



Action Plan ARMSA

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RENATUR

Improving regional policies to better protect the natural heritage of peri-urban open spaces

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Part I – General information

Project: Renatur - Improving regional policies to better protect natural heritage of peri-urban open spaces.

Partner organisation: Mazovia Development Agency

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):

Country: Poland

NUTS2 region: Warsaw Capital, Mazovia Regional

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Investment for Growth and Jobs programme |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | European Territorial Cooperation programme |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other regional development policy instrument |

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Regional Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Voivodship

Mazowieckie Voivodship is now at the time of shift from Financial Period of the Structural Funds 2014-2020 and 2021-2027. Due to the project description, the Policy Instrument to be improved is Regional Operational Programme and during project preparation the (now) ending Programme was in place. In current situation the PI improvement was define as process of improvement of Programme for next years by analysing the missing chances of previous one and using professional knowledge to add PUOS natural heritage protection context in process of programming on new one.

Finally defined Action is dedicated to Regional Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Voivodship for period 2021-2027 that is formally called “Funds for Mazovia 2021-27”.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

General Background

During peer review session (14th January 2022, Renatur S.C. Meeting - Improving the Regional Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Voivodship toward protection of natural heritage of Peri-Urban Open Spaces) some general recommendations have been proposed concerning the success conditions for PUOS protection regarding grant schemes at the regional level:

- pilot studies showing the importance of them. This is, pilot studies promoting PUOS protection should be done. An the results of this pilot examples will show how it can be done, how beneficiary it is and which are the possibilities in order to work on that line of PUOS protection.
- development of regulation,
- knowledge management,
- education of residents and tourists to raise their awareness of the importance of the PUOS for the their wellbeing,
- establishment of the regional connection to illustrate why natural heritage protection should be promoted in the PUOS (example: public relations with the citizens),

- co-creation and participatory approach – stakeholder involvement before the start of investment project,
- strengthening regional planning system to make it obligatory for whole metropolitan area,
- clear vision on an area, translated into spatial/urban plans – durability, clear priorities and preferences of the authorities - e.g. this can be problematic when there is a change in local government and the new one has different visions and priorities,
- harmonization of financial sources, stable and long term (e.g. in terms of maintaining the green infrastructure like Górki Szymona but also agricultural development schemes - their stability),
- clear management and responsibility framework.

Grant schemes should precisely and explicitly define criteria promoting PUOS protection. Otherwise, applicants of projects selected in competitions for co-financing under the Regional Operational Program in 2021-2027 will not refer to the protection of PUOS or, what is worse, when implementing projects in PUOS, they will not protect them or even develop them. The solutions to better protect the natural heritage of PUOS must be efficient and not be overburdened for applicants. The sustainable success of grant schemes concerning PUOS protection also goes hand in hand with some additional profits, such as i.e. creation of new jobs or new channels of promotion of local tourism and products.

A strategic approach is also needed at the local level. A PUOS visitor flow management, including onsite digitalised measures and pre-calculations, should be used. There is a paper that explains some examples Zubiaga, M., Izkara, J. L., Gandini, A., Alonso, I., & Saralegui, U. (2019). Towards smarter management of overtourism in historic centres through visitor-flow monitoring. *Sustainability*, 11(24), 7254 ([access here](#)). Thanks to this approach, harmonization of tourism and nature protection management can be possible. An extensive and massive tourism may damage cultural values of heritage sites or PUOS. Overtourism therefore needs to be managed to facilitate approachableness and bring economic dynamism to tourist sites. The lessons learnt from the article is to meet “the Triple Bottom Line sustainability strategy (assuring social, environmental, and long-run economic sustainability) where the relationships between social connectedness (coexistence between tourists and inhabitants) and organizational sustainability (managing tourism for economic dynamism) need to be tackled” (pp. 2). The CHRISTA Interreg Europe project ([access here](#)), for example, provided a good practice repository for sustainable and responsible tourism at heritage sites. The CHRISTA project is a particularly good point of reference for Mazovia as it has gathered experience in protecting the value of natural and cultural heritage through tourism projects under regional operational programs in nine European regions (Italy, Spain, Romania, Cyprus, Macedonia, Sweden, Latvia, Bulgaria and Portugal). The experience of the CHRISTA project shows that educational activity that takes into account non-mass access should be a mandatory element of any project of this type. An example of good practice (GP) in this respect is, for example, iLagoon fishing tourism in the lagoon of Venice. iLagoon is an innovative application for iPad for tourism, which acts as an interactive guide for the fishing-tourists. The traditional audio-guide systems and new functionalities of the application were combined for the ergonomics of use. The automatic recognition of polar coordinates, associated to the area of interest, allows the visitor to access the content related to the object that interests him in a simple and comfortable way. Granada Geopark is an initiative based on a relevant geological heritage and other natural and cultural resources located in the north area of Granada. The educational part of the project addressed to students and pupils includes landscape and natural photography courses and technical seminars on geological heritage and geotourism. The need to include educational elements in these projects significantly

strengthened their sustainability and contributed to the possibility of ensuring a better display of heritage values without overburdening it with excessive tourist pressure.

Target groups should also be properly defined, setting rules for different groups of tourists. There are some platforms that provide guides and examples to carry out this group target specification. One of them can be [Good tourism institution](#). The next stage of work on defining the rules should be participatory planning with regular involvement of all actors / stakeholders. Tourists should gradually learn how to allow a given area natural renewal and regeneration in a balanced way. Raising the level of users' awareness should be harmonized with setting regulatory framework at local level for PUOS protection in relation to tourism and local development. These goals can also be achieved thanks to the mandatory inclusion of educational activities in PUOS projects in ROP 2021-2027.

ACTION 1. Project selection criteria in ROP with extra points for PUOS protection

Action

According to experts, an increase in the number of visitors causes inevitably more cars, garbage etc. Ultimately, it leads to an increase in capacity. Therefore, there should be limits – some services should be restricted, limits in the number of visitors should be applied. Preferences should be given to non-motorized means of transport for accessibility. For infrastructure development, sustainable and circular solutions should be applied (utility systems, energetic systems of buildings etc.). Threats are also new construction in the PUOS and more environmental pollution in the PUOS. Unfortunately the importance of the PUOS as a protection-worth space is lost in public perception. This risk can be minimized with the creation of an action guide for sustainable tourism.

Landowners and managers of tourism activities should bring their actions in line with the principle of sustainability to the best of their ability. Tourism in PUOS is sustainable when its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts are fully considered and the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and locals are integrated. From the biodiversity side, enhancing, at least maintain biodiversity, ecologically sustainable tourism services and measuring of carbon footprint should be priority. Any development or activity must not result in a loss in biodiversity. The main objective should be to reduce continuously carbon footprint. Set rules should remain to define / calculate carbon footprint of service / tourists to define biodiversity index. On this basis, incentives for sustainable / green developments should be developed. During the workshop (14th January 2022, Renatur S.C. Meeting - Improving the Regional Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Voivodship toward protection of natural heritage of Peri-Urban Open Spaces) experts indicated the following examples of effective PUOS protection:

- rehabilitation of water regimes in Hortobagy National Park,
- also themed trails that allow visitors to experience protected areas,
- the Hortobagy National Park (in Hungary) - the Puszta World Heritage Site is an exceptional surviving example of a cultural landscape constituted by a pastoral society. The national park maintains the world heritage site, keeps traditional animals, has built a "brand" based on local products, carries out educational activities and runs tourists attractions,
- formulation of greenways as a new way of tourism in PUOS - ongoing process in Hajdu-Bihar County based on lessons learnt from OUR WAY project, success factors were willingness of local people (farmers, citizens), municipality leadership, proper of nature protection experts, available resources,

- OUR WAY project is an Interreg project that aims to contribute to the conserving, protecting, promoting and developing **natural and cultural heritage** in Europe using **Greenways** by means of the improvement of policy instruments related to the cultural and natural quality of the territories involved, including tools for their governance and developing specific measures for their promotion and preservation,
- the development of the landscape park of the Merode (<http://www.demerodeonline.be>),
- initiated by the Flemish Government opportunity to acquire 1500 ha of land, incl. forest, agricultural land etc. Afterwards a land development project was set up and subsidies were given to develop this land as well as the surrounding areas.

The above-mentioned projects have a common element, i.e. raising the awareness of tourists through educational activities. This conclusion, resulting from the exchange of experiences within the RENATUR project, suggests that criteria promoting education and awareness-raising activities should be included in the evaluation of projects that relate to PUOS.

On this basis, key areas of criteria of a sustainable tourism were formulated. The co-financed project by raising the awareness of tourists through educational activities:

- involves sustainable mobility of visitors,
- reduces environmental degradation,
- respects nature,
- has as little impact as possible on the nature,
- respects local people,
- enables to experience nature as close, intensive and original as possible,
- minimizes resource use,
- adapts as much as possible to the culture of the country and local community,
- is responsible, innovative and inclusive,
- doesn't harm the natural heritage of a region.

As the general criterion, the investment should be aimed at the sustainable use of space in connection with the development and design of spaces that deserve protection. The other general criteria, applied in projects via educational activities, should be following:

- measurable impacts on biodiversity,
- carbon footprint measurement and using green energy,
- contribution of a certain initiative to protection of the Nature 2000 areas,
- justification of the proper involvement of stakeholders both for application and later implementation phases; proving that the investment strengthens one or more ecosystem service/s of the area concerned,
- connection/logic relations/ synergy between different funds (past / future) relation, different initiatives, investments, actions,
- bonus points for projects that promote sustainable partnerships (e.g. between citizens or between different municipalities). that is, to make partnerships that can be consolidated to work together for the sustainability of the environment and with a long-term vision,
- profit for cooperation on local level - partnership in the proposal.

After defining main general criteria recommendations were formulated regarding the implementation of defined types of projects under specific objectives in the draft version of the Regional Operational Program of the Mazowieckie Voivodship 2021-2027 (Funds for Mazovia):

| Specific objective | Project types | Recommendations concerning promotion of natural heritage of PUOS with Regional Operational Programme |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 2 (ii) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Construction and expansion of installations / units for generating electricity and heat from renewable sources with related infrastructure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ not to increase artificial surface, not to use be done on natural soil, ▪ taking advantage of natural possibilities, e.g. damming a river, ▪ use already artificial surface to generate it, buildings etc., ▪ communities of energies using PUOS to support sustainable energy production, ▪ amount of co2 being avoided as indicator, |
| 2(iv) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disaster management equipment and infrastructure; ▪ Increasing flood protection and limiting the effects of drought by retaining rainwater; ▪ Counteracting the effects of droughts and heavy rains in urbanized areas through the use of green and blue infrastructure; ▪ Development of climate change adaptation plans (MPA). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the use of nature based solutions, ▪ creating multifunctional raingardens in PUOS, |
| 2(vii) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updating of landscape park protection plans; ▪ Protection of biodiversity and creation of protection centres for native plant and animal species; ▪ Reclamation of municipal waste landfills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ holistic ideas and nature based solutions of the waste landfill reclamation. to include the river landscapes (like the one in Piaseczno) into a fauna and flora protection zone, |
| 4 (vi) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thematic tourist routes and tourist products (referring to historical, cultural, natural and culinary values). ▪ Development of infrastructure for conducting cultural activities important for education and cultural activity (greening). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the thematic routes could connect existing PUOS as ecological corridors, ▪ routes done in the most sustainable easy way with the lowest impact on the area, ▪ canoe trails, ▪ greenways (e.g. OUR WAY project, Interreg Europe), ▪ if possible not to construct more, reuse of buildings and if constructed very low |

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of cultural and creative industries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ impact buildings or infrastructure with local resources, ▪ ECO Educational paths joining different PUOS, ▪ thematic cultural routes linking tradition, innovation and environment (OXENWEG project in Hajdú-Bihar). |
| 5 (i) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage. ▪ Revitalization of degraded areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ revitalized degraded areas could be interlinked with ecological corridors with PUOS, ▪ giving new sustainable functions for revitalized areas, ▪ the use of nature based solutions for the revitalization of the degraded areas, ▪ to promote the cultural knowledge not just buildings, local history |

The above listed criteria require to be the subject of discussion and reflection at the regional level during works on the Regional Operational Program – key elements of the process are defined below.

Implementation of the Action is connected with 3 crucial success factors that have to be executed in Phase II:

1. Internal discussion with the Department of Regional Development and European Funds of the Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Voivodship, and internal decision should be made whether:

- the criterion for taking into account educational activities is mandatory or scored as additional,
- it is horizontal criterion or it is separately defined for each specific objective.

2. Regional ex-post evaluation of the Regional Operational Program 2014-20 should indicate the following scenarios:

- role of the additional criteria in the driver for specific policy implementation,
- possible way to protect PUOS by selection criteria in new financial period.

Marshal Office of Mazowieckie Voivodship is defined ex-post evaluation of the of the Regional Operational Programme with general assumption that results from the evaluation will define recommendations for improvement of the ROP for 2021-27. The range of the analysis will be very wide and include many subjects and topic that are important for follow up of the regional policy and improve its results. Thanks to the new area connected to PUOS protection it can be possible to execute two important aspects necessary for the action (in parallel way):

- understanding of the PUOS protection as a element of the public funding opportunity,
- creation of the positive attitude and acceptance of the PUOS protection within the Stakeholder milieu.

The ex-post evaluation I planned for the end 2022 and half of the 2023.

3. Implementation of the formal procedure have to be executed to take into account to the greatest possible extent of influence of the improved Regional Operational Program on regional level:

The development and introduction of the criteria to the competition organized in the Regional Operational Program of the Mazowieckie Voivodship is carried out in accordance with a specific procedure:

- The draft criteria are developed in cooperation by the employees of the Managing Authority of the program (this role is performed by the Management Board of the Mazowieckie Voivodship, operational work on its behalf is carried out by one of the departments of the Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Voivodship) and the Intermediate Body (eg the Mazovian Unit for the Implementation of EU Programs).
- The draft criteria are then the subject of works of the Working Group of the Monitoring Committee of the Regional Operational Program (the body supervising the implementation of the regional operational program). The working group consists of a maximum of 21 people; these are employees of the aforementioned department, intermediary institutions, and various regional entities (eg Mazovian Center for Social Policy, Mazovian Office of Regional Planning).
- Then the criteria are discussed and voted on by the Monitoring Committee.

Many stakeholders are involved in the process of developing the criterion. Only the Monitoring Committee adopts the final version of the criterion.

Players involved

Department of Regional Development and European Funds of the Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Voivodship - department responsible for the preparation, implementation and updating of the regional operational program.

Department of Culture, Promotion and Tourism - responsible for the preparation of the regional tourism development strategy.

Masovian Regional Tourist Organization - NGO involved in the work on the regional strategy of tourism development.

Department of Ecological Policy, Geology and Hunting - department responsible, inter alia, for activities related to landscape parks and protected landscape areas.

Mazovian Unit of EU Programmes Implementation (MJWPU).

Timeframe

Implementation of Action is planned for the whole period defined in the project.

From formal perspective the process will be directly connected with two main elements:

1. schedule of the ex-post evaluation,
2. schedule of the Implementation of the Priorities in Regional Operational Programme defined yearly and described in the Implementation Manuals.

Consequently definition of the selection criteria will be, from formal perspective, element of the internal discussion during submission of the Manuals.

Following the aforementioned points it is assumed that timeframe of the action implementation will go in below presented path:



The described procedure of developing a list of criteria, adopting them and integrated them to the OP takes approx. 2-3 months. It is assumed that Action will be implemented if the list of criteria is qualified for a working group meeting and the real time necessary to execute the procedures can take 6 months.

However, it should be taken into account that not all documents necessary for the implementation of European funds at the regional level are ready yet. The regional operational program is currently being consulted with the European Commission. Additionally, a working document describing in detail how to implement specific objectives and project types has to be prepared. Only after the approval of the regional program by the European Commission it will be possible to start working on the criteria.

Costs

Implementation of the action require allocation of financial resources, that in general assumption are defined as follow:

1. Personal costs:

- a. ARMSA: 2 person x 12 months x 250 Euro = 6000,00 Euro
- b. Marshal Office (equivalent of costs of the person responsible for ROP: 1 person x 6 months x 150 Euro = 900,00 Euro
- c. Experts in the process: 5 person x 300 Euro = 1500,00 Euro

2. Meetings (rooms, catering, materials):

- a. 2 regional meetings x 250 Euro = 500,00
- b. 4 local meetings x 200 Euro = 800,00

3. Travel and accommodation:

- a. Local travel: 500 Euro

4. Other costs:

- a. Evaluation costs (equivalent of all costs of the evaluation): 1000 Euro
- b. Materials and promotion of Action (e.g. articles in local media): 500 Euro

Funding sources

Aforementioned costs will be covered by following funding resources (general assumption):

1. ARMSA budget: 1a, 1c, 2b, 3a,4b.
2. Marshal office budget: 1b, 2a, 4a.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____

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