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## **Policy of Promoting European Funds in the Activities of Polish Regional Governments on the Example of Lublin Province (2007–2013)**

Polityka promowania Funduszy Europejskich w działalności  
samorządów wojewódzkich na przykładzie województwa lubelskiego  
(2007–2013)

### **Abstract**

The study is devoted to the currently implemented in Poland information and promotion policy related to the European Funds. Since the Polish accession to the European Union (2004), these funds have been one of the most important sources of financial support for the development of the country and its regions. The European funds are of particular importance for the Polish underdeveloped eastern regions, including the Lublin region, on the example of which the author discusses the operation of this policy. A key role in promoting the European Funds is played by provincial governments, not only because their management of information institutions in their areas, but also by their own example of effective managing of aid from the European Union. The author of the study presents the legal basis of this policy, its objectives, tool used for the purpose of this policy and the structure and operation of the Information System of the European Funds in the programming period 2007–2013.

**Keywords:** European Union funds, the European Union, Cohesion Policy, promotion, regional government, regional development

### **Introduction**

Polish integration with the European Union, and in particular becoming a member of the Community, significantly influenced the transformation of the country in various fields – political, economic, social or cultural ones. Throughout its history, Poland has never changed so quickly, as it is today, and one of the most important reasons of the scale and dynamics of this transformation is the absorption of the European aid funds. The term “European Funds” is currently very deeply rooted in the Polish social and economic life. It all started nearly 20 years ago, in the early 90s of the previous century, when, under the auspices and with the strong support from the European Communities, the

political and economic transformation of Poland was initiated. At that time Poland, along with other countries of the disintegrating Eastern bloc, began to receive substantial financial support from the European Communities and other developed countries of the West. This support was primarily intended for Poland and Hungary, the countries leading in the political and market reforms in the area of Central and Eastern Europe (the PHARE Programme). Over time, the Community strategies to support the Polish transformation and socio-economic development of the country, as well as the scope and effectiveness of this support, have evolved.

When the relations with the European Communities and the European Union tightened in the early 90s of the Twentieth century, Poland became the largest recipient of financial assistance from the West. Following the country's accession to the European Union this aid became an integral component of the functioning of the state, its economy, including Polish local governments. Also there was a systematic increase in public demand for knowledge about the functioning of the European Union and its aid funds and the possible use of the structural support. In response, the government found it appropriate to begin the implementation of a policy related to information and promotion of the European Funds. It was decided to build an efficient information system serving the popularization of knowledge about the European aid funds and the acquisition of such means by various social entities. The main burden of the implementation of the information and promotion policy about the European Funds rested on provincial governments, which became the building blocks of a nationwide network of information on the Community Structural Funds<sup>1</sup>. The Ministry of Regional Development oversees the implementation of this policy which is particularly important for the state in terms of the membership in the European Union.

The purpose of this study is to present the operation of the information and promotion policy related to the European Funds in the programming period 2007–2013 on the example of a selected region, that is the region of Lublin. The basis for the study are the Community and national regulations and related documents, statistical data and promotional materials from the Ministry of Regional Development and agencies of the Lublin Province Marshal Office, as well as studies related to described issues by Polish authors.

## **1. European Funds for Poland in the programming period 2007–2013**

Discussing the information and promotion policy related to the European Funds in the programming period 2007–2013, the EU aid measures from which Poland benefited in the first years of its membership in the European Union should be mentioned (2004–2006, the structural funds of the financial perspective 2000–2006). The first two years after the accession to the Community were special due to the fact that we gained the full access to the EU Structural Funds for the first time. In 2004–2006 the acquisition of the European Funds (Structural Funds) was carried out by the Sector Operational Programmes<sup>2</sup> and the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IRDP), a key instrument at supporting the development of Polish local governments and implementation of the EU cohesion policy. In 2004–2006 the European Union allocated 8.65 billion euro for Poland<sup>3</sup>.

In the new, current programming period (2007–2013), Poland received higher financial support for its development. The budget of the European Union and *the National Cohesion Strategy* (NCS) – *The National Strategic Reference Framework* secured a total of 85.56 billion euro for the use by Poland in that period (by 2015, according to the rule n+2). Of this sum, 67.3 billion euro comes from the Community budget, 11.86 billion euro from national public funds (including approximately 5.93 billion from the budget of the Polish state) and 6.4 billion euro from private entities (co-financing their

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<sup>1</sup> The European Fund Information System for 2007-2013.

<sup>2</sup> These were the Operational Programmes: *Human Resources Development* (SOP HRD), *Improvement of the Competitiveness of Enterprises* (SOP ICE), *Fishery and Fish Processing* (SOP Fish), *Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food Sector and Rural Area Development* (SOP Agriculture), *Transport* (SOP-T) and *Technical Assistance Operational Programme* (OP-TA).

<sup>3</sup> Data from the Ministry of Regional Development from 2007. The development projects in Polish regions at that time were supported by the funding from the Community Initiatives (EQUAL, INTERREG, URBAN and LEADER) and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area (the so-called Norwegian funds, separate from the EU Structural Funds).

participation in the projects till the end of the current programming period). The expenditures under the EU cohesion policy are now coordinated with the expenditures allocated to structural instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fishery Policy, as well as European programmes for strengthening of competitiveness<sup>4</sup>. The total amount of funds involved in the implementation of the national development strategy, which is based on the National Cohesion Strategy, for the period 2007–2013 is close to 108 billion euro (107, 9)<sup>5</sup>.

The objectives of NCS are currently realised with the assistance of national Operational Programmes (OP) managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) managed by provincial governments, as well as the Cohesion Fund means. The financial support of the European Union, which is used by Polish regions, is distributed nationwide through the Operational Programmes: *Eastern Poland Development* (5 regions: Lubelskie, Podlaskie, Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie, Warmia and Mazury, 3.4% of the total EU support -2.3 billion euro), *Infrastructure and Environment* (41.9%, 27.9 billion euro), *Human Capital* (14.6%, 9.7 billion euro), *Innovative Economy* (12.4%, 8.3 billion euro), *Technical Assistance* (0.8%, 0.5 billion euro), and the Operational Programmes of *the European Territorial Cooperation* (about 1%, 0.7 billion euro) and 16 Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) prepared by each province (24.9% of the total funds, that is 16.6 billion euro)<sup>6</sup>. One of the ROPs is *the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007–2013* (ROP LP)<sup>7</sup>, which replaced key for the development of Polish regions – *The Integrated Regional Development Operational Programme* (IRDOP) used in 2004–2006.

Important instruments supporting the objectives of the NCS, especially in a regional context, are the before mentioned European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2007–2013 (replacing the previous Community Initiatives), pertaining to the cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation (557.8 million euro for their implementation for Poland) and a special initiative of the European Commission – the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (173.322 million euro for Poland, the programs: Poland – Belarus – Ukraine and Lithuania – Poland – Russia)<sup>8</sup>. The described structural funds available under the national OPs and *the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007–2013* are a major source of funding of the development policy of Lublin Province included in *the Lublin Province Development Strategy for the years 2006–2020* (LPDS)<sup>9</sup>.

## **2. The legal basis of the information and promotion policy connected with the European Funds in the programming period 2007–2013**

The Basic legal acts at the Community level which regulate information and promotional activities connected with the European Union Structural Funds in the current programming period are:

1. The Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and the repealing Regulation (EC) No Nr 1260/1999,
2. The Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general

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<sup>4</sup> These funds come from the Structural Funds - the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, as well as the Cohesion Fund supporting the implementation of the structural policy.

<sup>5</sup> Data of the Ministry of Regional Development published on the European Funds website of the Portal of the Ministry ([www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl)).

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> *The Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013*, Lublin: Lublin Province Board 2007 and *The Detailed Description of Priority Axes of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013. The Refined Programme*, Lublin, Lublin Province Board, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> See the European Fund Portal of the Ministry of Regional Development ([www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl)) and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes Portal of the Ministry of Regional Development. ([www.ewt.gov.pl](http://www.ewt.gov.pl)).

<sup>9</sup> *The Lublin Province Development Strategy for the years 2006-2020*. Lublin Province Board, Lublin 2005, vol. I and II (updated in 2009).

provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and Regulations of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund.

At the level of the Member State of the European Union, in the case of Poland, information and promotional activities connected with the European Funds in the programming period of interest to us are carried out on the basis of:

1. The Act of 6 December 2006 on the principles of the development policy implementation<sup>10</sup>,
2. *The Communication Strategy of European Funds in Poland as part of the National Cohesion Strategy for 2007–2013*<sup>11</sup>.
3. *Guidelines of the Minister of Regional Development for information and promotion* of 13 August 2007<sup>12</sup>, and
4. Detailed communication plans of particular OPs.

At the regional level, information and promotional activities connected with the European Funds are realized on the basis of the guidelines contained in the national OPs and in ROPs of individual provinces. In the case of Lublin Province these will be, for example:

- *Guidelines for marking of projects under the Human Capital Operational Programme*<sup>13</sup>,
- *Guidelines for beneficiaries of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007–2013 in the field of information and promotion*<sup>14</sup>.

### **3. The organization of information and promotion activities connected with the European Funds in Poland in 2007–2013**

Information and promotion activities connected with the European Funds in the current programming period are carried out by institutions involved in the implementation of the National Cohesion Strategy and managing individual OPs. This obligation is imposed on them by the before mentioned provisions of the Community law, and in particular by the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 and national documents, which more specifically define the principles of communication and promotion of the European Funds. These activities are aimed to provide the citizens and various entities with the access to information on how to apply for funding from the European Union structural funds, as well – which is very important – to show the Community contribution to the development of its Member States and to familiarize the society with the realised Cohesion Policy.

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<sup>10</sup> Act of 6 December 2006 on the principles of development policy (Journal of Laws of 2006, No. 227, item 1658).

<sup>11</sup> *The Communication Strategy of the European Funds in Poland as part of the National Cohesion Strategy for 2007-2013*,<sup>11</sup> Warsaw: the Ministry of Regional Development 2008 (the document approved by the European Commission on October 15, 2008, updated on February 23, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> *Guidelines of the Minister of Regional Development for information and promotion* of August 13, 2007, the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (ref. MRR/H/13 (1) 08/2007), the amendment of June 10, 2010 (ref. MRR/H/13 (02) 06/2010).

<sup>13</sup> *Guidelines for marking of projects under the Human Capital Operational Programme*, Warsaw: the Ministry of Regional Development 2009.

<sup>14</sup> *Guidelines for beneficiaries of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013 in the field of information and promotion*. Lublin Province Board, Lublin 2011.

Both the before mentioned *The Communication Strategy of the European Funds in Poland* (CSEF), as well as specific communication plans of the OPs, determine, on the basis of the Community regulations, the range of activities and basic tools for the implementation of the information and promotion policy in our field of interest.

The basic tools of the information and promotion policy connected with the European Funds, which should be ensured by the managing institutions are:

- Websites,
- Information offices,
- Publications connected with the EU funds and
- Trainings

Complementary tools include: materials in an electronic form, the organization of information and promotional events, the organization of call centres, advertising activities (outdoor advertising, advertising in electronic media), as well as public relations activities.

In accordance with the provisions of the basic documents, which we have already pointed out, institutions managing individual OPs are obliged to:

- conduct information campaigns devoted to the launched programmes,
- carry out a wide range information campaign about the programmes and the effects of their implementation at least once a year,
- place the flag of the European Union in front of their headquarters for one week starting on May 9,
- announce in an electronic form a list of beneficiaries of the European Funds, together with the titles of the projects and granted funding amounts

It should not be forgotten that the obligation of information and promotion of the European Funds is also incumbent on the beneficiaries of the EU support. The persons and entities realising their projects with the EU funding are required to carry out certain activities directed to the public, both during the project and after its completion. The form of undertaken activities varies depending on the type and nature of the project and the value of the public grant<sup>15</sup>. Application for the project funding from the European Union in the framework of the *NCS* means the beneficiary's automatic consent to putting basic information about him or her and the project on the public list of beneficiaries.

According to the *CSEF* provisions, institutions managing the Structural Funds, at both the central and regional levels, are obliged to conduct informational and promotional activities, including educational ones, relating to the *NCS* and all the programmes co-financed by the European Union in the years 2007–2013. The *NCS*, in the implementation of which various entities take part, ensures that the implemented activities are consistent, coordinated and carried out according to the same rules. In

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<sup>15</sup> If the public contribution to the project is lower than 500 thousand euro or if the projects are realized under the European Social Fund, the beneficiary does not have to put written information (e.g. on devices, in the premises, in the surrounding, in the information materials, documents or during trainings). His or her actions are limited to informing all participants of the project that the project has been selected by the program co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund or the Cohesion Fund. In the case of projects concerning the purchase of fixed assets or financing of constructions or connected with infrastructure, when the total public contribution exceeds 500 thousand euro, the beneficiary is required to place information boards at the start of the project, and then after its completion to install a commemorative plaque with the project title, the beneficiary's name, the project value and the financial contribution from the EU, the logo of the operational program, the EU flag with a verbal reference to it and the fund from which the project was co-financed. Detailed guidelines for the information and promotion activities are set out in *the Communication Strategy of the European Funds* (Section 8.2), communication plans of the Operational Programmes and documents of managing institutions.

the sphere of activities informing of and promoting the European Funds, the *CSEF* focuses primarily on encouraging potential beneficiaries to make use of the EU funds by providing them with the information needed in the process of applying for these funds, motivating beneficiaries to properly realize the projects and shaping public awareness in the sphere of possible use of these funds and their importance for the implementation of the *NCS* in the years 2007–2013.

The *CSEF* points to the most important target groups, to which it address the informational and promotional activities connected with the European Funds. These include the public, young people (as a particular social group), the beneficiaries of the EU support and potential beneficiaries, the media, economic and social partners, institutions engaged in the implementation of the European Funds, as well as decision-makers and local leaders and opinion-makers (such as artists, churches and religious associations, athletes, advertising industry).

The *CSEF* determines who should conduct information and promotion activities and what the division of roles among the institutions of the system is. Thus, the activities of the horizontal nature are carried out by the so-called Coordinating Institution, that is the Department of Information, Promotion and Training of the Ministry of Regional Development. Accordingly, the institutions managing national and regional Operational Programmes are responsible for informing about and promoting appropriate programmes directed to appropriate groups (appropriate for a particular program), regional communities, as well as beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. Intermediate bodies and intermediate bodies of the second degree carry out activities addressed directly to the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. The implementation of these objectives is aided by consistent visualization<sup>16</sup> and the language comprehensible for the public, which makes information and promotion activities connected with the European Funds consistent and transparent and contributory to “(...) a higher level of knowledge and awareness of the Polish society in the sphere of the use of the European Funds”<sup>17</sup>.

The *CSEF* is consistent with the *Guidelines for Information and Promotion of the Minister of Regional Development*<sup>18</sup>, which set out the basic principles of management and coordination of information and promotion activities, the way of preparation and the scope of communication strategies of *NCS*<sup>19</sup> and communication plans of individual OPs. *The guidelines* specify the course of activities and principles of their reporting and evaluation. This document, like the *CSEF*, identifies recipients of information and promotional activities conducted by individual institutions. And so, general activities are carried out by the *NSRF* Coordinating Institution in the sphere of the information and promotion. Promotional activities of the Operational Programmes addressed to the general public are carried out by the Institutions managing individual OPs, while the Intermediate bodies realize activities directed towards beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of these programmes. *The Guidelines* set out the tools for the information and promotion activities and describe their rules. The main tool of the policy, which is of interest for us, in this document are: keeping information offices, publishing, editing web pages and providing training in the field of the European Funds. At the level of the regional provinces, Institutions managing funds and OPs implement arrangements for information and promotion connected with the European Funds specified in documents of individual OPs for the years 2007–2013. For example, when it comes to Lublin Province and the Human Capital Operational Programme, financed from by the European Social Fund, these are: *The Communication Plan for the Human Capital Operational Programme 2007–2013* and *the Guidelines for marking of projects under the Human Capital Operational Programme*<sup>20</sup>. In addition, at the regional level – in our

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<sup>16</sup> For the *NCS* and individual operational programmes, the Strategy introduces a consistent visual identity system based on a graphic symbol and logotypes (the *NCS* and individual OPs have their graphic and color code).

<sup>17</sup> See *CSEF*.

<sup>18</sup> *The Guidelines for Information and Promotion of the Minister of Regional Development* of August 13, 2007. The National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (ref. MRR/H/13(1)08/2007), the amendment of the Guidelines took place in 2010 (ref. MRR/H/13(02)06/2010).

<sup>19</sup> *The National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 – supporting economic growth and employment (the National Cohesion Strategy)*. The Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw 2007.

<sup>20</sup> *The Communication Plan for the Human Capital Operational Programme 2007-2013*, Warsaw: the Ministry of Regional Development 2009; *the Guidelines for marking of projects under the Human Capital Operational Programme*, Warsaw: the Ministry of Regional Development 2009.

case Lublin Province – the resolutions of the document prepared by the local government of Lublin and serving the realisation of *ROP LP* are implemented, that is the *Guidelines for beneficiaries of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007–2013 in the field of information and promotion*<sup>21</sup>.

#### **4. The implementation of information and promotion policy connected with the European Funds in Lublin Province (2007–2013)**

The Act of 5 June 1998 about the provincial governments<sup>22</sup>, imposed on provincial governments a duty to undertake activities aiming at broadly understood development of the region. In accordance with Article 11 of *the Act*, these activities include – stimulating economic activity, creating conditions for economic development, supporting the development of science and cooperation between science and economy, promoting technological progress and innovation, increasing competitiveness and regional economy. The realisation of these objectives is closely related to *the Lublin Province Development Strategy for the years 2006–2020* (LPDS), having been implemented for a few years, which places great emphasis on the efficient use of the European aid funds.

Since the Polish accession to the European Union, Polish local governments have become one of the main beneficiaries of the EU support realised within the framework of the EU cohesion policy. A natural consequence of this state of affairs has been local governments' increased interest in these funds and in practical knowledge on the procedures of applying for the communal funds. The concern about more efficient use of ever larger aid funds made it necessary to carry out the effective information and promotion policy on the use of the European Funds not only by the central government, but also by regional and even local ones. This policy shapes the consciousness of the public and various entities about the key meaning of these funds for socio-economic development of the state and its regions and the need to make the best use of them. Currently, provincial governments effectively implement the information and promotion policy connected with the European Funds, contributing to the efficient use of the structural funds in various fields of social and economic life.

One of the provinces that successfully implements the policy of interest to us and at the same time effectively uses the EU Structural Funds is Lublin Province. The main task, currently faced by the local government of Lublin is to build modern, innovative and competitive knowledge-based economy. In line with the presented in LPDS vision of the future of the region, in the future Lublin Province should become the region of competitive economy, the region of modern knowledge-based society, the attractive and territorially coherent region and the region which is effectively managed and open to international cooperation<sup>23</sup>. The basic source of financing of the region development, according to LPDS, are the Structural Funds of the European Union. Therefore, it is crucial for the Lublin Province government to effectively use the European Funds. The whole information and promotion activities related to these funds adopted by this government can be regarded as a policy of this province on popularization and making the EU Structural Funds more easily accessible.

The policy of promoting the European funds realised by the local government of Lublin is an extension of the Community's policy and the policy of the central state government in this field, based on the above mentioned regulations, strategic studies and resolutions of OPs documents. In terms of information and promotion of the European Funds, the *ROP LP* can be considered as a contribution of Lublin Province to the concerned policy of the current programming period<sup>24</sup>. Lublin local government's actions, aimed at the most efficient use of the available EU assistance, result from the awareness that this support plays a key role in the modernization of the region and the elimination of its development backwardness in many areas. The regional authorities aim at making the best use of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Guidelines for beneficiaries of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013 in the field of information and promotion*, Lublin: Lublin Province 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Act of. 5 June 1998 on province local government region, Journal of Laws 1998, No. 91, item 576).

<sup>23</sup> See *LPDS*, updated 2009, vol. II, p. 27–32.

<sup>24</sup> See *the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013*. Lublin Province Board, Lublin 2007, p. 168 and next (5.10 „Communication and promotion”); *Guidelines for beneficiaries of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013 in the field of information and promotion*. Lublin Province, Lublin 2011.

European Funds, and thus at making them available to the biggest number of local government units and economic entities in order to maximally multiply the resulting benefits both for the regional economy, infrastructure and the society of the region, in accordance with the region development directions defined in the LPDS.

The aim of the information and promotion policy connected with the European Funds for 2007–2013 executed by the local government of Lublin and organizational units subordinate to the Lublin Province Marshal Office is:

1. support of management of structural funds, at the regional level, organized in the framework of the national and regional Operational Programmes,
2. providing clear, accurate and up to date information on the European Funds and the possibility of their use for the benefit of the Lublin region,
3. raising public awareness of the society in the region in the sphere of the possible use of the financial support of the European Union and its importance for the development of the Province.

The implementation of the province policy, of interest to us, is realised with the use of the following communication tools – intermediate ones (publications, bulletins, advertising, websites, engaging the local media) and direct ones (meetings, conferences, trainings, newsletters)<sup>25</sup>. In addition, it is important to correctly identify the target groups to which the information and promotion is addressed. These groups include: the beneficiaries in the public sector (governments of all levels), economic and social entities, NGOs and the civil society of the region<sup>26</sup>.

A key component of the policy promoting the European Funds, currently realised in Lublin Province, is to a network of information and consultation offices. The first of them was launched as early as the beginning of the EU Financial Perspective 2007–2013, and exactly in mid-2007<sup>27</sup>. The Information Offices (IOs) operate within the currently realised project of the Ministry of Regional Development titled “*The European Fund Information System for 2007–2013*”. Its aim is better coordination of activities and development of this kind of offices focused on reliable information to the public, local government units and business entities about functioning of the European support funds and the acquisition of the Structural Funds in various areas of social and economic life. IOs offer in one place a comprehensive service by notifying the interested entities on the European Community Cohesion Policy, all the European funds, the related national and regional OPs, the realisation of the NCS<sup>28</sup> and practical aspects of applying for funding from the European Union structural funds.

The Ministry of Regional Development closely monitors the work of the network of information offices connected with the European Funds taking care of high quality of their work and usefulness for

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<sup>25</sup> See. for example, actions taken on the Internet by the institutions of the Lublin province local government - the website of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province → information and promotion of the ROP LP ([www.rpo.lubelskie.pl](http://www.rpo.lubelskie.pl)).

<sup>26</sup> The obligation of information and promotion activities rests not only on the Institution managing *the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013*, but also, as already stated, on the beneficiaries of the aid from the Operational Programme. Each beneficiary is obliged to carry out awareness-raising activities directed to the public both during the project and after its completion. The form of the information and promotion activities varies depending on the nature of the project and the value of the public grant, to which we have already drawn the attention. The basic document regulating the method of realization of information and promotion activities by the beneficiaries are the Guidelines (*The Guidelines for beneficiaries of the Regional Operational Programme of Lublin Province for 2007-2013 in the field of information and promotion*. Marshal Office in Lublin, Lublin 2011 (see [www.rpo.lubelskie.pl](http://www.rpo.lubelskie.pl)).

<sup>27</sup> The first IO was launched on 14 May 2007 at. Czechowska 19 in Lublin, others were soon open at the premises of the Lublin Marshal Office Branches (in Biała Podlaska, Chełm and Zamość).

<sup>28</sup> The National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 – *supporting economic growth and employment. the National Cohesion Strategy*. The document accepted by the European Commission approving certain elements of the National Strategic Reference Framework, Warsaw: the Ministry of Regional Development 2007.



the society, local governments and economy. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on the skills of the consultants and professional servicing of customers in the IOs (mandatory consultants' participation in two trainings per year, a proficiency test every year). The Ministry makes information about the European Funds and the Cohesion Policy implementation widely available so that the consultants can provide satisfactory answers to the questions formulated by the interested entities. Periodically their level of satisfaction is tested by anonymous monitoring of the service quality in the local IOs.

The currently operating network of the Information Offices consists of:

- the Central Information Office of the Ministry of Regional Development located in Warsaw,
- 16 Main Information Offices (MIOs), one in every Province,
- dozens of local Information Offices (IOs) located in individual Provinces of Poland.

**Table 1. European Fund Information Offices in Lublin Province as a component of the European Fund Information System for 2007–2013**

European Fund Central Information Office 00-503 Warszawa, ul. Żurawia 3/5, tel. (22)6260632 www.cpe.gov.pl e-mail: punktkonsultacyjny@cpe.gov.pl			
Main Information Offices in big Polish towns: Białystok, Gdańsk, Gorzów Wlkp., Katowice, Kielce, Koszalin, Kraków, Łódź, Lublin, Olsztyn, Opole, Poznań, Szczecin, Toruń, Warszawa, Wrocław, Zielona Góra ↓			
Main European Fund Information Office in Lublin 20—151 Lublin, ul. Stefczyka 3B/0.18 www.feulubelskie.pl, call centre: 0 800175151, tel. (81) 4416865			
4 Local Information Offices in big towns of the Lublin Province ↓			
IO in Chełm 22-100 Chełm pl. Niepodległości 1	IO in Biała Podl. 21-500 Biała Podl. ul. Warszawska 1	IO in Zamość 22-400 Zamość ul. Partyzantów 94	IO in Puławy 24-100 Puławy ul. Centralna 9

Source: the table prepared by the author on the basis of the data from the Ministry of Regional Development

The functioning of the MIOs and local IOs is the responsibility of local governments of individual provinces, namely Marshal Offices, which cooperate in this area with the Ministry of Regional Development (under the signed agreements)<sup>29</sup>. The activities of the local IOs consist in free of charge informing and limited consulting about the European Funds and Operational Programmes, the possibility of obtaining the structural funds, as well as specific issues related to the preparation of grant applications<sup>30</sup>. In practice, it involves:

- informing about the conditions, criteria and procedures of financing from the EU projects,
- diagnosis and classification of ideas for funding in order to find the appropriate funding source (the proper fund, operational programme, priority / priority axis, the action / sub-action), or informing

<sup>29</sup> Financing of the European Funds information system in the period 2007 - 2013 is carried out in the framework of *The European Fund Information System for 2007-2013*, which is co-financed by the funds of the *Regional Development European Fund* (as part of the *Technical Assistance Operation Programme*) and the budget.

<sup>30</sup> Those interested may be assisted by the IOs on the phone, by postal mail and email, as well as directly, i.e., by means of individual consultations taking place in the IOs.

the interested entity about the impossibility of funding a specific project in the current programming period,

- informing about contact data to the institutions and their organizational units dealing with specific OPs, activities, types of projects,
- making available free of charge publications about the European Funds prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development, Marshal Offices in individual provinces or other public institutions involved in the implementation of these funds,
- organizing open information meetings for beneficiaries by the MIOS.

### **5. Organizational units of the Lublin Province Marshal Office participating in the implementation of the policy related to information and promotion of the European Funds**

The information and promotion of the European Funds and the possibility of their use in the years 2007–2013 in Lublin Province is coordinated by the Lublin Province Marshal Office (LPMO). They are implemented by four departments of the LPMO and 4 sections operating within them, namely:

1. The Regional Policy Department (European Funds Section),
2. The Regional Operational Programme Department (Section of the Information and Promotion of the Regional Operational Programme)<sup>31</sup>,
3. The European Projects Coordination Department (Section of Implementation of the Rural Area Development Programme 2007–2013),
4. The European Social Fund Department (Section of Communications and Promotion of the Human Capital Operational Programme).

#### **The basic tasks of the European Funds Section in the LPMO Regional Policy Department are:**

- providing the province residents with the knowledge about all the European funds and the financed activities connected with them, with particular reference to the operational programmes implemented under the National Cohesion Strategy for 2007–2013,
- providing the public with the information on the status and effects of the implementation of various European funds both on the national and regional levels, including the information on the implementation of specific projects under the so-called good practice,
- development of effective cooperation mechanisms for the exchange of information and undertaking joint actions in the province in the framework of the so-called European Funds Information System, which consists of regional and national institutions informing about the European Funds.

The basic tasks of the Section of the Information and Promotion of the ROP in the LPMO Regional Operational Programme Department are:

- coordination and implementation of information and promotion activities, including supervision over intermediate bodies of the second degree in this area,
- management of the Information Office and reception of applications,

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<sup>31</sup> The first two above mentioned departments are the newest units of the MOLP (created on 11.07.20011, substituting the previous Strategy and Regional Development Department).

- management of the ROP information service,
- organizing and conducting educational activities for the beneficiaries of the ROP.

The basic tasks of the Section of Implementation of the Rural Area Development Programme (2007–2013) in the European Projects Coordination Department are:

- informing about the *Rural Area Development Programme for the years 2007–2013 (RADP)*, including the rules and procedure for granting financial aid under the RADP and about beneficiaries' obligations arising from the grant of this kind of aid,
- transfer of all the data and information necessary for monitoring and reporting about the realised activities to the monitoring and reporting post,
- preparation and transfer of the annual communication plan for informing about the RADP to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development,
- issuing opinions about procedures for ongoing information and promotion tasks.

The basic tasks of the Section of Communications and Promotion of the Human Capital Operational Programme in the European Social Fund Department in the sphere of the European Fund promotion are:

- carrying out of promotion and Communications activities of the *HC OP*,
- preparation of information and communication plan of the *HC OP*,
- management of the Information Office and the Application Reception Office,
- organising and conducting of trainings and activities raising qualifications of the staff implementing the *HC OP*, as well as of meetings and conferences for the beneficiaries of *HC OP*.

## **6. Activity of the European Fund Main Information Office in Lublin related to the information about and promotion of the European Funds**

In order to illustrate the nature and scale of activities undertaken by IOs belonging to *the European Funds Information System* for 2007–2013 we can provide data and information about the main activities of the European Funds Information Office in Lublin, in the period from 1 September 2009 to 30 June 2011.

Figures:

- Number of people visiting the IO: 3110
- Number of answers given on the telephone: 5815
- Number of responses by e-mail: 517
- Number of organized trainings and meetings with beneficiaries 53 (participation of 1327 people)
- Number of meetings with beneficiaries outside the premises of the IO
- Number of meetings “on business trips” to municipalities and counties: 13 (participation of 75 people)

— Number of published information materials (books, documents, folders, etc.): 43 389

— Edition of newspapers and weeklies in which articles on European Funds were published (in the Lublin province): 328 598

Organized events:

Year 2009 (December)

Occasional event “EU Santa Claus” in 6 major cities of Lublin Province (Lublin, Zamość, Chełm, Kraśnik, Puławy, Biała Podlaska) involving the radio and television.

Year 2010 (June-September)

A series of holiday festivities “on the air and in the open air”, organized in collaboration with Radio Lublin SA throughout the Lublin Province

2010 (November-December)

European Funds Information campaign in the Lublin region titled “Information. European Funds. Development of the Lublin region” organized throughout Lublin Province (all municipality towns), in collaboration with the radio, television, press, using the Internet, outdoor screens and direct mailing.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Polish integration with the European Communities and the membership in the European Union meant that for nearly twenty years Poland has received a wide stream of financial support from various funds which are administered and managed by the Community. At that time, both Polish local governments, and various enterprises and organizations have been able to obtain financial support thanks to which their development and modernization have become possible. When it comes to Polish local governments, we should remember that their application for the EU funds has often been associated with overcoming serious financial, legal, organizational and technical obstacles. In most cases local government units have been able to overcome these difficulties and ultimately receive grants through which many valuable projects have been implemented, including the infrastructure investments fundamental for their future.

Not only the entities which have until now benefited from the support of the EU, but also the society, observing the effects of the information and promotion policy and the effects of the execution of specific European projects, have understood the importance of the financial aid received from the European Union. Without the Community’s support it would be impossible to realize many important for the community projects in various fields. The effects of these successful efforts will be seen for many future years, showing Poles in a clear manner the importance of the European Union cohesion policy. These achievements would not have been possible without the efficient implementation of the information and promotion policy about the European Funds to which the local government of Lublin has significantly contributed.

Finally, I should emphasize the great value of the experience gained by local governments of Lublin Province during the implementation of projects co-financed from EU Structural Funds. These experiences are an important asset of these governments, which will pay off well in the near future, specifically in the next programming period 2014–2020, when Poland is expecting even more, or – in the current financial crisis – at least similar to the ongoing, multi-billion dollar support from the European Union.

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