

From small projects to umbrella projects - Poland

1. What type of organisations are/were involved in the design?

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

2. Why was the tool/mechanism put in place?

The concept of 'small projects' was developed in order to enable local people and informal associations to develop and deliver small scale projects. Although straightforward and worthwhile in nature, it appeared to be very complicated to implement small projects as they were subject to the same verification rules as large investment projects. The great popularity of these small projects - so far more than 41 000 applications have been submitted, resulted in many administrative bottlenecks. Moreover, excessive verification led to a significant limitation of small projects scope of aid, which had to strictly comply with the regulations in place.

3. Describe briefly how it is carried out in practice

Small projects are defined as projects which contribute to improving the quality of life or diversification of economic activity in LAG areas and which are not eligible for support under Axis 3 measures – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy, provided they meet the eligibility and selection criteria and for which the total value of a project is between PLN 4 500 and 100 000.

The activities eligible under the 'Small projects' scope of aid are:

- increasing the awareness of local communities through training and other activities of an educational or workshop based nature, for entities from an area covered by a LDS;
- improvement of the quality of life of local communities in the area covered by a LDS;
- development of the activity of local communities;
- development of tourism and recreation in the area covered by a LDS;
- preservation, reconstruction, protection or signposting of valuable local landscape and natural heritage, in particular in areas covered by specific forms of nature protection, including Natura 2000 areas;
- preservation of local cultural and historical heritage;
- initiation of the creation, development, processing, distribution and services based on local resources, traditional sectors of economy or local heritage, including cultural, historic and natural, or improvement of the quality of such products.

Those eligible to benefit from aid through these projects included local people residing in a LAG area, if they run a business, non-governmental organisations, are a 'legal' person, and churches and religious communities which are based in or which operate in the area covered by a LAG.

The available aid takes the form of reimbursement of a part of the eligible costs of operations.

The eligible costs of 'small projects', unlike other RDP measures, can also include in-kind contributions such as labour or services provided free of charge. The level of financial support cannot exceed 80% of eligible costs of an operation.

4. What is the main effect of the described tool/model/practice in relation to financing LEADER and on which level is this effect achieved?

This system of funding 'small projects' has enabled a much higher number of small scale projects to access the funding available. This has supported the engagement of communities with the LEADER Programme, placed a value upon the volunteer contributions often made in projects of this nature and has built the capacity of smaller groups to develop, manage and deliver projects with the potential this will lead on to the same groups or individuals applying for larger scale activity.

5. What have been the conditions needed or put in place to design, implement the practice?

Under Axis 4 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, with the exception of activity eligible for support under Axis 3 measures, Poland, within the measure "Implementation of Local Development Strategies" allowed support for 'small projects' meeting the objectives of Axis 3.

6. What are the lessons learnt and relevance for LEADER 2014-2020?

Having reviewed the 'small projects' system and its associated administration the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has decided to replace 'small projects' with 'umbrella projects' in the next programming

period. It is anticipated this will simplify the aid application process as far as possible. The main aspects of the new system for 'Umbrella Projects' include:

- Umbrella projects group several micro projects which contribute to the overall goal set for the whole umbrella project,
- The LAG sets the specific targets and indicators for each umbrella project,
- The LAG is the sole beneficiary of the umbrella project, distributing grants to the final beneficiary who is delivering the micro project,
- The maximum value of a single micro project is 50 000 PLN,
- To be used by really small scale projects in order to avoid an unduly heavy administrative burden,
- The LAG publishes call for proposals, verifies applications, signs contracts and pays the final recipients,
- To complete the financial settlement with the Paying Agency the LAG presents a list of bank transfers made to the beneficiaries,
- The beneficiaries do not have contact with any institutions other than the LAG,
- Full responsibility for the implementation of the umbrella project and the achievement of its targets and indicators lies with the LAG,
- Only a proportion of LDS funds can be allocated to umbrella and the LAGs own projects.

7. Contact details for further information

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