

# Country Report Poland



*The present fiche aims to present, in summary, how youth-related projects and initiatives are supported by the Rural Development Programmes in a number of countries selected for the second phase of the research in the framework of the Youth and Young farmers Thematic Initiative.*

## 1. Actors involved in youth related projects and main sources of financing

In Poland, a great variety of actors are involved in projects that promote rural youth. Out of the governmental actors, the most important ones are the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry for Regional Development, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Farm Advisory Services, the Marshall Offices (regional self-government), various museums and agricultural schools of secondary education level.

The LAGs are especially active in engaging the local rural youth locally. Several civil society organisations, such as the Rural Youth Association, the Professional Association of Young Farmers, the European Centre for Education and Development, the Foundation for Development of Education System, the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, the Rural Development Foundation and the Heinrich Böll Foundation – Polish Office, are also involved in rural youth projects.



**“Integrated Rural Development”  
Scholarship capacity building programme for students  
Heinrich Böll Foundation – Polish Office  
Total funding € 132,000**

The programme supported 20 graduating students (1,5 year each) by offering them financial scholarship and 360 hours of training with a particular focus on LEADER. Participants were selected in a competition among students from various universities and faculties (e.g. sociology, agriculture, landscape architecture, spatial planning) across Poland, both from rural and urban areas. The training was highly participatory, inviting experts dealing with rural development from Poland and abroad. Students attended various events and contributed to the development of legislation proposals on LEADER and youth issues (e.g. small rural schools).

An important part of the programme was to strengthen the fellowship in rural community – doing animation and research for the LAGs, as well as enhancing the students’ “network literacy”. As a result, most of the fellows have pursuing a career path in rural development or are become engaged in civil society initiatives in Poland and abroad. Some of the LAGs supported by students achieved very high scoring notes in the Polish 2007-2013 RDP competition.

Furthermore, research organisations also take part in promoting rural youth, including the Jagellonian University of Krakow, the Nicolaus Copernicus University of Torun, the Polish Academy of Sciences and other agricultural universities.

Additionally, the Polish People Party and Polish members of the European Parliament engage in youth projects, as do the UNDP and UNESCO Chairs.

The main sources of financing rural youth-related projects are the EAFRD, ESF, ERDF, Youth in Action, government funds and private funds, such as the Polish-American Freedom Foundation and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. In Poland there are a large number of rural youth initiatives and programmes that are financed through NGOs' funds – either directly or through re-granting schemes. Especially popular are the various capacity building programmes for young rural leaders and scholarships for materially disadvantaged youth from rural areas. One of the core donors of such initiatives is the above mentioned Polish-American Freedom Foundation.

## 2. How RDP promotes youth initiatives/projects in rural areas

The Polish RDP as such does not have a strong youth focus, even though youth is mentioned in the SWOT analysis. The analysis concentrates on various socio-economic tendencies regarding youth. In particular, the focus is on the threat of out-migration of youth from rural areas to cities and abroad due to better income opportunities, and the negative results arising from this brain-drain and loss of social capital, particularly in terms of development of rural areas.

In spite of this clear recognition of the issues facing young people in rural areas, the only RDP measures targeting specifically young farmers are Measure 112 'Setting up young farmers' and Measure 121 'Modernisation of agricultural holdings', whereas youth in general are targeted through LEADER projects. Effort is made by the Polish NRN to target young people. In fact the network, in spite of not having any youth focus in its action plans, has engaged in a number of youth-related initiatives, both at national level and in cooperation with other NRNs.

However, there is far more support for youth projects outside the RDP, especially from the ESF, NGOs, foundations and the UNDP.

### a. Consultation process for the preparation of 2007/2013 RDPs

The Professional Association of Young Farmers and the Association of Rural Youth participated in the consultations for the Polish 2007-2013 RDP. During the numerous conferences, workshops and meetings, especially within the working group on the 'Setting up of young farmers' measure, young farmers' representatives had opportunities to express expectations on the implementing rules for the measure (definition of beneficiary, amount of support, eligibility criteria, definition of setting up, beneficiary's obligations as well as procedure of applying for and granting support).

The final description of the measure was the result of the combination of both the experience gained during the 2004-2006 programming period, in terms of objectives, analysis of situation in agriculture, financial resources available, and different postulates and remarks made within the consultation process. During the consultations, a suggestion was made to introduce financial incentives for young farmers in M121 'Modernisation of agricultural holdings', which was then respected in the design of the eligibility criteria.

### b. How the RDP targets young people

As already illustrated above, the two main measures in the Polish RDP that target young people are M112, aimed solely for beneficiaries under 40 years of age, and M121 which also includes specific selection criteria for young farmers.



During the consultations it was already noticed that Measure 112 and Measure 121 gained a huge interest among stakeholders, which was then confirmed with the implementation. Comparing with other measures, these ones can be considered as leading in terms of “attractiveness” for beneficiaries. In this respect, targeting was also well prepared and expected numbers of beneficiaries were reached, including the number of young beneficiaries.

### *c. Role of the LAGs*

LAGs are the main vehicles for involving non-farming youth in the Polish RDP. Young people are explicitly mentioned in the eligibility criteria for LAG boards and their involvement is recommended. Many LAGs are involved in the implementation of youth projects; some of them, such as LAG Dobra Widawa, LAG Leśny Krąg, LAG Kwiat Lnu, specifically mentioned youth in their strategy. LAG Kwiat Lnu serves also as a local “contact point” for the Poland-wide NGO scheme “Act Locally”, which has a strong focus on rural youth. In some other LAGs the subject of youth, which is not explicitly mentioned in their strategy, has emerged during the strategy implementation, as in the case of LAG *Tygiel Doliny Bugu*, whose manager was interviewed in the framework of this research.

LAG *Tygiel Doliny Bugu* has funded two large projects addressing youth as well as a number of smaller youth projects initiated in some cases by young people.

Formally, the implementation of the main youth-related projects is a responsibility of organisations that are not chaired by youth. Young people are however active in encouraging local organisations and LDS beneficiaries to apply for funding and implement projects. They are also well informed about funding opportunities and needs of rural area.

### **“Giving Young People the Chance to Preserve Regional Traditions”**

**LAG Tygiel Doliny Bugu (PL) and LAG Neumunas (LT)**

**Budget: € 66 577, EAFRD € 32 261**

It was recognised that young people, aged 14-29 years old, from the territories of the LAGs, Neumunas (Lithuania) and Tygiel Doliny Bugu (Poland), were becoming more and more detached from the traditions of their regions. As a response, a project was conceived with the intention of reversing the decreasing levels of community activity amongst the youth population through fostering their participation in local activities.

The project was supported by an overall idea of promoting rural cultural heritage of both rural regions. The young people were actively involved in the project, learning about rural traditions in both countries and mastering artistic and handicraft skills. The project resulted in strengthening the connections between youth and their territories as well as with adults. Currently, both LAGs are continuing their cooperation through another TNC project on youth.



<http://tygiel.vvgnemunas.lt/index.php/pl/>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bea710kznWM>

According to the LAG manager, while working with youth there should not be too much constraints generated by rules and tight schedules, but more creativity should be allowed. Working with youth should be less theoretical and more practical, oriented on acquiring skills while using interactive workshops. Young people should be also “rewarded” for participating in projects, e.g. by adding some leisure activities to the agenda.

### 3. Role of the NRN in supporting youth

The action plan of the Polish NRN does not specifically refer to youth. Yet, in practice the NRN supports a wide range of activities for and organised by youth and young farmers’ organisations. The NRN also channels information about youth-related projects and events.

The NRN takes part in organising conferences and events, such as the Academic Forum for Rural Development in 2012 and 2013. It is also involved in the Flagship Project on youth under the Nordic-Baltic Cluster and the EUSBRs. The NRN also supports projects and actions related to youth regionally.



### 4. Role of youth and young farmers’ organisations in supporting youth

As already stated above, in Poland there is a large number of youth-related projects and initiatives initiated and supported by organisations, even if not necessarily youth organisation. In this respect, Poland has a strong rural youth organisation, the Polish Rural Youth Union, founded in 1928, the oldest non-governmental organisation in the country. Its mission is to support the comprehensive development of the young generation in the Polish countryside and the Polish agriculture. The organisation arranges internships and trainings, cooperates with research institutes, and focuses on education and leisure activities.



The projects, initiated by the Polish Rural Youth Union, target mainly young people from rural areas, young farmers as well as students of agricultural schools and universities. These projects are mostly funded by the ESF, but some are supported by the EAFRD fund.

*Information included in this fiche is primarily coming from the analysis carried out within the ENRD Initiative on “Youth and young farmers in rural areas”. The fiche is compiled by the ENRD Contact Point on the basis of information collected in the EU Member States and Regions. The content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the EU institutions, national or regional authorities.*