



ASSISTING AN ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED REGION IN POLAND KNOW-HOW FROM THE ALPS FOR THE CARPATHIANS



The project seeks to promote development in the underdeveloped regions in the Polish province of Podkarpackie in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains. The programme will support local initiatives for developing rural tourism, marketing traditional products and engaging local civil society.

One key goal of Switzerland's enlargement contribution is to help eradicate social disparities, including within individual partner countries. This aspect is especially relevant to this project in the impoverished mountain region in south-eastern Poland on its borders with Slovakia and Ukraine.

The region suffers from the fact that it is far removed from the nearest urban centre and has been unable to keep pace with developments over recent decades. The creation of a free market economy had little impact on economic development, and in particular on agriculture, which made little progress. This project seeks to inject new dynamism and drive change in these regions, in particular by promoting sustainable tourism in tune with the local situation.

Switzerland has a great deal of experience in managing alpine regions. As the SDC has already done in the past (e.g. in Nepal), it can make its know-how available to other countries which, like Poland, wish to drive the development of their mountain regions forward.

The first step was to produce a market study to evaluate the current situation. This required detailed analysis of the strengths of the region and its potential for development, with suggestions for specific activities that could help bring about the progress desired. The report also identified weaknesses and obstacles. An action plan was then drawn up to assist in the proposed development.

The backbone of the project comprises four linked components:

- 1) First, a common vision of the partners involved will be drafted. This initial step is necessary to create a common framework in order to avoid duplication of effort and uncoordinated approaches resulting from different basic concepts.
- 2) The second component of the programme is the creation of two funds to finance the projects that are uncertain in this region. Precise criteria ensure that only projects that meet the requirement for sustainable development will be selected and supported.
- 3) The third component concerns the creation of a network for the sale and marketing of products along with the establishment of a common brand.
- 4) Finally, an agency to market the mountain region of Podkarpackie will be set up to promote the development of the region over the long term.

To ensure the successful implementation of these sub-projects, training modules are provided at all stages (capacity building). These will rectify any practical and theoretical deficits and ensure that the intended outcomes are actually achieved. Switzerland's close relationship to this project is also underlined by the fact that the Swiss NGO Intercooperation is strategically supporting the project and passing on Swiss



know-how in developing mountainous regions. Examples here are Entlebuch, Parc Ela and Müntertal. Along with sharing experience, visits to Switzerland are also planned, plus the establishment of partnerships with Swiss organisations.

Appropriate measures will be taken to ensure transparency and sustainability, as well as coordination of the project strategies on the various levels (municipality, region, country). There were therefore no further obstacles to giving the go-ahead for this project in December 2010.



I am extremely grateful that Switzerland contributes to the development one of the finest and most remote areas of Poland – the so called Bieszczady Mountains. For the people of my region, the Swiss funds are of particular importance, as we associate with Switzerland the highest quality products and a high level of tourist services.

By means of the project, networks of individuals and institutions, selected in an open competition, will benefit from training courses, internships and grants, which will help them to improve the quality of their products and services based on Swiss standards. I am glad that the funds for the promotion of the region, the creation of local brands, and the support to local entrepreneurs will help the region to be more competitive on the Polish and European markets. I would also stress that the project is possible thanks to the excellent cooperation between the Carpathian Foundation – Poland and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation in Bern.

Zofia Kordela- Borczyk,
Chairman of the Board, Executive Director,
Carpathian Foundation Poland

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

SUBJECT

Regional development

COUNTRY

Poland

PARTNER

Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The region around the foothills of the Carpathian mountains has always been marginalised and neglected. It has seen scarcely any economic development, its agricultural production is uncompetitive and farms have very little in the way of mechanisation. This underdevelopment also extends to the cultural sphere, for example only 2.5% of the population have completed higher education. There is also a lack of modern infrastructure, for example in transport, and no access to finance.

PURPOSE

The programme seeks to promote the economic potential of this neglected region of Poland. In particular, it aims to boost rural tourism and local production.

ACTIVITIES

- Analysis of non-agricultural activities
- Training in running enterprises in a mountainous region
- Study visits to Switzerland
- Introduction to managing small loans
- Creation of a partnership network for cooperation
- Creation of an agency to promote the Podkarpackie region

TARGET GROUPS

SMEs, NGOs, entrepreneurs interested in developing economic activities.

COSTS

Total project budget:

CHF 4.95 million

Swiss contribution:

CHF 4.82 million

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Carpathian Foundation Poland

DURATION

2011 – 2015