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## Polish Rural Development Programmes – Evaluation Results and Lessons Learned

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**Abstract:** *In May 2004 Poland became a member of the EU. Thus it became eligible for the EU funds towards rural development. The programmes related to the EU rural development policy are complex. They involve planning numerous measures for a multi-annual implementation. Polish experiences with the implementation of EU co-financed programmes targeted to the development of rural areas show that the reallocation of funds between measures and regions is an effective tool for increasing the total financial absorption. The choice of measures is a difficult issue. Policy instruments designed by public administration often do not prove well fitted to a given economic reality. Therefore, their alterations must be possible during the implementation process as this is the way their efficiency and effectiveness can be improved.*

**Keywords:** *Poland, EU, rural development programmes, policy measures, policy implementation.*

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In May 2004 Poland, together with nine other countries, became a member of the European Union. Thus it became eligible for the EU funds towards rural development. The accession enabled launching Polish first rural development programme – Polish Rural Development Plan 2004-2006. In 2007 a new EU programming period started and a new programme was launched in Poland – Polish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

The preparatory phase, when the programmes were written, consulted and evaluated, was in both cases conducted very thoroughly with the understanding that the implementation of these programmes will influence the speed of changes and would determine a long-term shape of rural areas. The choice of policy measures and the division of the budget planned for the implementation of these programmes were a result of a compromise between diverse interests of different stakeholders.

There is hardly any regional differentiation in the design and implementation of rural development policy measures in Poland. This must be judged as a mistake as the EU experiences show a regional approach is needed (C. Hubbard, M. Gorton (2010)). The regional distribution of financial resources is introduced in case of many policy measures. Yet, this is almost the only way of taking into account the regional diversity. Such a unified approach of planning for the whole country was partly chosen as a way to prevent any possible problems with the implementation that could have occurred due to probably not sufficient institutional capacity at the regional level. Therefore both of the programmes were based on needs and challenges identified for the whole country. The policy instruments and division of resources concentrated on offering diverse support. Thus the instruments' goals were sometimes contradictory and the resources were dispersed in a scattered way depriving the programmes of a significant impact on the changes in agriculture and rural areas.

The aim of the text is to discuss the significance of the changes achieved as a result of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) and to answer the question of the possibility of higher influence on the targeted beneficiaries. The article is based on the economic analysis of both primary (data from monitoring of the programmes) and secondary resources (with the key focus in all the evaluation reports) and the analysis of the relation between policy goals and policy implementation, the approach applied to this analysis stems for political economy and sustainable economy.

### **Programming period 2004-2006**

As Poland and nine other countries joined the European Union in the middle of its seven year long programming period its first support programmes under the Common Agricultural Policy and structural funds were envisaged for only

three years<sup>1</sup>. Yet, even planning for such a short period required undergoing full EU procedure as regards the planning, implementation and controlling the programmes.

In the programming period 2000-2006 the EU rural development policy was based on the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations (EC, 1999). According to this policy's structure valid at that time in the EU some policy measures were under the funding of Guidance and some of Guarantee section of EAGGF depending on the type of region a given NUTS 2 was named (Objective 1 and Objective 2 regions with different titles for the EU support instruments).

As a result of this two-fold structure there were two programmes concerning the development of agriculture and rural areas in Poland implemented:

1. Sectorial Operational Programme "Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food and rural development", 2004-2006;
2. Rural Development Plan, 2004-2006.

### **Sectorial Operational Programme "Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food and rural development", 2004-2006**

The European Commission approved the Sectorial Operational Programme "Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food and rural development", 2004-2006 (SOP "Agriculture") in April 2004. It was a part of the EU structural assistance for the Objective 1 region<sup>2</sup>. The programme was financed from the Guidance Section of European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), in conjunction with the national measures (state budget, funds own resources of local governments and beneficiaries).

Programme's objectives were defined as follows:

- improving the competitiveness and sustainable development of the sector farm,
- supporting the processing industry to improve its position competitive,
- supporting the multifunctional development of rural areas.

Their implementation was organized within three programme priorities and included following policy measures:

#### Priority 1. "Supporting changes and adjustments in the agri-food sector":

- 1.1. "Investments in agricultural holdings";
- 1.2. "Setting up of young farmers";

<sup>1</sup> Plus additional two years based on the „n+2” principle on the financial management of the assistance funds.

<sup>2</sup> The whole territory of Poland was named as an Objective 1 region.

- 1.3. "Training";
- 1.4. "Support for agricultural advisory";
- 1.5. "Improving processing and marketing of agricultural products".

Priority 2. "Sustainable rural development":

- 2.1. "Restoring forestry production potential damaged by natural disaster or fire and introducing appropriate instruments prevention";
- 2.2. "Land re-parcelling";
- 2.3. "Rural renewal and the preservation and protection of rural heritage";
- 2.4. "Diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative sources of income";
- 2.5. "Agricultural water resources management";
- 2.6. "Development and improvement of infrastructure related to agriculture";
- 2.7. "Leader +".

Priority 3. "Technical assistance":

- 3.1. "Support for the management and implementation of the Programme";
- 3.2. "Institutional Development";
- 3.3. "Information and Promotion Programme".

## **Rural Development Plan, 2004-2006**

The Rural Development Plan, 2004-2006 was co-financed by the Guarantee Section of European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund. The Plans objectives were compatible with the ones chosen for the SOP "Agriculture". Under the specific objectives the following measures were implemented:

- 1. Improving the competitiveness and sustainable development of the sector farm:
  - a) "Early retirement"
  - b) "Semi-subsistence farming"
  - c) "Agricultural producer groups"
  - d) "Projects under regulation (EC) No. 1268/1999"<sup>3</sup>
  - e) "Complimentary direct payments"
- 2. Supporting the processing industry to improve its position competitive:
  - a) "LFA payments"
  - b) "Agri-environment programmes"
  - c) "Compliance with the EU standards"

In addition there was "Technical assistance" measure to support the implementation process of this programme.

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<sup>3</sup> This measure was not initially a part of the Polish RDP. It was introduced later under the named regulation as a solution to a large number of applications for co-financing projects within the pre-accession SAPARD programme.

## Rural Development Programme, 2007-2013

In the current programming period the EU policy supporting development of rural areas is based on different regulations than in the previous one. Even the name and the structure of the EU fund supporting rural development were altered. During the current programming period the regulation applicable is the Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (EC, 2005). The whole territory of Poland was classified as convergence region and the whole support for our country is based on this notion.

### Axis 1. Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector:

- 111. “Vocational training for persons employed in agriculture and forestry”
- 112. “Setting up of young farmers”
- 113. “Early retirement”
- 114. “Use of advisory services by farmers and forest owners”
- 121. “Modernisation of agricultural holdings”
- 123. “Adding value to agricultural and forestry”
- 125. “Improving and developing infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry”
- 126. “Restoring agricultural production potential damaged as a result of natural disasters and introducing appropriate prevention actions”
- 132. “Participation of farmers in food quality schemes”
- 133. “Information and promotion activities”
- 142. “Agricultural producer groups”

### Axis 2. Improving the environment and the countryside:

- 211, 212. “Support for farming in mountain areas and other less-favoured areas (LFA)”
- 214. “Agri-environmental program (agri-environment payments)”
- 221, 223. “Afforestation of agricultural land and of non agricultural land”
- 226. “Restoring forestry production potential damaged by natural disasters and introducing prevention instruments”

### Axis 3. Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy:

- 311. “Diversification into non-agricultural activities”
- 312. “Creation and development of micro enterprises”
- 321. “Basic services for the economy and rural population”
- 313, 322, 323. “Village renewal and development”

### Axis 4. LEADER+

- 413. “Implementing local development strategies”
- 421. “Implementing cooperation projects”
- 431. “Running the local action group, skills acquisition and animation”.

## Reallocation of financial resources

The European Union's rural development policy leaves significant leeway to its member states. The key choices concerning the shape of all the support programmes concern two issues: policy measures and financial resources.

The choice of policy measures in case of the Polish programmes co-financed by the EU and targeted to agriculture and rural areas was most influenced by two main factors:

- aim of achieving high support's absorption;
- idea of responding to complex and diverse needs of the Polish agriculture and rural areas.

The most vivid example of trying to reconcile these two factors is the RDP 2007-2013. The EU offered a wide range of policy measures. Poland chose 22 measures. These varied significantly in terms of their aims and amount of money. The choice of measures was highly criticised as too much money was allocated to measures considered to be ineffective and inefficient in targeting structural problems of Polish agriculture [12]. Especially criticised were costly early retirement payments. Moreover, the current RDP is burdened by the commitments made under the previous RDP with payments for beneficiaries of "Early retirement", "Agri-environment programmes" and "Semi-subsistence farming". The biggest problem was with the "Early retirement" where the payments for the beneficiaries of RDP 2004-2006 proved to be higher than foreseen and led to finishing calls for applications in RDP 2007-2013 already in 2010. The initially planned number of beneficiaries in this measure was 50 400 compared with 53 400 in RDP 2004-2006. In 2010 this planned number of beneficiaries in the current RDP was reduced to 20 400. The area of land to be transferred by the beneficiaries to younger farmers was also reduced from 480 000 ha to 266 000 ha.

How diverse the current RDP is shows the comparison of the percentage share in the total RDP 2007-2013 budget of different types of measures (table 1). For the Leader+ measure 421 there is less than 0.1% of the total budget, for supporting information and promotion activities under measure 133 less than 0.2% and for payment of commitments made under RDP 2004-2006 in case of semi-subsistence farms almost 2.6%.

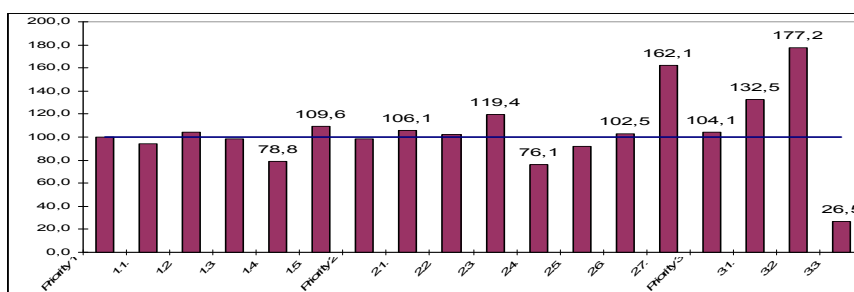
**Table 1. Share of chosen measures in the total RDP 2007-2013 budget**

Measure	Share in RDP 2007-2013 (in %)
421. "Implementing cooperation projects"	0.09
133. "Information and promotion activities"	0.17
141. "Semi-subsistence farming" – commitment made under RDP 2004-2006	2.55
113. "Early retirement" – commitment made under RDP 2004-2006 and current RDP	12.71

Source: Own elaboration based on [7].

None of the EU co-financed programmes directed to agriculture and rural areas in Poland avoided resource reallocation. The reallocations were undertaken primarily in order to safeguard the financial absorption of the funds available. The need to do them was a result of a mismatch between the forecasted needs and the actual demand.

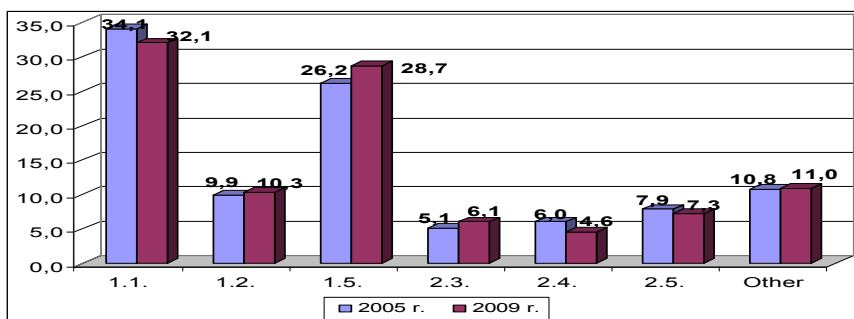
Significant funds' reallocations within the SOP "Agriculture" were limited only to a number of measures (graph 1). The biggest reduction applied to the measure 2.4. "Diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative sources of income" with the final budget of 76.1% of its initial level. The highest increase in the budget was observed in case of the measure 2.7. "Leader +".



**Graph 1. Financial reallocation within the Polish SOP "Agriculture" 2004-2006**

Source: Own elaboration based on [19] and [20].

All the changes in distribution of financial resources did not have a significant impact on the division of resources among all the measures (graph 2). The biggest increase in share in the programme's budget there was in case of these measures that already had the greatest share – i.e. the measure 1.1. "Investments in agricultural holdings" and the measure 1.5. "Improving processing and marketing of agricultural products".

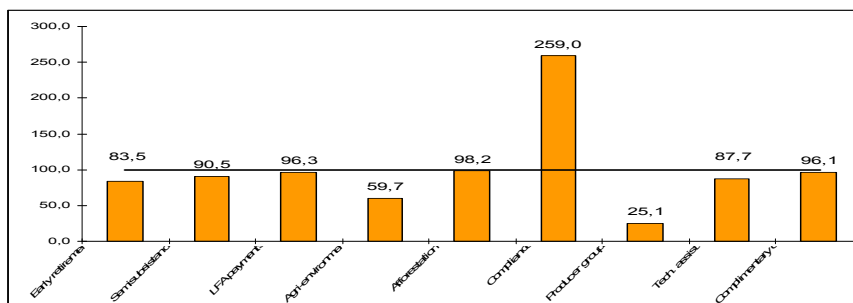


**Graph 2. Change in the share of resources assigned to particular measures in SOP "Agriculture"**

Source: Own elaboration based on [19] and [20].



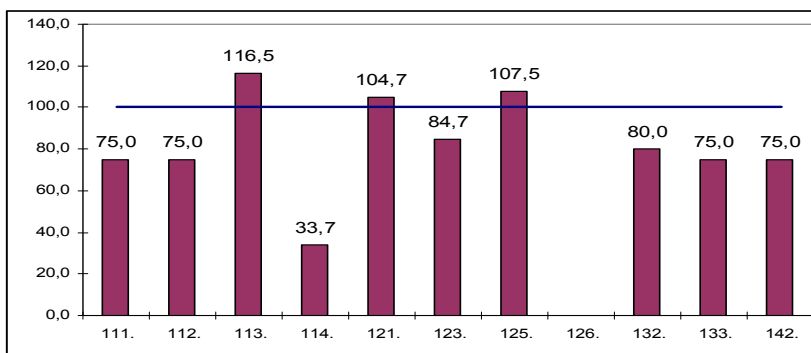
Rural Development Plan 2004-2006 also underwent some budget reallocations (graph 3). The most significant increase was a result of huge interest of potential beneficiaries. Such a popular instrument was a measure “Compliance with the EU standards”. Its final budget was over 2.5 times higher than the initial one. The measure “Agricultural producer groups” was subject to the highest reduction with its budget being reduced to 1/4 of its initial value. Also the budget for agri-environmental actions was significantly reduced by several dozens percentage points. For all the other measures the budget was only slightly reduced.



**Graph 3. Reallocation RDP 2004-2006**

Source: Own elaboration based on [11] and [12].

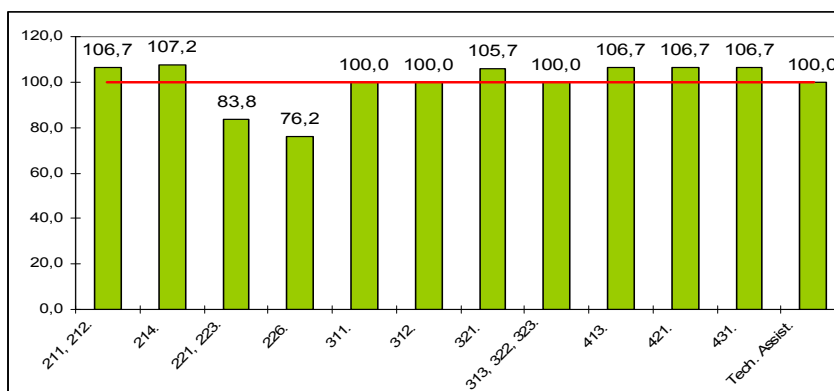
The reallocations of the funds are also part of the current programming period. In this case there is no learning process due to both the introduction of new policy instruments and the unpredictability of the actual interest. Therefore, already in the middle of the current programming period there are significant changes in the distribution of funds. In case of the Axis 1 the biggest winner was the “Early retirement”. Its current budget amounts to 116.5% of its initial level (graph 4). The largest reduction was made in case of the measure 114. “Use of advisory services by farmers and forest owners” with the current budget at 33.7% of its first level. Most of the Axis 1 measures were given a significant reduction of approximately 20%. This was partially the result of adding a new measure - 126. “Restoring agricultural production potential damaged as a result of natural disasters and introducing appropriate prevention actions”.



**Graph 4. Reallocation Axis 1 RDP 2007-2013**

Source: Own elaboration based on [8] and [9].

In case of other axes the reallocations were not that extended (graph 5). The budget for the measure 226 - “Restoring forestry production potential damaged by natural disasters and introducing prevention instruments” was significantly reduced to only 76.2% of its initial level. Four measures (including technical assistance) there were no changes in the allocated budget.



**Graph 5. Reallocation Axes 2-4 RDP 2007-2013**

Source: Own elaboration based on [8] and [9].

Changes in allocation of the funds available are not only done between measures but also within them. They are conducted in case of measure where the funds are divided between regions. In the current programming period such modifications have already been made a couple of times<sup>4</sup>. The scale of alterations is often significant. In case of Measure 121 - “Modernisation of agricultural holdings”, the measure whose share in total RDP 2007-2013 amounts to 10.4%, allocation for some regions was reduced by half (table 2). There were already two allocation changes to the initial distribution among regions. It is worth noting that version 3 of the regional allocation reduces the extend of changes made in version 2. All the changes were based on the uptake of available resources in subsequent calls for application.

The comparison between regions’ share in the total number of farms and the share in current distribution of funds in Measure 121 shows that some regions receive much more support per farm than the other (table 3). Yet this is fully justified if we look at the data on the absorption of the support. The share in the payments made till the end of August 2011 is generally similar to the average between version 1 and 3 of the funds’ allocation. High share in the funds already spent compared with the current distribution of funds (version 3) demonstrates activity of the farmers. This is most vivid in case of two regions: kujawsko-pomorskie and wielkopolskie. It has to be mentioned that these regions have been the most active in absorbing EU co-financed programmes

<sup>4</sup> All the regulations introducing reallocations of funds in RDP 2007-2013 are to be found on the website: <http://www.minrol.gov.pl/pol/Wsparcie-rolnictwa-i-rybolowstwa/PROW-2007-2013/Dokumenty-analizy-raporty/Legislacja-ogolna-PROW-2007-2013>

since the pre-accession programme SAPARD. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the allocations for these regions are approximately twice as high as their share in the total number of farms in Poland.

**Table 2. Changes in the regional distribution of the funds under Measure 121. “Modernisation of agricultural holdings” (until September 2011)**

No.	Voivodship	Version 1*	Version 2*	Version 3*	Version3/ Version 1 (in %)
1.	dolnośląskie	3.98	4.55	4.26	106.91
2.	kujawsko-pomorskie	7.37	7.90	7.69	104.42
3.	lubelskie	7.90	13.11	11.10	140.53
4.	lubuskie	3.85	0.86	1.88	48.89
5.	łódzkie	6.43	10.39	8.98	139.73
6.	małopolskie	2.65	4.25	3.63	136.98
7.	mazowieckie	13.67	18.38	16.86	123.34
8.	opolskie	2.76	2.70	2.71	98.25
9.	podkarpackie	2.22	3.58	3.04	137.10
10.	podlaskie	9.25	7.16	8.29	89.71
11.	pomorskie	5.11	3.62	4.09	80.02
12.	śląskie	1.80	2.86	2.48	137.68
13.	świętokrzyskie	3.51	4.77	4.24	120.84
14.	warmińsko-mazurskie	5.51	4.37	4.89	88.61
15.	wielkopolskie	17.93	9.95	12.77	71.23
16.	zachodniopomorskie	6.08	1.55	3.09	50.89

\* Version 1: [17]; version 2: [16], version 3: [15].

Source: Own elaboration based on [17], [16] and [15].

**Table 3. Regions' positions in the implementation of Measure 121**

No.	Voivodship	Version 1*	Version 3*	Payments made (until 8.2011)	Direct payments (number of applications in 2011)
1.	dolnośląskie	3.98	4.26	4.14	4.16
2.	kujawsko-pomorskie	7.37	7.69	8.69	4.84
3.	lubelskie	7.90	11.10	6.74	13.04
4.	lubuskie	3.85	1.88	2.82	1.46
5.	łódzkie	6.43	8.98	4.98	9.08
6.	małopolskie	2.65	3.63	2.41	8.95
7.	mazowieckie	13.67	16.86	14.84	15.19
8.	opolskie	2.76	2.71	3.43	2.03
9.	podkarpackie	2.22	3.04	1.59	8.56
10.	podlaskie	9.25	8.29	11.37	5.95
11.	pomorskie	5.11	4.09	5.17	2.81
12.	śląskie	1.80	2.48	1.93	3.52
13.	świętokrzyskie	3.51	4.24	3.50	6.31
14.	warmińsko-mazurskie	5.51	4.89	6.69	3.15
15.	wielkopolskie	17.93	12.77	17.15	8.89
16.	zachodniopomorskie	6.08	3.09	4.54	2.06

\* as in table 1.

Source: Own elaboration based on data of Agency of Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture.

## Implementation regulations as a proxy for administrative capacity

The European Commission requires from its member states and their institutions a certain level of administrative capacity to ensure that the programmes co-financed by the EU will be implemented according to the regulations in force and in such a way that they full potential for achieving the developmental goals is used

There are ways for measuring and evaluating the potential of administration. With such a complex and multidimensional programmes as the ones implemented within the EU rural development policy the strength and readiness to act should be carefully verified at all the phases of the policy implementation process starting with the programme's elaboration and ending with the quality of the controlling system. An important, but commonly omitted field of the administrative responsibilities are the regulatory activities. They are strongly interlinked with all the other administrative activities therefore they can serve as a proxy for the capacity of the whole administrative system.

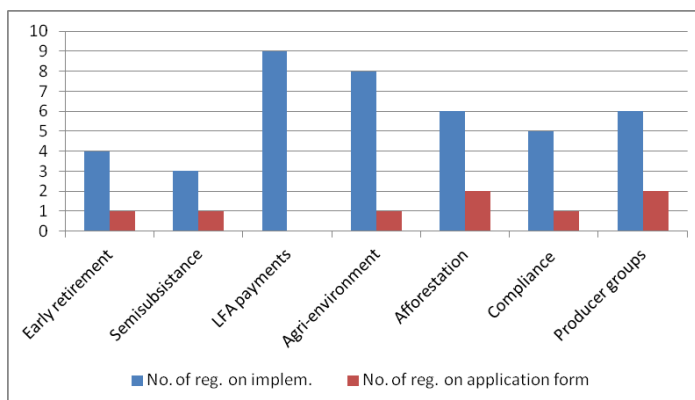
In Poland, apart from the key acts introducing a given RDP, there are implementation regulations. They stipulate specific detailed regulations concerning the support under a given measure. These are the regulations of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on detailed conditions and procedures for granting financial assistance under each of the RDP measures. They are subject to changes.

In the programming period 2004-2006 in the Rural Development Plan 2004-2006 there were separate implementation regulations for application forms and all the other conditions and details concerning the financial assistance. Only in case of the Less Favoured Area payments there were no separate regulations on application forms. The initial regulations determining the application forms were changed only in case of two measures (graph 6). The regulations stipulating detailed conditions for financial assistance were changed much more often. The one concerning the LFA payments had nine versions.

Naturally the changes varied significantly in scope and extend. Therefore the sheer number is just an approximation of the quality of legal services and other sides involved in the process of law making at the ministerial level. It must be born in mind that some of the amendments were forced by changes in the main acts that were the foundation for these implementation regulations or were mentioned as reference.

The changes could be divided in several groups based on the type of alteration of a given paragraph such as:

- editorial – having no influence on conditions of receiving support;
- legislative – resulting from changes in other legal acts;
- substantial – changing the eligibility criteria or other conditions.



**Graph 6. Number of implementation regulations adopted in RDP 2004-2006**

Source: Own elaboration.

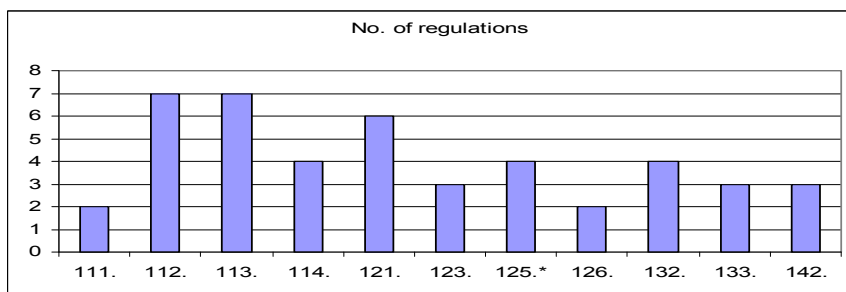
The editorial changes show generally the carelessness and low quality standards of the legislative team. They generate both administrative costs on the public administration side and private transaction costs on the side of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. Yet, the private transaction costs are not high. The impact of legislative changes depends on the characteristic of this modification. One should remember that these changes are not a result of low administrative potential of the institutions implementing RDP. The last group of changes has the strongest influence on the implementation of a given policy measure. Substantial changes are introduced generally in three cases:

1. when the previous version was too general or unclear leading to not optimal use of public funds;
2. when there is a need to change the eligibility criteria to increase/decrease the number of applications for support;
3. when there is a need to extend the period of processing the applications resulting from lack of sufficient capacity in the institution dealing with it.

For example in case of “Early retirement” in the RDP 2004-2006 the initial regulation of 30 April 2004 [16] was for the first time changed with the regulation of 5 October 2005 [12]. The new regulation included two editorial alterations. The other changes involved substantial modifications to the eligibility criteria and terms of offered payments. The insertion of one word “directly” in the description of the eligibility criteria (“conducting agricultural activity in agricultural holding in the period of at least 10 years directly preceding the application for early retirement payment”) probably resulted in the reduction of the number of potential beneficiaries. The new regulation introduced four other changes constraining the conditions of the support. There was only one alteration softening the criteria for receiving the payments by eliminating conducting non-agricultural activity of the list of situations resulting in suspension of payments<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Detailed description of the changes in the implementation regulations of the measures included in the

The implementation of the RDP 2007-2013 also involves numerous changes in regulations stipulating detailed conditions of receiving financial assistance. There are no regulations concerning the application forms as in the previous RDP. Yet, already in the middle of the programming period there are many changes to the initial implementation regulations. They are most vivid in case of the measures under Axis 1 (graph 7).



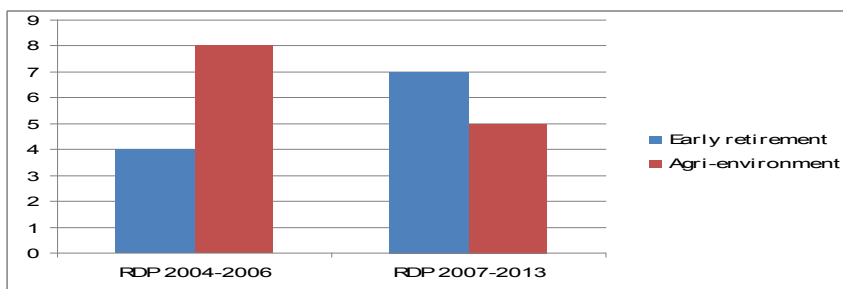
**Graph 7. Number of implementation regulations in Axis 1 of the RDP 2007-2013 (changes recorded till 9.2011)**

Source: Own elaboration.

The comparison of the number of implementation regulations for particular measures present both in the previous and current RDP shows that there is no successful learning process in case of preparing legal regulations for a given measure (graph 8). Both measures compared are considered to be sensitive in terms of regulating them as there are eligible to a big number of potential beneficiaries and are difficult to regulate due to their complexity. The early retirement involves complicated issues dealing with ownership rights, whereas agri-environment programmes require detailed description of the activities to be undertaken such as agro-technical activities and naming all the species that can be grown or bred. Therefore, it is understandable that they are characterized by many changes in implementation regulations.

Yet, there is no negative correlation between the number of changes made in implementation regulations and the speed of money absorption as is shown by the Axis 1 measures of the RDP 2007-2013. This is a clear hint that the type of changes introduced is more important than the number and given that some changes in the implementation regulation can lessen the eligibility criteria and thus catalyze the speed of funds' absorption.

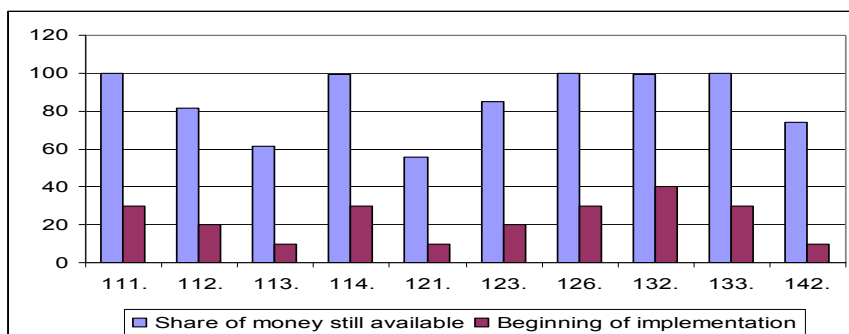
Rural Development Plan 2004-2006 includes a publication: B. Wieliczko (2010): System oceny polityki Unii Europejskiej wobec obszarów wiejskich a zasady dobrego rządzenia. "Studia I Monografie" nr 149, Instytut Ekonomiki Rolnictwa i Gospodarki Żywnościowej – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Warszawa.



**Graph 8. Number of implementation regulations introduced for chosen measures in the RDP 2004-2006 and the RDP 2007-2013 (changes recorded till 9.2011)**

Source: Own elaboration.

The other proof of lack of learning process in the implementation of RDP is the slow introduction of most of the measures being implemented in the current RDP 2007-2013. Even the measure that were part of the previous RDP 2004-2006 were in many cases launched with a serious delay compared to the start of the programme. The late start of specific measures was a result of problems with authorization of the implementation agency. These problems are now highly visible in the amount of money still available. In case of measures under the Axis 1 there is a correlation between the amounts to be spent and the year of launching the measure (graph 9) with the correlation coefficient at 0.92.



**Graph 9. Share of allocated funds still available vs. year of the measure's implementation in case of Axis 1 of RDP 2007-2013**

Source: Own elaboration based on [10].

## Lessons learnt and recommendations for the period 2014-2020 - summary

The programmes related to the EU rural development policy are complex. They involve planning numerous measures for a multi-annual implementation. To safeguard their high effectiveness and efficiency the process of their designing must be carefully planned and conducted. Yet, this does not guarantee the future success. The key to it is constant monitoring and readiness to act

during the implementation process. The flexibility is a must. The programmes must undergo even serious modifications allowed by the EU regulations in order to respond to changes in external conditions and observed interest in policy instruments. The importance of small alterations also should not be underestimated.

The each programming period is different and the rural development programmes are shaped by a new set of EU regulations. Therefore the changes in implementation system of a given measure, even the one present in the previous Rural Development Programme, have to be carefully planned and timely introduced. At each stage of the implementation process there are countless unknowns that can turn both to opportunities and threat. As it is impossible to foresee all the situations that may occur therefore a fast reaction mechanisms must be build in the implementation system at all its stages.

The other vital issues is striking the right balance between measures applied in terms of funds' allocation as well as the potential of achieving high synergy effects and balancing all the dimensions of sustainable development. Naturally, the assessment of the impact a plan has on sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas should be judged from a wider perspective of all the programmes and policy instruments targeted there.

Polish experiences with the implementation of EU co-financed programmes targeted to the development of rural areas show that the reallocation of funds between measures and regions is an effective tool for increasing the total financial absorption. The choice of measures is a difficult issue. Policy instruments designed by public administration often do not prove well fitted to a given economic reality. Therefore, their alterations must be possible during the implementation process as this is the way their efficiency and effectiveness can be improved.

The experiences gained by Poland show that the rural development measures differ in terms of the administrative capacity needed for their implementation. Especially complex are the environmental measures with a number of special limitations and specifications closely connected with other EU and national regulations. Therefore, during the preparations for the RDP 2014-2020 a special attention should be given to agri-environment-climate implementation regulation, especially as some alterations are planned in the extend of cross-compliance obligations and some obligations of directive 2000/60/EC and other regulations. The changes in the rural development proposed by the EC (EC, 2011) are not revolutionary. The most currently available policy measures is going to be kept unchanged so there is much potential for directly applying the regulations and procedures already in use. However, the key lesson that should be inscribed in the whole process of preparing the Polish RDP 2014-2020 should be the constant monitoring of implementation rules and procedures so that the necessary modifications are introduced promptly.



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