiaries, thanks of the thorough knowledge of the MICE market (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions i.e.

the broadly understood training and conference tourism), can take informed action to develop the business tourism industry, and consequently - the economy of the entire city.

Switzerland also supported Polish eco-tourism, by showing how to use electro-mobility technology for this purpose, within the framework of the project "Poland - Swiss Benchmarking

Project beneficiaries

Region Brand

Beneficiary: Association Euroregion Carpathia Poland
Swiss Partner: Institute of Tourism, University of Applied Science of Western Switzerland HES-SO in Sierre

In the Podkarpackie Voivodship, the development of tourism faces a number of challenges related to tourist facilities, holiday offers, professional marketing, information about resources and tourist attractions and the coordination of activities in these areas. Whereas in Switzerland, holiday, adventure tourism (e.g. skiing) or conference tourism are thriving. The aim of the project "The Alpine-Carpathian Tourist Cluster of Knowledge" was to lay the foundations for the development of Polish-Swiss partnerships for the cooperation of Alpine and Carpathian entities in the area of tourism. Within the framework of the project, a long-term strategy for the Carpathian Brand was created, based on the principles of seeking the preservation of the natural environment and the sustainable use of the environmental resources. To achieve this goal, public consultations were conducted and an extensive analysis was carried out of the systems for supporting tourism in Poland and in Switzerland.

Platform for eco-tourism and electromobility in the mountain regions". Using the experience of the Swiss tourist region of Goms helped the mountain areas in Poland: Bukowina Tatrzańska, Zakopane, Niepołomice and Miękinia. A plan for using electric vehicles was created for these regions and a benchlearning platform was developed, enabling regular information exchange between regions.

Multiple faces of Lublin

The experience of the Canton of Neuchâtel helped the national minorities in Lublin. A special Integration Support Group, formed under the project "Lublin for everyone. Participatory model of managing diversity", undertook the development of a strategy supporting the activation of organizations, institutions and other informal groups involved in the matters related to interculturalism of Lublin, based

on expert analyses and studies of sociological preferences of residents and their attitudes towards diversity. Lublin shared the developed strategy with other Polish cities: Łódź, Katowice, Wrocław, Szczecin, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Cracow, Bydgoszcz and Poznań. Whereas everyone can meet the residents of Lublin, belonging to all sorts of different cultures, thanks to the site "The Faces of Lublin", where the people from the photographs share their experience

Project beneficiaries

Civic education

Beneficiary: Kozuchów Municipality

Swiss Partner: InteGreat Association

Polish Partner: Foundation "Agreement Dalkowskie Hills"

The project "European Coalition for Civil Participation - Polish-Swiss transfer of knowledge and experience for local communities" aimed at strengthening the Polish-Swiss partnership in the area of activating the local community and promoting voluntary services, in particular among young people. It was equally important to transfer to Poland the best Swiss experience in the area of sustainable spatial planning of urban-rural areas. 50 project initiatives were carried out to improve the aesthetic qualities of the area. An educational-recreational fitness trail for young people was also built on the Dalkowskie Hills. The completion of the project contributed to the development of the civil society that cares for the image of the Polish countryside and small towns.

and opinions about the diversity of their city. The campaign also covered bus stops and bus screens as well as local editions of newspapers.

The Partnership Fund also promoted knowledge transfer. Those who learned about the importance of this skill included:

- libraries - in the project "Mum, dad, take me to the library", promoting reading of books

among the youngest by proper preparation of librarians and developing in children the habit of borrowing books from libraries (The Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz Municipal Public Library, Bibliomedia Suisse Foundation from Losanne);

- municipalities - e.g. within the project "Wymiennikownia [Exchange Space] - an innovative space of cooperation for

the benefit of young people" which supported authorities of Gdynia municipality in preparing activities engaging young people in the life of the city. In the follow-up to the project, the activities were extended to include the development of the youth policy in Gdynia and implementing new ideas addressed to this group under

Project beneficiaries

"Supraśl – Polish window with a view on Switzerland"

Beneficiary: Supraśl Town Hall and Municipality Office
Swiss Partner: Municipality of Balsthal

The project, based on the long-term cooperation between the municipalities of Supraśl and Balsthal, aimed at stepping up the partnership by initiating new joint activities and sharing experience in the cultural, social and nature related areas. Organizing meetings of groups of social leaders and regional activists from both countries, the Festival "Canton-Supraśl" along with the cooking competition "In the Supraśl and Balsthal pot", shooting a video together promoting both partners, as well as organizing two international conferences, all that led to broadening the scope of the cooperation and strengthening the links between the regions. Thanks to some original initiatives, e.g. cooks from both countries exchanging their regional recipes, joint initiatives were promoted and the interest of both residents and tourists in the Polish-Swiss partnership was increased. The cooperation translated into sharing good practices in sustainable tourism and transfer of knowledge about environmental protection and promotion of cultural values



the project “Gdynia - the City of the Young (GMM) - a cooperation platform for the development of youth-related social innovations” (Gdynia Municipality, Social Entrepreneurship Initiative & Foundation from Switzerland);

- Euroregions, associations and social cooperatives - e.g. Association of Local Governments of the Euroregion BUG within the project “Euroregions development factors - exchange of experience between the Basiliensis and the BUG Euroregions”, which made it possible to organise partner meetings

in both countries, to organise an event in Switzerland, during which tourist products from the Lublin region were promoted and to organize seminars to share experience in sustainable development and cross-border cooperation between the Beneficiary and its Swiss Partner (Association of Local Governments of the Euroregion BUG, the Basiliensis Euroregion).

Regular cooperation

The cooperation within the framework of the Partnership Fund resulted in sound relations between the Polish and the Swiss sides,

as in the case of the project “Safety and first aid education in the poviat of Myślenice and the Canton of Valais - sharing good institutional, local government and school practices”, whose leader, the poviat of Myślenice and the Project partner, Canton du Valais, strengthened their relationship, which is continued until today, not only at the professional level. The series of training sessions on first aid conducted for 150 students of lower secondary schools in the Poviato of Myślenice by volunteers from the School of Young Paramedics was highly praised the Swiss partners, both for its content and for the organization on the Polish side.

The partners in the project “Innovative methods and possibilities to acquire renewable energy sources in the Lublin region, following the example of good practices and experience of the Swiss partner,” that is, the Lubelskie Voivodship and the Laboratory for Energy Conversion ETH Zürich, also continued their cooperation. The partners’ activities resulted in the more effective development of wind projects in the voivodship. The goal was achieved by conducting workshops in Zurich, drafting opinions concerning the project and organising a seminar.

▴ ▴ **These organizations are still in contact, they share experience and exchange invitations to participate in their subsequent ventures** ▴ ▴

Violetta Korkuś, Ecorys Polska Sp. z o.o.

Switzerland, the power of diversity

Attachment to tradition and breath-taking views. Luxurious brands that the entire world marvels at. Home to numerous scientists and Nobel Prize winners. Modern technology - from electric cars and thermal accumulators, capable to store thermal energy in the summer and use it in the winter, to implants that may once help disabled people regain full ability to walk. On the one hand, it is a home to a strong financial sector and the World Economic Forum, on the other – a symbol of humanitarian help with its embodiment - the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement. A state whose nationals serve the Popes in the famous Swiss Guard (“Cohors pedestris Helvetiorum a sacra custodia Pontificis”). A country whose complex organisation and cultural diversity make people refer to it as the European Union in miniature. Switzerland.

It has eight million inhabitants, of whom 25% are foreign residents. Such a high percentage of people with international background makes Switzerland, similarly to Australia, one of the leaders of the western world with regards to the ratio of the population originating from outside the country. Respect for work and fair wages, no involvement in international conflicts, high standard of living, little social stratification, world-class higher education; there are a lot of factors that fascinate and attract foreigners to Helvetia.

Confederation of small homelands

With four national languages and the preservation of traditional dialects, this entire cultural mix is located on a relatively small territory, of the size comparable to the combined Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Małopolskie Voivodships. The multicultural character of the country is even more visible in the academic environment, where you can hear people switching effortlessly between French, German, Italian and English.

The homeland of the legendary Wilhelm Tell, despite covering a relatively small territory, consists of 26 cantons with considerable autonomy. There are matters that fall within the remit of the federal government, such as the army, foreign policy, economic law, or some elements of social policy. Nevertheless, every canton has its own constitution, a cantonal parliament, law enforcement services and controls a number of economic aspects, such as taxes or the level of autonomy of the municipalities.

Switzerland is a federal republic with a system of direct democracy. All Swiss citizens are called on three to four times a year to take part in popular votes on a variety of political issues. The fact that the citizens have a strong, “bottom-up” influence on the political life reinforces their sense of responsibility, and, consequently, their commitment to solving the problems of their small homeland. This is also reflected in the political system: the representatives elected



by the local communities have a strong sense of social responsibility and they primarily focus on pragmatically solving problems. As a consequence, they are able to form coalitions lasting for decades, bringing together theoretically opposing fractions. The sense of common good and cooperation are the main pillars of the Swiss miracle.

Development without natural resources

Besides its abundant water resources, Switzerland has very little natural resources and the majority of its territory is mountainous. Dairy products have been an important component of the country's economy for centuries, including cheese (in the 17th century, cheese became the first Swiss brand with global reach and was supplied to the majority of European countries, North Africa, and even to the United States). Two centuries later, cheese was joined by milk chocolate. At the same time,

it appeared that Switzerland had some fantastic natural resources after all - the majestic mountains, which in the Romantic period raised admiration and fascination. The origins of alpinism go back to that time.

Present times - innovation

The Helvetians have not been a colonial superpower, so they benefitted from the industrial revolution only to a limited extent, when compared for instance, to the United Kingdom. Steam engines appeared in Switzerland relatively late, but the Swiss were ahead of others in perfecting the methods of producing electricity with water turbines, whereas the complex transmission system in Swiss spinning machines was considered a technical miracle at that time. In order to avoid some mistakes from the times of industrial revolution, the Alpine country relied strongly

on innovation, particularly in area of industrial engineering, but also in other branches. The Helvetians looked for new solutions, for example in pharmaceutical industry, where they made a number of discoveries (e.g. dietary supplement in the form of vitamin C tablets, morphine, as well as Valium sedative or other psychoactive drugs). Companies, such as Novartis and Roche, every year find their way to the list of 500 largest global companies, according to the "Fortune" magazine. Federal Universities of Technology act as incubators of new ideas and solutions that astonish the world – e.g. the Solar Impulse project run by Bertrand Piccard whose aim was to construct an aircraft powered only by solar energy. His father and grandfather were also pioneers in the world of science. The former, Jacques Piccard, explored the Mariana Trench in 1960, whereas the latter, August Piccard, designed and constructed bathyscaphes.

The list of renowned Swiss scientists is very long. 21 Nobel Prize winners have had links with the Federal University of Technology in Zurich alone, including Albert Einstein and Wilhelm Röntgen.

Homo Helveticus means Swiss precision

Practically all stereotypes about Switzerland are positive. On the one hand, we talk about brands - the symbols of reliability, on the other hand, about a society built on diligence, hard work and sense of responsibility.

44 Swiss companies are on the list of the 2,000 largest private companies in the world (according to Forbes Global 2,000), so Switzerland ranks 11th on this list. Glencore invariably occupies the first place among the strongest Swiss companies; even though Switzerland has practically no mineral resources, the company's core business

Switzerland, as multicultural and multilingual country, provides a good example of harmonious community life: the Swiss people cooperate in a way that can be a model for others. In order to understand this phenomenon one should get a closer look into the model of managing diversity adopted in the country. There are four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. Swiss differ also in culture and religious beliefs. Over the ages, the Swiss nation has developed a number of mechanisms aimed at reaching consensus despite the existing differences. Those include: decentralisation of government, decision-making based on direct democracy and the principle of perpetual neutrality written down in the Swiss constitution.



is trade with natural resources. Nestlé company is a leading manufacturer of food products, Rolex is a symbol of luxury, Novartis and Roche are pharmaceutical giants. One may think that whenever the Swiss decide to work on something, they will develop it to perfection.

In many rankings and reports (e.g. HSBC, World Happiness Report, US News and World Report Y&R's BAV Consulting, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania), Switzerland is often described as the best country to live in. That is no surprise: a well-integrated and cooperating society and a reasonable set of market regulations are key

factors for maintaining a common sense of safety and mutual trust.

As Switzerland is a small country, its home market is limited. It is a large exporter and importer of goods. Trade in goods and services accounts for a comparatively high percentage of its Gross Domestic Product GDP. Well-developed industry and services, as well as the high innovation potential in growth industries like microtechnology, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals mean that Switzerland has what is needed to produce state-of-the art, quality goods.

Switzerland is a country which is worth learning from.

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