



Program
Rozwoju
Obszarów
Wiejskich
na lata 2007-2013

**Association
of
Local Action Group
„Ziemia Pszczyńska”**



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Introduction

Before you the first issue of the bulletin reporting the activities of LAG "Ziemia Pszczyńska". This will be the cyclic publication, which in their pages will illustrate the essential information concerning the Association and subsequent plans and actions. It is also a kind of promotion, through which we hope will attract new well-wishers, and the knowledge that we will try to provide help our readers decide to write own application to obtain money from the European Union. We also want to present in this bulletin the structure of our Association and boast of successes and ongoing projects that without the participation of many people of our district could not be realized. We encourage you to cooperation and new initiatives that will enrich our local community.

1. LAG „Ziemia Pszczyńska” -Beginnings

We are an association that brings together economic sector, public sector, NGOs and individuals in a joint action for local development

LAG „Ziemia Pszczyńska” consists of 6 communes: Kobiór, Pszczyzna, Goczałkowice-Zdrój, Miedzna, Pawłowice and Suszec.

Scheme 1.



Source: Association of Local Action Group „Ziemia Pszczyńska”. Local Development Strategy for the 2009-2015 page 1.

We operate on the basis of establishment of the fourth axes of the LEADER Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. This is a term for a European program to support rural communities, which (has been operating) operates in the European Union since 1991. The main objective of this program is to build social capital in rural areas through activation of the inhabitants and contribute to job creation and better utilization of existing natural resources, historical, cultural, economic, etc.

Its essence is the involvement of rural communities in decision-making on a particular area of development at the local level, through the creation and development of local partnership representatives of three sectors: public, private and social.

The idea of a partnership in the form of a Local Action Group was born among the representatives of local authorities from Pszczyna district in early 2008. After the initial talks and consultation on the possible shape of the LAG „Ziemia Pszczyńska”, there was finally decided to take the LEADER approach attempts to cover the entire district. Coordinating the entire project is taken care of mainly by coordinators and many people involved in the creation of the association.

In June 2008, in Suszec the first information meeting was held, devoted to the idea of the LEADER approach and opportunities associated with its implementation within the framework of Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. The representatives of all three sectors: private, public and social who operate throughout the district were invited to this meeting. On 13 August 2008 the founding meeting of the Association of the Local Action Group “Ziemia Pszczyńska” was held in Pszczyna. The full formalization of the partnership took place on 20 October 2008, when the Association of Local Action Group was entered in the National Court Register.

2. Structure of Local Action Group „Ziemia Pszczyńska”

The governing bodies of the Association are:

- **General Meeting of Members,**
- **Management Board**
- **Audit Committee**
- **Council.**

General Meeting of Members

The Association currently consists of more than 60 people who take decisions in the form of resolutions at the General Assemblies of Members.

The authorities such as the Management Board, the Audit Committee and the Council are elected by the General Meeting of Members on the two-year term.



General Meeting of Members 24.05.2010

Management Board

Management Board manages all activities of the Association and represents it outside. It consists of seven people: Aleksandra Zachraj serves as chairperson, vice-president is Andrzej Nelec, Bernadeta Lampart is a treasurer, Katarzyna Hasik is a secretary. The board have three ordinary members: Katarzyna Myszor, Jacek Kubis and Michał Pudełko.



Management Board

Council

The Council is the main body of the Association in terms of deciding to support projects within budget of LAG. It is composed of 13 persons, representing all municipalities. Chairman of the Council is Grzegorz Mola. The first meeting of the Council relating to the choice of the operation will take place after the close of the contest "Small Projects."



Coordinators

Coordinators

In each community is a person who cooperate with LAG and coordinate information and promotional activities of the Association.

Pszczyna	Sylwia Pająk-Figula	(032) 44 93 948	spajak@pszczyzna.pl
Kobior	Wojciech Paździor	(032) 21 88 03	gdkkobior@interia.pl
Miedzna	Roman Szromczyk	(032) 21 16 338	inwestycje@miedzna.pl
Pawlowice	Wioletta Frysz	(032) 47 56 340	w.frysz@pawlowice.pl
Suszec	Łukasz Majerowski	(032) 44 93 068	promocja@suszec.pl
Goczalkowice-Zdroj	Gabriela Placha	(032) 21 07 185	wicewojt@goczalkowicezdroj.pl

Office LAG

Office of the Association of Local Action Group „Ziemia Pszczyńska” is located in Pszczyzna. Its task is to conduct ongoing maintenance of the Association. The office employs three workers. The head office is Aleksandra Jeleń. We also employ two specialists on the project: Izabela Hetmańska and Natalia Dabrowska. Anna Harazin is a volunteer and supports the office. These individuals are highly qualified and provide professional service.



Pracownicy biura LGD

3. What you can do together with the Association of LAG "Ziemia Pszczyńska" on what you can raise funds?

LAG "Ziemia Pszczyńska" may provide assistance for operations in the field:

- 1) action "Diversification into non-agricultural activities" (Action is to contribute to the creation of non-agricultural sources of income on farms, and the creation of jobs outside agriculture in rural areas by providing assistance to or through the development of farmers, households and spouses of farmers or non-agricultural activities related to agriculture in the production or services);
- 2) action "Establishment and development of microenterprises" (action creates conditions for the diversification of economic activity and employment opportunities, thereby contributing to sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas. The aim is to increase economic competitiveness of rural areas, entrepreneurship and the labor market, growth of employment in rural areas)
- 3) actions "Diversification into non-agricultural activities" (acting to help improve the quality of life in rural areas by meeting social and cultural needs of their residents, promotion of rural areas and rural investment support granted to the projects related with the development of public space, including maintenance, restoration and upgrading of cultural and natural heritage in the countryside and improve the attractiveness of rural tourism);
- 4) other projects called "small projects" (action provides financial support to small, local initiatives, is to inspire greater interest in their own area, to strengthen local identity, a greater influence on the activation of people, organizations or other entities).

The operation can be carried out under the above mentioned activities if it complies to the objectives and objects.

LAG serves as the intermediate between the beneficiary and the Silesian Province Marshal's Office and paying agency (Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture in Czestochowa).

The task of the LAG is to provide information, advice, announce contests, receiving applications and forwarding to the evaluation of the Association Council.

4. Call Schedule.

Launch of the recruitment for applications for individual call, is schedule for 2010. According to the schedule the first call was dedicated to „Village renewal and development”. Unfortunately, due to the change of regulations our schedule had to be modified by the General Meeting of Members, and the contest was postponed for the fourth quarter of this year, so you can perform it under the new guidelines, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

We start with „small projects” that we have planned for the second quarter of 2010. Call for proposals launched on 12 May and ended on June 10. It will be a „baptism of fire” for our Associations.

In the third quarter of 2010 there will be the next call announced for "Establishment and development of microenterprises" and „Village renewal and development”. Recruitment for the "Diversification into non-agricultural activities" will be announced in the fourth quarter of this year.

We advise potential beneficiaries to think about ideas and the possibility to use EU funds in advance. We know from experience that correct writing a project requires a good idea, the contribution and acquisition the partners to the project. Filling in the form without any errors and consultation with an expert is also inevitable. Everything is possible to do and works well if the activities are well planned.

5. How did LAG "Ziemia Pszczyńska" help the interested in preparing for Small Projects?

Trying to prepare for all applicants who would like to take advantage of the application in the first contest, which was announced by us, we have planned three cycles of meetings with expert. Such meetings were held throughout the all communities. All these meetings were conducted by an expert Roman Gruszczyk.

The first cycle of training was general and took place in February/March 2010 in every community. In connection with these meetings LAG sent invitations to pastors, mayors, governors of agricultural circles, sports clubs, presidents of the farmers' associations and representatives of the fire brigade and other active organizations in this area.

The second series was a training workshop. Within this meeting interested applicants had an opportunity to learn about details related with filling in the application form. The last meetings of this cycle of meeting were held in the form of the training combined with the consultations.

All these meetings were very popular, because there could have been solved problems arising during writing the projects.

The office of LAG Ziemia Pszczyńska provided some pieces of advice to the beneficiaries, encouraged them to realise their own ideas, indicating also the best way to implement them. Through such activities our office received in this first call 22 projects.

6. Promotion of LAG „Ziemia Pszczyńska”

Since the very beginning, the board and the office have been trying to promote the mission and activities of our LAG. To enable good communication with the local communities, a nonformal network between the respective local community council and our LAG has been established. At the stage of creating LAG in every of six communities a coordinator was appointed. Their role is crucial in forwarding information to the grassroots' organisation and people interested in our offer. However, the most accurate source of information remains our website: www.lgdziemiapszczyńska.pl.



In January 2010 in order to reach different people in various places we expanded our promotional activities. At first, we published a series of leaflets and then started cooperation with local magazines “Dziennik Zachodni” and “Gazeta Pszczyńska. Thanks to the wide informative action we were able to reach many potential beneficiaries. Our chairperson has given several interviews, usually presenting general mission and activities of our LAG. We were also proud to see short programmes on Silesia Television and Radio Planeta.

To diversify our promotional activities we have co-financed and co-organised several events at the community level. The events which aim at sustaining and promoting local heritage and gather many people. So far we have been in Suszec, Kobiór and Goczałkowice. During the event we set up our stand, talk to people informing them about different financial possibilities of European funds. We hope that our actions will present LEADER by reaching local communities.

7. Pearls of Pszczyńska Land

Our first, big cultural project is called “Pearls of Pszczyńska Land”. It is aimed at fishing the PEARLS. Pearls are people who you can find in every community as their unusual personalities enrich local environment. That's way, the most important result of the project is a publication with short biographies and description of our Pearls. That poviat-wide, umbrella project should help with finding people of distinctive interests, hobbies or involvement. We believe those people should be appreciated and promoted.

The motivation for the project lays in our belief that those people create the genuine, at the same time distinctive atmosphere of our local motherland. They are the foundation of local tradition and its perseverance. At the same time they develop local community in many other areas. We hope that the project and thus publication will awaken other people to treasures hidden in human potential and initiatives it can create. Potential too often hides right in our neighbour's house.

The project started in April 2010 and will be implemented through the rest of 2010. Altogether application was submitted, among them 50 names chosen. The list of people qualified was published on our website.

8. Cooperation with other Local Action Groups

“Silesian Leader Network” is the platform for exchanging experiences, ideas and worries of all Silesian LAG groups. We were happy to host the two-day meeting through 22nd and 23rd February in Piasek. The meeting was led by Mr Witold Magrys. It was financed and organised by Silesian Association of Communities and Poviats.

We find the meetings a great learning opportunities as various subjects regarding functioning of LAGs are discussed there. At the same time we are able to adopt a common position and thus lobby our interests.

We have taken action in order to realise a cooperation project. We have participated and held several meetings with the neighbouring LAGs “Cieszyńska Kraina” and “Morawskie Wrota”. We met as we were interested in doing a research on local product and then its chances to succeed at the local markets. In order to gather more information we met with representatives of research companies. We wanted to identify that particular local product and compare with the opinion of big cities inhabitants, like Rybnik, Cieszyn or Pszczyna.

Unfortunately, due to many organisational and financial reasons the project has been suspended.

In order to provide international dimension of our activities in March we responded positively to the offer of French LAG “Espace Belledonne” and Finish LAG “Karhuseutu”. They offered wide cooperation areas. It is planned that the project will be opened by a conference in October.

We will inform you about the further developments in the next brochure.

9. Creating Centre for Non-governmental Organisation in Pszczyna

In May our organisation was awarded a grant from Civil Initiative Fund by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The main aim of the project is creation of centre of non-governmental organisation in Pszczyna. A conference planned on 21st June will open the project. The projects lasts 6 months. It starts in July and finishes in December.

It will be realised in rural areas of the Pszczyna region. The activities will concentrate on legal, administrative, accounting, financial and other professional advice.

In other words, the project will have a form a free training and individual consultancy for grassroot organisations as well as people interested in setting their own organisation or people interested in becoming a volunteer. In the framework of the project we would also like to set a database of volunteers which will include information of advantages and legal consequences of supporting social actions.

In the long term, we hope that the project will create a platform of networking and contact making for different organisations, including public sector institution in various places of Pszczyna region.

10. "I know it is worth it" - an interview with Aleksandra Zachraj, a chairperson of "Ziemia Pszczyńska" Local Action Group



Why has this organisation been established?

The association has been established in order to seize the opportunity of LEADER programme. LEADER programme aims at developing rural areas in Europe and covers all the countries of the European Union.

In western Europe first LAG were founded in the early nineties but in Poland LEADER has been present since 2004. Our LAG was established in 2008 and at the moment we are one out of 16 LAGs in Silesia.

From 2009 to 2015 your LAG has the budget of 11,6 mln PLN. How will you allocate those resources?

Our budget is divided into three different categories: administration (including cooperation projects in Poland and abroad, realisation of projects for local communities, promotion and operation of the office) which amounts to 2 mln PLN. The rest - 9,6 mln PLN is allocated for beneficiaries who submit application in our calls.

Who can apply?

Generally, every inhabitant of Pszczyzna region, every organisation or entrepreneur operating here, excluding the city of Pszczyzna as it is not part of LEADER Programme. In other words, a person doesn't have to belong to any organisation. The most important criterion is their address. However, it needs to be emphasized that the support has to be implemented in regard to respective aims and objectives which are defined on our Local Strategy of Development. We have to be sure that projects exploit - the cultural, historical and natural potential and resources of Pszczyzna Land.

Does it mean that every inhabitant of Pszczyzna applies to LAG in order to get their project financed?

Theoretically yes, practically there are certain procedures which clearly indicate who can apply. I recommend participation in informative meetings, trainings and individual consultancy organised by us as well as visiting our website www.lgdziemiapszczynska.pl.

Who decides who the money goes to?

There is a special Committee consisting of 13 people coming from different communities of Pszczyzna region. They are people representing different sectors, experiences and ideas. They will decide whether the project corresponds with the Local Strategy of Development. The projects which are the best, meaning best fulfilling the aims of the strategy will be recommended for support by Marshall Office. Then, the Marshall Office decides whether the application is formally correct and if the opinion is positive the applicants will sign the financial agreement. We would like the LAG Committee to check the applications formally. In that way, we would avoid the situation where the LAG Committee recommends a very good project but then it is rejected because of the formal reasons for example missing some attachments or not corresponding with certain decrees.

How long does the application procedure take?

Counting from the opening of the call to signing the financial agreement, it would be about six months.

It's long.

It depends how one looks at it. This time can be used effectively. The projects usually are made of different actions and involve many people. So waiting can be used for rethinking and verifying the project.

In that case, when will the applicants receive money?

Only after the project is completed. At first, the applicants have to pre-fund the project and then they will ask for a refund. Our office is ready to help with filling the necessary documentation. We hope to use good practices and use the grants effectively.

Do you know the dates of the calls?

Last year we had planned to open the first quarter with the “Renewal and Development of the Country” but then the Ministry of Agriculture advised to suspend the call due to the new decree regarding the above mentioned call. It thwarted our plans, especially the plans of Community Councils which had been prepared with their projects. Unfortunately, we can't influence the superior institutions. It meant the first open call was “Small Projects” in May-June 2010. Then in the third quarter “Creation and Development of Micro entrepreneurship” and in the last quarter of the year “Diversification towards the non-agricultural actions”.

I hope the rest of the calls' schedule will go according to the plan.

What obstacle for beneficiaries do you see?

In my opinion, the main obstacles are: the pre-funding and tones of documentation. The pre-funding rule means providing the financial resources for the total value of the project and ask for a refund. That solution limits the opportunity for small organisations which usually have small budgets. Submitting the application or a final report and a calculation demand tones of documents. For people with little experience in European funds it presents a great problem.

What support does LAG offer?

People who are interested should actively participate in training and advisory hours organised by our office. We have just finished training and individual consultancy regarding the “Small Project” call. In the second part of 2010 we plan to continue the trainings activities reaching entrepreneurs and farmers as the forthcoming calls are designed for them.

Our support covers different areas regarding the preparation of the project and application, gathering necessary documentation or completing the final report.

How would you encourage people for active involvement in projects implemented in the framework of LAG?

The money is worth reaching for, just because it is there. It is a great opportunity to implement one's ideas and influence the quality of life. At the same time we need to realise that the success of the project demands patience and hardwork. I think the satisfaction is guaranteed. From the experience of other LAGs and mine I know it is worth it.