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## Regional Operational Program for the Lodz Voivodeship as a vehicle of the regional development strategy

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**REGIONAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAM  
FOR THE LODZ VOIVODESHIP AS A VEHICLE  
OF THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**Introduction**

In 2006 Polish Parliament passed a law setting out the rules of development policy<sup>1</sup>. Mainly intended to coordinate socio-economic policies at the national, regional and local levels, the new law also named entities responsible for development policy and described the mode of their cooperation. The underlying goal was to create an environment enabling the best use of the resources offered by the structural funds and the Cohesion Fund.

While the national development policy has been made the responsibility of the Council of Ministers, its regional and local levels have been assigned, respectively, to the self-governing voivodeships (regional councils) and the self-governing counties and communes (county councils and commune or town councils).

The fundamental strategic document defining the objectives and priorities in Poland's socio-economic development is the **National Development Strategy 2007–2015**. Together with the National Reform Programme 2005-2008 it has been used as a basis for developing and enacting the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013 (**National Cohesion Strategy 2007–2013 – NCS**).

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<sup>1</sup> Ustawa z dnia 6 grudnia 2006 r. o zasadach prowadzenia polityki rozwoju, Dz.U. 2006, nr 227, poz. 1658.

The NCS's strategic objective and horizontal goals have been worked out in response to the challenges raised by the Lisbon Strategy and the results of a socio-economic analysis. The strategic objective has been designed to create an environment conducive to increasing the competitiveness of a knowledge-based and entrepreneurial economy that ensures employment growth, as well as improved social, economic and spatial cohesion.

To attain the strategic objective, several horizontal goals have been defined, such as<sup>2</sup>:

- a) improved functioning standard of public institutions and development of partnership mechanisms,
- b) better quality of human capital and enhanced social cohesion,
- c) provision and modernisation of technical and social infrastructure to make Poland more competitive,
- d) helping enterprises become more competitive and innovative,
- e) increasing the competitiveness of Polish regions,
- f) providing rural areas with equal development opportunities and fostering their structural transformations.

The tools for achieving the strategic objective and the horizontal goals are six operational programmes and 16 Regional Operational Programmes managed by the regions.

Because of the NCS goals, the major role in distributing the EU funds has been given to the regional self-governments, which control 25% of the country's 2007–2013 funding. Each Voivodeship Board has been obligated to develop their regional operational programmes to be co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

This article presents the implementation status of the Regional Operational Programme for the Lodz Voivodeship. The analysis will be based on the data obtained directly from the Lodz Marshal's Office and from the website of the Ministry of Regional Development (MRD).

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<sup>2</sup> Narodowe Strategiczne Ramy Odniesienia 2007–2013 wspierające wzrost gospodarczy i zatrudnienie. Narodowa Strategia Spójności, Ministerstwo Rozwoju Regionalnego, Warszawa 2006.

## **1. The Regional Operational Programme for the Lodz Voivodeship 2007–2013 – its objective and structure**

The Regional Operational Programme for the Lodz Voivodeship 2007–2013 (ROP LV) has been designed as a tool using the ERDF funds to further the implementation of the Lodz Voivodeship Development Strategy 2007–2020.

This operational document charts the main lines of regional development towards<sup>3</sup>:

- a) higher economic competitiveness,
- b) popularization of sustainable development in the region, and
- c) enhanced social, economic and spatial cohesion.

The document's foundations are the MRD's guidelines and the lessons learnt during the previous programming period. The ROP LV was approved by the European Commission's decision of 2 October 2007 accepting, under Community aid, the ERDF operational programme for the region of Lodz covered by the convergence objective.

The strategic objective of the ROP LV is „to integrate the region into the European and global socio-economic space as a Central European centre of development attractive for residents and business, and to strive to ensure the region's internal cohesion, while maintaining its diversity”<sup>4</sup>.

Under the EC regulation 1083/2006, the body responsible for the programme management to the European Commission is the Voivodeship Board.

The Lodz voivodeship has received € 1,006.38 million from the ERDF to carry out its RPO. The domestic matching funds are estimated at € 276 million; of which € 155 million are public funds and € 121 million come from private sources. The voivodeship accounts for 5.40% of the ERDF's financial allocation to Poland, calculated according to an algorithm accepted by the Council of Ministers.

With more than a 20% share in the EU's cohesion policy budget for the years 2007-2013, Poland has become the greatest beneficiary of the policy. The country will receive a total of € 67.3 bn, enhanced with public and private matching funds estimated at around € 11.9 bn and € 6.4 bn, respectively. Table 1 shows the distribution of the ROP funds among particular voivodeships.

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<sup>3</sup> Regionalny Program Operacyjny Województwa Łódzkiego na lata 2007–2013, Łódź, September 2007, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 4.

Table 1

Funding distributed among voivodeships' ROPs (€ million)

Voivodeship	ERDF funds	Domestic public and private funds	Total amount under ROP
Dolnośląskie	1 213.10	348.00	1 561.10
Kujawsko-pomorskie	951.00	294.00	1 245.00
Lubelskie	1 155.85	480.91	1 636.76
Lubuskie	439.10	150.04	589.14
Łódzkie	1 006.38	276.00	1 282.38
Małopolskie	1 147.70	142.57	1 290.27
Mazowieckie	1 831.50	323.20	2 154.70
Opolskie	427.14	75.37	502.51
Podkarpackie	1 136.30	331.94	1 468.24
Podlaskie	636.20	114.04	750.24
Pomorskie	885.06	342.10	1 227.16
Śląskie	1 712.98	303.71	2 016.69
Świętokrzyskie	725.81	128.08	853.89
Warmińsko-mazurskie	1 036.60	501.93	1 538.53
Wielkopolskie	1 272.80	415.22	1 688.02
Zachodniopomorskie	835.43	n/a	n/a

Source: developed by the author based on the website data on Regional Operational Programmes implemented by particular voivodeships.

The vehicle for attaining the strategic objective of the ROP LV is activities divided among priority axes I–VII. Table 2 displays the amounts of funding allocated to the particular axes.

Table 2

Distribution of the 2007–2013 ERDF funds among priority axes in the Lodz voivodeship

Specification	ERDF funds (€ million)
Priority axis I: Transport infrastructure	241.53
Priority axis II: Environmental protection, hazard prevention and power sector	171.08
Priority axis III: Economy, innovation, entrepreneurship	271.72
Priority axis IV: Information society	70.44
Priority axis V: Social infrastructure	120.76
Priority axis VI: Urban renewal	100.63
Priority axis VII: Technical assistance	30.19

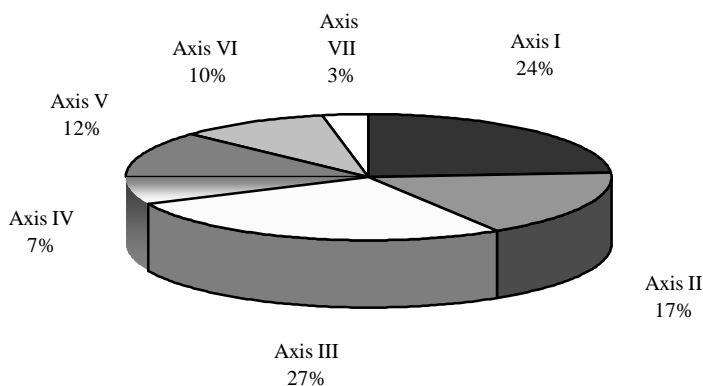
Specification	ERDF funds (€ million)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 006.38</b>

Source: developed by the author based on the *Szczegółowy opis osi priorytetowych Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego Województwa Łódzkiego na lata 2007–2013*, Łódź 2011, p. 7.

Most ERDF funds (27%) have been directed to axis III for the development of innovative and competitive economy in the region.

Between 2007 and 2013 this axis will receive € 418 million, almost € 272 million provided by the ERDF itself and € 138.6 million coming from domestic public and private sources (33.6 and 105 million euros, respectively)<sup>5</sup>.

The distribution of the ERDF funds among the ROP LV axes is shown in Graph 1.



Graph 1. ERDF's financial contribution to ROP LV 2007–2013 by priority axis

Source: *Podręcznik beneficjenta III osi priorytetowej...*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Podręcznik beneficjenta III osi priorytetowej Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego Województwa Łódzkiego na lata 2007-2013*, Łódź 2010, p. 19.

Special emphasis has also been laid on axis I *Transport infrastructure* and axis II *Environmental protection, hazard prevention and power sector* that have been allocated, respectively, € 241.53 million and € 171.08 million (i.e. 24% and 17% of the funding made available to the Lodz voivodeship).

## 2. Implementation status of the Regional Operational Programme for the Lodz voivodeship

The data obtained from the National Information System KSI SIMIK 07–13 show 168,500 applications totalling PLN 380.6 bn that were submitted in the country between the start of the structural programmes and 31 March 2011.

Based on the applications, 53,626 funding contracts amounting to PLN 235.4 bn (62.1% of the current allocation) have been signed with the beneficiaries.

As far as the ROP LV is concerned, 930 contracts were concluded by the same date. Their total value of PLN 3,236,507,957.14\* translates into PLN 1,277.03 of EU funding per capita in the voivodeship. Table 3 shows the numbers and the values of the contracts with respect to the priority axis.

Table 3

Numbers of contracts and funding granted under ROP LV as on 31 March 2011

Priority axis	Contract	
	Number	Value
Priority axis I	63	857,116,314.98
Priority axis II	155	561,925,393.31
Priority axis III	426	831,115,767.24
Priority axis IV	190	272,049,447.19
Priority axis V	85	469,478,479.66
Priority axis VI	7	168,742,055.01
Priority axis VII	4	58,536,954.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>3,236,507,957.14</b>

Source: developed by the author based on the ROP Department's data, Marshals Office in Lodz.

\* EBC PLN/€ exchange rate on 30 Dec. 2010 = 3.9650.

Most contracts have been signed in relation to axis III for economy, innovation and entrepreneurship. This category of beneficiaries is assisted by the Entrepreneur Service Centre in Lodz. The next two very popular categories of activities attracting large numbers of applications are covered by axis II (environmental protection) and axis IV (information society).

The special interest that the prospective beneficiaries have shown in all three axes since the very beginning of the programme have resulted in over 1,500 funding applications directed to the Managing Authority. Table 4 shows their distribution among priority axes.

Table 4

Numbers of applications submitted to ROP LV 2007–2013

Priority axis	No. of applications			
	Submitted	Meeting formal criteria	Meeting business criteria	Rejected
Priority axis I	227	99	80	48
Priority axis II	509	282	266	227
Priority axis III	6	6	5	1
Priority axis IV	479	257	207	222
Priority axis V	357	185	153	172
Priority axis VI	9	8	8	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 587</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>671</b>

Source: developed by the author based on the ROP Department's data, op. cit.

The five years of the ROP LV implementation provide grounds for a positive assessment of the beneficiaries' interest in the EU aid's funds. Nevertheless, the applicants still struggle to comply with the formal and business guidelines that regulate application writing. The Managing Institution invariably disqualifies almost half of the applications because of various shortcomings. The most frequently found are the following<sup>6</sup>:

- a) projects scheduled for unreasonably long periods,
- b) data inconsistencies,
- c) relatively or completely unrealistic project assumptions,
- d) the electronic version and the paper version of a project being at variance,

<sup>6</sup> *Wnioski do Unii Europejskiej*, www.wnioski-ue.pl (5 June 2011).



- e) budgets showing items that were not indicated in the application,
- f) miscalculated amounts of the funding requested and of the applicant's own contribution,
- g) „bloated” costs,
- h) numerical inconsistencies between the application and the attachments,
- i) the obligatory attachments are either missing or have a wrong form.

The voivodeship of Lodz has many information centres with staff helping the beneficiaries prepare their applications. Training-oriented meetings are also frequently delivered. This educational activity aims to familiarize a possibly large group of the potential beneficiaries with the correct ways of writing applications and with settling the amounts granted as required by the relevant regulations.

As shown by the ROP LV data as on 31 March 2011, the programme has spent on contracts 75.8% of its budget, which ranks the voivodeship seventh in the country<sup>7</sup>. Its counties submitted 1,679 applications of which 835 were approved and cleared for funding estimated at PLN 3,415,078,777.59. Ultimately, 688 contracts totalling PLN 2,706,933,408.90 have been signed.

Number of contracts signed
City of Lodz - 193
Pabianicki County - 54
Łódzki-Wschodni County - 45
Zgierski County - 44
Sieradzki County - 28

Funding received
City of Lodz – 675,550,461.41
Zgierski County – 206,912,770.28
Poddębicki County – 161,514,133.63
Piotrkowski County – 115,647 571.89
Bełchatowski County – 110,631,712.53

Chart 1. Best-ranked counties using EU funds under ROP LV 2007–2013 (PLN)

Source: developed by the author based on *Informacja na temat stanu wdrażania Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego Województwa Łódzkiego na lata 2007–2013*, [www.ROP.lodzkie.pl](http://www.ROP.lodzkie.pl).

<sup>7</sup> *Wykorzystanie środków UE w ramach strategii wykorzystania Funduszu Spójności na lata 2004–2006 and Narodowych Strategicznych Ram Odniesienia 2007–2013, Informacja miesięczna za marzec 2011 r.*, [www.mrr.gov.pl](http://www.mrr.gov.pl) (6 June 2011).

The City of Lodz is the most active seeker of the ROP LV funds. It has raised € 166,901,488, i.e. 25% of all funds distributed under the programme so far. Accounting for 193 of funding contracts signed in the voivodeship, it is a leader in this field too. The next most successful units are the Zgierski County (8%), Poddębicki County (6%), Piotrkowski County (4%) and Bełchatowski County (4%).

These data point out that the beneficiaries improve their skills of raising EU grants and this translates into larger numbers of projects driving regional development.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that the Regional Operational Programmes are the only ones that are entirely controlled by the voivodeships makes them crucial for both local and regional development. As well as being correlated with the goals defined in the strategies of particular voivodeships, the RPO goals are designed to provide flexible responses to the needs identified within the particular regions. The range of activities that the ROP LV recommends has been developed to improve the residents' quality of life and to make the region competitive vis-à-vis other units.

The skills of raising EU funds and the experience that the Lodz voivodeship gained during the financial perspective 2004–2006 have turned out to be invaluable. The new financial perspective has brought larger numbers of applications and so contracts are also concluded more often. That 75% of the ROP's budget has been used by 31 March 2011 is an indication that the Community's aid funds are sought not only systematically, but also in compliance with the pertinent guidelines. Although the voivodeship has not been ranked among the top leaders, the pace with which the aid funds are consumed should be assessed as satisfactory. The evidence in support of the opinion is the range of the completed projects that already today set new quality of living standards in the region and make it an attractive area for those seeking culture and recreation.

## Literature

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## REGIONALNY PROGRAM OPERACYJNY WOJEWÓDZTWA ŁÓDZKIEGO JAKO ELEMENT STRATEGII ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO

### Streszczenie

Polityka lokalna i regionalna stanowi jedno z istotnych działań zmierzających do uatrakcyjnienia regionu i uczynienia go konkurencyjnym. Istotne znaczenie w tych działaniach odgrywają fundusze strukturalne Unii Europejskiej. W okresie programowym 2007–2013 Polska jest największym beneficjentem europejskiej polityki spójności, dla którego przypadnie ponad 20% wszystkich środków finansowych przeznaczono-

nych z budżetu Unii Europejskiej na realizację polityki spójności. Alokacja wyniesie 67,3 mld euro, która uzupełniona ma być krajowym wkładem publicznym w wysokości około 11,9 mld euro oraz wkładem prywatnym na poziomie 6,4 mld euro. Ważna rola w rozdysponowaniu środków przypada województwom, które opracowały Regionalne Programy Operacyjne. W województwie łódzkim w ramach RPO do zagospodarowania jest kwota 1 006,38 mln euro z EFRR, wspierana środkami krajowymi na poziomie 276,00 mln euro. Realizacja celu strategicznego zawartego w Regionalnym Programie Operacyjnym Województwa Łódzkiego następuje poprzez realizację zadań objętych siedmioma osiami priorytetowymi. W opracowaniu przedstawiono zakres zagadnień objętych poszczególnymi osiami priorytetowymi i wartość środków z EFRR w rozbiciu na poszczególne osie. Przedstawiono stan realizacji RPO WŁ na koniec I kwartału 2011 r. oraz stopień wykorzystania środków przez najaktywniejsze powiaty województwa łódzkiego. Analiza przeprowadzona została w oparciu o dane uzyskane w Urzędzie Marszałkowskim Województwa Łódzkiego oraz dane publikowane na stronie Ministerstwa Rozwoju Regionalnego i RPO WŁ.