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Introduction

We are happy to present the first issue of GOOD PRACTISES. They summarise the first calls in the framework of *Small Projects, Creating and Development of Microenterprises as well as Revitalisation and Development of the Country*. The calls are announced within the Rural Areas Development Programme 2007-2013. The calls were announced by Local Action Group "Ziemia Pszczynska".

The aim of this publication is to offer a summary of our latest experiences as well as share the insight knowledge about application procedures and applications themselves. That is why (here) you will also find here an interview with an expert who shares his remarks about the calls and applications.

We hope that in this publication you will find necessary advice needed in the application procedures.

After first calls

Our first call for applications was announced within the *Small Projects Action*. *Small Projects* action is announced within the framework of *Rural Areas Development Programme 2007-2013*. It was realised by Association Local Action Group „Ziemia Pszczynska”. The call lasted from May 12th to June 10th. We were happy to receive 22 applications. Our board opinioned positively all applications as all of the projects were corresponding with the Local Development Strategy.

Total amount of submitted projects amounted to 429 000 zloty, while the allocation in that call amounted to 637 000 zloty.

Almost 50% of the beneficiaries were represented by non-governmental organisations, the rest of the group were the public institutions, individuals and churches.

In the geographical context the applications covered the representations of Pszczyna, Suszec, Goczalkowice and Kobior. Unfortunately, we did not receive an application from Miedzna.

To support the process of applications preparation we organised various trainings and meetings. They were needed in order to offer additional, sometimes very specific knowledge about the call requirements. The trainings were divided into three different

stages. The first one was informative meetings which gave a general overview about our organisations and LEADER Programme. Two other meetings had a workshop character and were designed for people already interested in applying but looking for more specific information and expert advice. The participants had the chance to learn how to write down their project in the applications and complete all necessary attachments.

The last stage of the training had a different character as it was reserved for individual advice hours. During advice hours potential beneficiaries could analyse their application and receive feedback as well as further instructions.

In the overall context of call procedure ex. number of applications and their quality, office work, board involvement etc. we have considered the whole process to be a success.

At the moment the rest of the calls are being published. The deadline for the call within *Creating and Development of Microenterprises* as well as *Revitalisation and Development of the Country* is September 21st, which means that the Board meeting will take place after closing this issue.

We have received 4 applications within *Creating and Development of Microenterprises*, nevertheless, the total amount of the application doesn't exceed the allocation. However, within the other action *Revitalisation and Development of the Country* we received 9 applications and their total amount exceeds the amount of allocation.

We will write about the final decisions of the board in the next issue.

From Ideas to Hopes

Trainings- that's how things got started

We are learning from the best

We were pleased to see that people were interested in the calls.

The board during their meeting assess the projects. Every project is given points in different categories. Afterwards, the average amount of points is calculated and a ranking list created. That way the board is able to decide on the best projects and recommend them to the Marshal's Office for financial support.

In the call within *Small Project*, the best project was submitted by the Karol Miarka Cultural-Social Association from Pielgrzymowice. That organisation presented a project on organising 8th Feast of Silesian Culture in Pielgrzymowice. It was important for Board members to know if the project is a one-time initiative or annual event.

The target group of the project is 180 people, inhabitants of the area covered by Local Development Strategy "Ziemia Pszczynska". It means the project is directed to all inhabitants of Pszczyna region, which is very important information when assessing the project as more points are given to projects which aim at wider public. It is better when the project covers more than one village or community.

Another important element is a well-defined objective of the project and its innovation. In the application, the organizer explains thoroughly that feasts are an important element of the Silesian culture which is derived from the old Polish tradition. In the region of Upper-Silesia the tradition has been continued by the miners, who up to present annually organize feasts called *gwarki*. The main objective of the project is integration of the community by common singing, dialect as well as dancing and food. In the assessing process, the stress put on sustaining local tradition was important to give the project the highest place in the ranking.

Partnership is also important. More points are given to projects which are realised in partnership. The Association from Pielgrzymowice cooperates with the local fire brigade, Community Council in Pawlowice as well as Community Cultural Centre. The role of the partners embodies help with promotion of the event.

An important fact is also that according to the Local Development Strategy the preference is given to the projects which ask for the financial support amounts to maximum 10 000 zloty. The Association ask(ed) for 9 300 zloty, which constituted 68% of the total project cost.

Interview centre

An interview with Jaroslav Niemczyk, who was a director of the office of the Local Action Group „Ziemia Bielska” till December 2009 and currently runs his own consultancy business regarding application and management of projects financed from European Union funds. As an expert he was present at the Board meeting of Local Action Group “ Ziemia Pszczynska”. He helped to run the first assessing meeting regarding the call within *Small Projects*.



What do you think of the quality of the applications submitted in the call within *Small Projects* announced by Association LAG “Ziemia Pszczynska”?

There were 22 applications submitted, the number is comparable with the number of application submitted in other LAGs. The quality of the project was also very equal. The maximum number of points amounted to 16, the best project received 15 points, the lowest in the ranking was the project with 10.2 points. In my opinion, the quality of the projects was high, especially if you take under consideration that it was the first call. Here it is also worth mentioning that in the light of the latest regulations, which introduced the minimal point criteria, all the projects would have been assessed positively and recommended for the support.

In order to support potential beneficiaries we organised three types of trainings- informative meetings, workshops and individual advice. What additional support would you recommend?

I think that additional support should be offered to the beneficiaries who signed the agreement with the Marshal’s Office. Besides, it would be a good idea to publish a “project map” with the information who and where realized a project. It (is also good) would be helpful to involve other organisations in the promotional activities, for example, non-governmental organizations, other formal and non-

formal institutions as well as village administrators and priests. The information could be wider spread in different public institutions like: Social Security Office, Tax Office, Agency of Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture. Information available in this places is important, especially for actions such as *Diversing towards non-agricultural acitivities*” and *Creating and development of microenterprises*.

In your opinion, what have been the most common mistakes of the beneficiaries?

Regarding Local Action Group and its part of the assessment, the applications were prepared very professionally, that is why they were ranked high. In regard to the assessment of the Marshal's Office, it is difficult to say at the moment as the applications are being verified there. Fortunately, it is possible for the beneficiaries to make corrections and complete the documents if the Marshal's Office needs further clarifications. However, usually the most common mistakes regard the financial part of the project ex. calculating one's own nonfinancial contribution or in general filling in the application with the attachments according to the instruction.

What should every person applying for a grant pay special attention during the preparation of application?

First of all, read the formal requirements and carefully read complete documentation and instructions. The best idea is to act according to the scheme: the idea-project-proposal, which means that firstly we need to know what to do, lay down the basic principles and general outline of the project, and then proceed to the application process. When we have an idea, we have to pay attention to what actions we can take, and whether we are entitled to apply for funding. We must answer questions such as: what? where? what do we want to do? what measures do we need to implement the project? And finally we have to take into account the objectives of Local Development Strategy, under which our application will be assessed by the

Council and the Regulation regarding the implementation, under which the application will be conducted by the Marshal's Office. The project must be consistent and effective. It is important to have time to prepare a technical project - do not leave it until the last minute!

What – in your opinion- is the biggest barrier to potential beneficiaries?

There are a lot of them ... The first of these is the fact that although the objective of LEADER is to build social capital, not everyone is entitled to proposals for example the Farmers Circle as an organization not registered, may not be an applicant, but a private person, being a representative of the organization, may. A big problem for Applicants is own contribution (in the case of *Small projects* this is 30%). Furthermore, the conclusions are quite complicated, and filling them in Excel Applicants also poses great difficulties. Expenses related to the preparation of proposals and attachments are not eligible, and so wanting to have them developed by external entities we do not receive a refund of costs associated with this. Difficulties arise also in the realization the project, a deposit can be obtained only at 20% of eligible costs.

Thank you for your time.

Interview with Mr. Grzegorz Mola - Chairman of the Council

Since birth, he has been associated with Goczałkowice and Pszczyna Land. He graduated from the Silesian University of Technology. He completed postgraduate studies in business, management, mathematics, health and safety management. Working in the Secondary School as a manager of school workshops, he is involved in many projects whose aim is to equip schools with modern teaching aids, as well as

he arranges internships for both students and teachers.
Hobby-tennis, skiing, fishing and ... running gardening.

The first evaluation is over, what problems have you encountered during assessing applications?

The first assessment of proposals by the Council went very smoothly. The experience of members of the Council of European funds acquisition contributed to it, as well as the possibility of early assessment of the applications using the Web applications, office work of the association, co-operation of Council members.

Board members are professionals and the mayors or their deputies, is it difficult to manage such a group?

Previous meetings of the Council ran very constructively - every member of the Council shared their experience in order to facilitate and make a fair assessment of project. These are the personalities who gather for one purpose - to truly carry out their difficult task. Because the evaluation of projects is not easy. Needless to say, despite the broad experience of Council members, each meeting is an opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Prior to the assessment, the Council has participated in several trainings. Was it helpful?

Trainings of the Council were very useful - enabled efficient use of the Web application, and thus we avoided the possibility of errors in the assessment of projects. It was also an opportunity to get to know the Council members better and a good chance for our integration. Similar objectives will be devoted to further training prior to the evaluation of projects under the competitions „Village renewal and development” and "Establishment and development of microenterprises"

What advice would you give to future beneficiaries requesting?

For sure, submitting an application carries some difficulties, but the prospect of

fundraising is sufficient compensation for their work - it is really worth it. Each beneficiary, if they want, can benefit from appropriate training and workshops led by experts, employed by the Association. This gives a good chance to avoid mistakes and correct completion of the application. Obviously it is needed to know the Local Development Strategy - there are all guidelines written for scoring, which will later be used by the Council. So it is worth devoting a few moments on this document.

Thank you for your time

The most common mistakes

preparation of documentation undertaken too late



ignorance of existing regulations and instructions



improperly prepared application:

- Lack of proper attachments
- Application form completed without following instructions
- Unrealistic values established in the project
- Wrong term time horizon
- Incorrectly developed project budget
- Faulty analysis of the environment
- Undefined objectives and activities within the project



Rejection of the project during the evaluation / project incompatible with all the assumptions of the project



loss of funding / part of funding

How to write a good project and successfully complete it?

- specify precisely aims and objectives of your project
- refer to the applicable rules and instructions
- follow websites of the implementing institutions, where all necessary information for Beneficiaries can be found
- make use of the training and consultation with an expert
- define realistic objectives for your project
- indicate the project coordinator, who will inspect the project
- use the experience of beneficiaries who have already realized their projects

In conclusion ...

There are next meetings of the Council ahead of us which will identify further applicants, the next operation recommended for funding ...

There is the next and last call for projects in 2010roku ahead of us - "Diversification into non-agricultural activities" ...

There are the next steps ahead of us about which we will keep you informing ...