

**VALUE AND AIMS OF INVESTING FUNDS  
FROM OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES 2007–2013  
BY RURAL COMMUNES OF WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIE**

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**Key words:** operational programmes 2007–2013, rural areas, warmińsko-mazurskie, NTS 2.

**A b s t r a c t**

The main aims of the study were to determine the spatial variability of the value of funding absorbed by local self-governments of rural communes (by DEGURBA classification) from operational programmes 2007–2013 per capita (Sci index) and in relation to the average annual budgetary income (Rscr index), as well as to investigate the directions of their use according to the categories specified in the SIMIK database of the Ministry of Development, as of December 31, 2015. All 101 rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie carried out 697 projects and absorbed 525.4 mln PLN of EU funding from OPs 2007–2013, which made up only 30% of the funding obtained by all communes of this region. The Sci index and Rscr index values reached by this funding ranged from 50 to 5,420 and from 1% to 164% correspondingly. However, most of the communes obtained the lowest values of EU funding placing them in the lowest sub-ranges of these indexes. Only three rural communes reached Rscr values above 100% of their average annual budget revenues. Rural communes of this region benefitted mostly from 'Regional OP for Warmińsko-Mazurskie' and from 'Human Capital OP', while 'Innovative Economy OP' and 'Infrastructure and Environment OP' were the sources of least support. Most projects carried out by these communes were either soft-projects or projects resulting in the development of plans and documentation. Hard projects were much fewer, but they still represented as many as 19 SIMIK priorities and met different development needs.

**WARTOŚĆ ORAZ KIERUNKI WYKORZYSTANIA FUNDUSZY  
Z PROGRAMÓW OPERACYJNYCH 2007–2013 (2015) PRZEZ SAMORZĄDY  
GMIN WIEJSKICH WOJEWÓDZTWA WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIEGO**

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**Słowa kluczowe:** programy operacyjne 2007–2013, obszary wiejskie, warmińsko-mazurskie, NTS 2.

## Abstrakt

Głównym celem badania było określenie przestrzennego zróżnicowania wartości funduszy unijnych pozyskanych przez samorządy gmin wiejskich (wg klasyfikacji DEGURBA) z programów operacyjnych 2007–2013, w przeliczeniu na 1 mieszkańca (wskaźnik Sci) oraz w relacji do średniorocznych dochodów ogółem budżetów badanych gmin (wskaźnik Rscr), a także wskazanie kierunków ich wykorzystania na podstawie kategorii bazy danych SIMIK, wg stanu z 31 grudnia 2015 r. Łącznie 101 gmin wiejskich tego regionu zrealizowało 697 projektów i pozyskało 525.4 mln zł dofinansowania unijnego z PO 2007–2013, co stanowiło jedynie 30% funduszy unijnych pozyskanych z tego źródła przez wszystkie gminy województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego. Wartości wskaźników Sci i Rscr uzyskane przez te gminy wiejskie wynosiły odpowiednio od 50 do 5420 oraz od 1% do 164%. Większość badanych gmin cechują jednak najniższe wartości tych wskaźników. Tylko trzy gminy wiejskie uzyskały fundusze unijne o wartości wyższej niż 100% ich średniorocznych dochodów budżetów ogółem. Gminy wiejskie tego regionu pozyskały wsparcie głównie z RPO warmińsko-mazurskiego oraz PO „Kapitał ludzki”. PO „Innowacyjna gospodarka” i „Infrastruktura i środowisko” były źródłem znacznie mniejszego wsparcia. Większość zrealizowanych projektów to projekty miękkie lub opracowanie planów i dokumentacji. Projektów twardych było znacznie mniej, pomimo to reprezentują one aż 19 priorytetów bazy SIMIK są i ukierunkowane na zaspokojenie zróżnicowanych potrzeb rozwojowych.

## Introduction

The key role of local self-governments in stimulating community development is undeniable (e.g. PARYSEK 1997, MYNA 1998, ZALEWSKI 2000, ADAMOWICZ 2003, SEKUŁA 2005, BABUCHOWSKA, KISIEL 2006, KOŻUCH 2011, MAŚLOCH, SIERAK 2013, PARYSEK 2015). As A. SZTANDO (1998, s. 14–16) concluded on the role of local self-governments in local development ‘today, in the era of rapidly developing local development theories, the municipality is expected to be a driving force for local development, with the widest possible representation of the interests of the local community. Its role is no longer limited to meeting current needs. (...) Today, its primary role is to ensure that the harmonized and systematic functioning of the local economy is aimed at creating new and improving existing utility values of the municipality, creating favourable conditions for the local economy and ensuring spatial and ecological order.’

The role of local self-governments in local development is determined by the current legal conditions (Ustawa z 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie gminnym, DzU z 1990 r., nr 16, poz. 95, Ustawa z 24 lipca 1998 r. o wprowadzeniu zasadniczego trójstopniowego podziału terytorialnego państwa, DzU z 1998 r., nr 96, poz. 603, PAJĄK 2007), the realities of the socio-economic situation in Poland, as well as the challenges faced by local self-governments in relation to the growing need to promote sustainable local development. Due to the limited financial resources at the disposal of communes (e.g. SWIANIEWICZ 1996, KOŁODZIEJCZYK 2001), effective support for such a role requires external sources of financing. The importance of this problem has been reflected in the assumptions of the EU cohesion policy for 2007–2013, and the construction of the operational programs for that period.

The programs have provided the opportunity to obtain non-repayable cohesion policy funds by a wide range of potential beneficiaries, including communes (LAU 2s). The results of exploratory research indicate that communes were the largest beneficiaries of 2007–2013 operational programs in Poland, both in terms of the total value of these funds and the number of implemented projects (RAKOWSKA 2016a). This raises the question of the differentiation of the share, directions of use and effects of investments realized by the rural communes under the operational programs from 2007 to 2015 in different NUTS 2 regions of the country.

Completion of both nominal (2007–2013) and real (2007–2015) times of implementation of operational programs for 2007–2013 allows the undertaking of a full-scale study of the results of absorption of EU funds by all commune-beneficiaries of OPs in 2007–2013 or their selected types in each region of the country. The socio-economic situation of the *warmińsko-mazurskie* NUTS 2 (POMIANEK 2012, ŚLESZYŃSKI, KOMORNICKI 2016, ROSNER, STANNY 2016, RAKOWSKA 2016b) and its rural areas (ROSNER 2011, STANNY, CZARNECKI 2011, POMIANEK et al. 2013) result from historical conditions and are woven from current factors, including its location at the external border of the EU and its inclusion in the Development of Eastern Poland. These reasons were the rationale for undertaking research in this area.

The main objectives of the study were to determine the diversification of value of funding absorbed by local self-governments of rural communes from PO 2007–2013 in quantitative terms, i.e. per capita and in relation to the average annual budgetary income, as well as the diversification of directions of their use according to the categories specified in the SIMIK database of the Ministry of Development, as of December 31, 2015

## Research methods

The study was based on secondary qualitative and quantitative data from:

- public statistical data from the Local Data Bank (LDB) Central Statistical Office of Poland for 2007–2013, as of December 31 of each analysed year<sup>1</sup>;
- data and programme documents of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development<sup>2</sup>, especially operational programmes 2007–2013;
- secondary qualitative and quantitative data from the SIMIK (System Informatyczny Monitoringu i Kontroli) data-base; Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, as of December 31, 2015.

The quantitative part of the study includes an analysis of:

- differentiation of absorption of EU cohesion policy funds 2007–2013 by local self-governments of rural communes on the basis of the *Sci* indicator, reflecting

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<sup>1</sup> Downloaded from [www.stat.gov.pl/bdl/app/strona.html?p\\_name=indeks](http://www.stat.gov.pl/bdl/app/strona.html?p_name=indeks) on May 15, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Previously named the Ministry of Regional Development and also the Ministry of Development.

the sum of EU funding obtained from all operational programs 2007–2013 by the analysed communes per 1 statistical inhabitant of the commune, based on the formula:

$$SCi = \frac{\sum_{i=2007}^{2015} fu_i}{(\sum_{i=2007}^{2015} i_i)/n} \quad (1)$$

where:

$fu_i$  – total EU funding obtained from operational programmes 2007–2013, in PLN,

$i$  – number of inhabitants in 2007–2013,

$n$  – number of years (9) of the real time of implementation of OPs 2007–2013, i.e. from 2007 to 2015;

– quantitative significance of EU funds for communes in the years 2007–2013 based on the relation of the sum of EU co-financing obtained from all OPs 2007–2013 to the average annual revenues of commune budgets in the analysed years ( $Rscr$ ), based on the formula:

$$Rscr = \frac{\sum_{i=2007}^{2015} fu_i}{(\sum_{i=2007}^{2015} br_i) / n} \cdot 100\% \quad (2)$$

where:

$fu_i$  – total EU funding obtained from operational programmes 2007–2013, in PLN,

$br_i$  – total budget revenues of LAU 2 in a given year, in PLN,

$n$  – number of years (9) of the real time of implementation of OPs 2007–2013, i.e. from 2007 to 2015.

The study used the division of the country according to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics and division of the country into local units LAU 2 (Local Administrative Units – Level 2)<sup>3</sup> i.e. communes<sup>4</sup> and NTS 2 regions known in Poland as a ‘voivodship’ (RAKOWSKA 2013a). For this reason, NTS 2 and ‘voivodship’ and ‘region’, similarly to LAU 2 and ‘community’ have been used interchangeably.

Rural areas of warmińsko-mazurskie were defined and delineated according to the European Union DEGURBA (Degree of Urbanisation) classification, which assigns all LAU 2s in EU Member States into the following three categories<sup>5</sup>:

- cities (densely populated areas),
- towns and suburbs (intermediate population density areas),
- rural areas (thinly populated areas).

<sup>3</sup> Website of EUROSTAT, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/local-administrative-units> (access 15.03.2017).

<sup>4</sup> In some translations also called ‘municipalities’.

<sup>5</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/miscellaneous/index.cfm?TargetUrl=DSP\\_DEGURBA](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/miscellaneous/index.cfm?TargetUrl=DSP_DEGURBA) (access 3.11.2016).

## Findings

All commune-beneficiaries in Poland carried out 22,829 projects with an 83,366 mln PLN total value, including 51,228.6 mln PLN in EU funding from OPs 2007–2013. All communes of warmińsko-mazurskie benefited from OPs 2007–2013, and carried out 1,250 projects with a 3,524 mln PLN total value, which included 2,223 mln PLN in EU funding.

Warmińsko-mazurskie NTS 2 has 116 LAU 2s, of which 101 (88%) are classified as rural according to DEGURBA<sup>6</sup>. All these rural LAU 2s were beneficiaries of operational programmes in 2007–2013. They carried out 697 projects co-financed by EU cohesion policy funding. The total value of these projects equalled 746.18 mln PLN and included 525.38 mln PLN (70%) of EU funding. Rural LAU 2s benefitted from four operational programmes (OPs), including three managed centrally and addressed to all potential beneficiaries in Poland, i.e. ‘Infrastructure and Environment OP 2007–2013’ (IandEOP), ‘Innovative Economy OP 2007–2013’ (IEOP), and ‘Human Capital OP 2007–2013’ (HCOP). ‘Regional Operational Programme for Warmińsko-Mazurskie 2007–2013’ (ROPWM) was the fourth one, and it was addressed only to potential beneficiaries from this region.

The largest (63.5%) share of total EU funding absorbed by rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie came from ‘Regional OP for warmińsko-mazurskie 2007–2013’. The value of 333.77 million PLN co-financed 197 projects carried out by 64 rural communes. ‘Sports, recreation and cultural center, sports and entertainment hall with a swimming pool in Olecko’ carried out by the Olecko commune was the biggest project in this group: it cost 35.7 mln PLN, which included 10.5 mln PLN in EU funding. The second and third biggest projects were carried out by Piecki and Ostróda communes and aimed at wastewater treatment. Their total costs equalled 18.5 and 17.2 mln PLN (correspondingly) and included 9.1 and 12.4 mln PLN of EU funding under ROPWM. As many as 108 projects carried out by different rural communes in different parts of the region cost less than

1 mln PLN and obtained from 0.08 to 0.79 mln PLN in EU funding. Projects carried out by rural communes under ROPWM represented 19 categories of SIMIK priorities. The largest group of 56 projects related to ‘Prevention of threats (including the development and implementation of plans and instruments for the prevention and management of natural and technological threats)’, and the second largest group of 33 projects was done under the priority ‘Wastewater treatment’. A similar number of projects were assigned the priority ‘Solar,

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<sup>6</sup> Only three cities, i.e. Elbląg, Elk and Olsztyn are classified as densely populated (i.e. cities), while the remaining 12 communes, i.e. Braniewo, Działdowo, Hawa, Lubawa, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Ostróda, Giżycko, Bartoszyce, Kętrzyn, Lidzbark Warmiński, Mrągowo and Szczytno are classified as ‘towns and suburbs’ i.e. intermediate population density areas.

biomass, hydroelectric, geothermal and other renewable energy' (16), 'Regional and local roads', 'Infrastructure of educational system' (15 projects each), and 'Integrated projects for urban and rural revitalization' (14). Other priorities included a smaller number of projects carried out by rural communities, e.g. 'Other support for strengthening tourism services' (10), 'Services and applications for citizens (e-health, e-government, e-education, e-inclusion, etc.)' – 9, 'Cycle paths' (7), 'Other activities to stimulate research, innovation and entrepreneurship in SMEs' and 'Management of municipal and industrial waste' (5 projects each), 'Other actions for environmental protection and risk prevention' (4), 'Protection and preservation of cultural heritage' (3). Five priorities, namely 'Technology transfer and improvement of networking between SMEs, between SMEs and other businesses, universities, many types of institutions at the level of post-secondary education, regional authorities, research centres and scientific and technological poles (science and technology parks, technopolies, etc.)', 'Telecommunications infrastructure (including broadband networks)', 'Services and applications for SMEs (e-commerce, education and training, networking, etc.)', 'Ports' and 'Development of cultural infrastructure' were represented only by one project in each case.

The Human Capital Operational Programme was the source of the second largest value (161.3 mln PLN) of EU funding obtained by rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie (table 1) due to the realization of 448 projects worth nearly 190 mln PLN (Tab. 1). Operational Programme Human Capital was the most popular – all rural communes carried out projects co-financed from this source. Some of them carried out projects only under this programme, and it was from one to 17 (Biskupiec) and 20 (Lidzbark Warmiński) investments. The majority (337=75.4%) of projects under HCOP received EU funding of less than 0.5 mln PLN. The biggest project cost 5.85 mln PLN, which included 4.97 mln PLN. It was carried out by the Iłowo-Osada commune and aimed at social and professional activation. As many as 351 projects concentrated on the aims of 'Actions to increase participation in lifelong education and training, in particular through measures aimed at reducing premature dismissal of schooling and minimizing discrimination based on gender and through measures to improve quality and access to initial, vocational and higher education and training'. The next 87 projects were aimed at 'Paths for integration and return to employment for disadvantaged people; Combating discrimination in access to the labour market and career development and promoting acceptance for diversity in the workplace', the remaining 10 projects aimed at 'Elaboration, launch and implementation of the reform of education and training systems to increase employability, increase adaptation of initial and vocational education and training systems to labour market needs, and systematically update the education system staff in the perspective of an innovation and knowledge-based economy'.

‘Innovative Economy OP’ was the source of a much smaller sum of EU funding obtained by rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie. There was 27.9 mln PLN in co-financing for 17 projects carried out by 16 communes. Most (14) projects addressed the priority ‘Other measures to improve access to and use of ICT’, 2 projects ‘Other investments in companies’, and only 1 project called ‘Advanced business support services for enterprise and enterprise groups’.

Table 1

Total value and number of projects, minimum, average and maximum EU funding absorbed by local self-governments of rural communes in warmińsko-mazurskie by operational programmes PO 2007-2013

Operational Program	Total value of projects	EU funding under OPs	The share of EU funding in total value [%]	Number of projects	Minimum, average and maximum value of EU funding per project [mln PLN]
	mln PLN				
Infrastructure and Environment	3.22	2.38	73.9	17	min.= 0.008 av.= 0.014 max.= 1.08
Innovative Economy	33.00	27.94	84.6	17	min.= 0.24 av.= 1.64 max.= 10.47
Human Capital	189.75	161.28	85.0	448	min.= 0.021 av.= 0.36 max.= 4.97
Regional OP for warmińsko-mazurskie	520.22	333.77	64.2	197	min.= 0.086 av.= 1.69 max. = 12.41
Total	746.18	525.38	70	697	min. = 0.008 av. = 0.77 max. = 12.41

Source: author’s elaboration based on SIMIK data.

‘Infrastructure and Environment OP’ co-financed 17 projects at a 3.22 mln PLN total value (Tab. 1). Most of these projects aimed at developing plans for a low carbon economy for the benefit of rural communes. Only two of all the projects carried out under IandEOP resulted in the construction of sanitary sewerage and water supply networks in the Jonkowo and Szczytno (szczycieński LAU 1) rural communes.

The SCi index shows the total value of EU funding obtained by the commune per 1 inhabitant. Its value for rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie ranged from 50 to 5,420 PLN per 1 inhabitant. Nearly 38% of the analysed communes obtained the lowest values of EU funding resulting in a SCi index between 50 and 500, for 28% of them the SCi ranged from 500 to 1,000, for 19% between 1,000 and 1,500, for the next 10% between 1,500 and 2,000 and for the remaining

6 rural communes it had the highest values between 2,500 and 5,420. Communes characterised by different SCi values do not create any spatial groups, they are located in various areas of the region (Fig. 1).

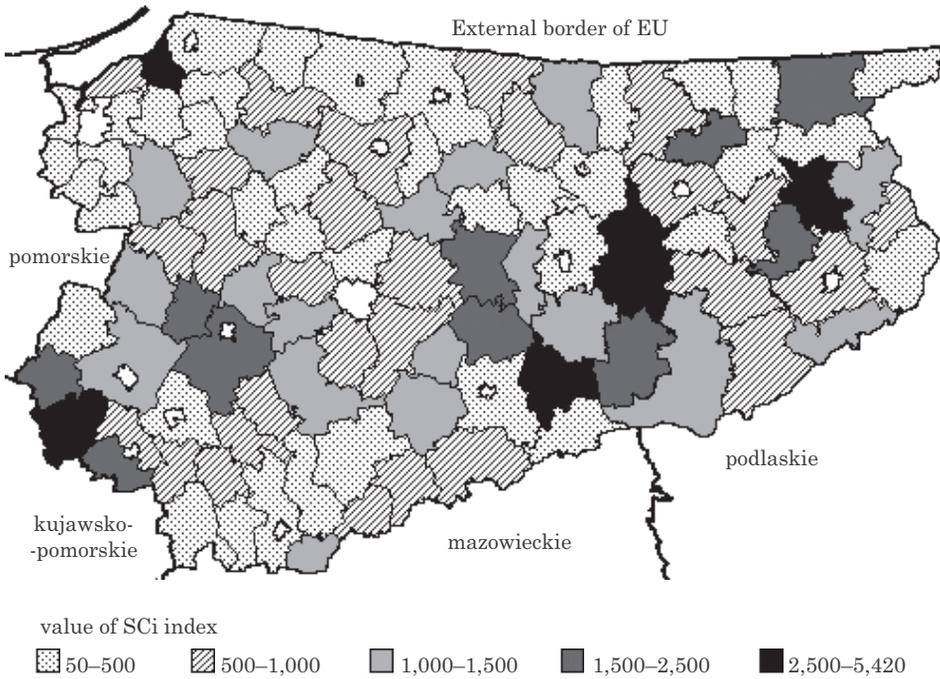


Fig. 1. Spatial differentiation of rural communes by SCi index value

Source: author's elaboration based on data from SIMIK and the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

The analysed rural communes varied significantly with regards to their Rscr index value (Fig. 2). Most of them (60=59.4%) absorbed the lowest values of EU funding, resulting in an Rscr index between 1% and 25%. The second largest rural LAU 2 group (24=23.7%) were those which absorbed EU funding equal to 25%–50% of their average annual budget revenues. The next group included 13 rural communes (12.9%) whose Rscr ranged from 50% to 75%. Only 3 of the analysed LAU 2s absorbed EU funding higher than 100% of their average annual budget revenues.

Communes characterised by different Rscr values did not create any spatial groups, they were located in various areas of the region (Fig. 2).

Three rural communes, namely Biskupiec (nowomiejski LAU 1), Ryn and Świętajno (olecki LAU 1) obtained the highest values of EU funding, resulting in the highest SCi and Rscr indexes (Tab. 2).

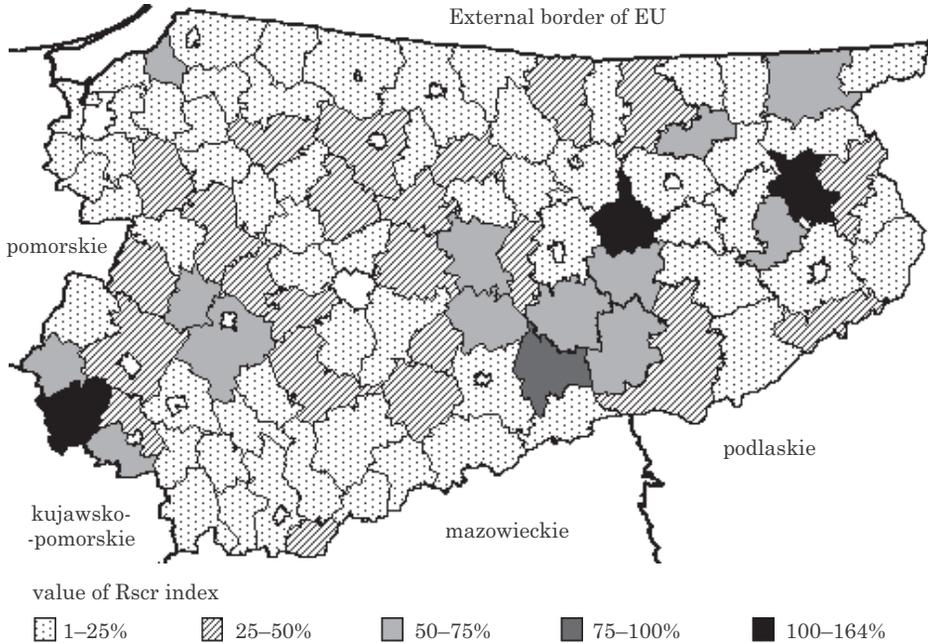


Fig. 2. Spatial differentiation of rural communes by Rscr index value

Source: author’s elaboration based on SIMIK data and the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

Table 2

Number of projects, SCi and Rscr indexes reached by Biskupiec (nowomiejski LAU 1), Ryn and Świętajno (olecki LAU 1), the biggest beneficiaries of OPs 2007–2013 in the analysed group

Commune	SCi index	Rscr index [%]	No of projects
Biskupiec	3,689.3	106	9
Ryn	4,610.7	127	9
Świętajno	5,412.3	163	6

Source: author’s elaboration based on data from SIMIK and the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

Świętajno commune obtained the highest Rscr (63%). In this case, total EU funding equalled 2.34 mln PLN and contributed 84% to the total value of 2.8 mln PLN. This was used for 6 projects carried out under HCOP (5) and ROPWM (1). Projects under HCOP aimed at improving the social and educational situation, while the project under ROPWM aimed at the improvement of ecological security thanks to the purchase of special equipment for the fire station. The second highest Rscr (127%) was reached by the Ryn commune.

It resulted from the realisation of 9 projects with a total value of 38.5 mln PLN, including 68% (26.2 mln PLN) of EU funding. In this case, HCOP was a source of EU funding for 4 projects, while ROPWM co-funded 5 projects. The latter co-funding included the expansion and modernization of the port infrastructure at Ryńskie Lake in Ryn, 3 projects aimed at wastewater treatment and 1 was related to environmental protection – the construction of a mini yacht marine. Biskupiec commune obtained EU funding with a value of its average annual budget revenues. The 10.9 mln PLN in funding was 74% of the total value for 15 projects performed under OP Human Capital (5), ROPWM (9) and Infrastructure and Environment OP (1). Three of these projects were connected with renewable sources of energy, two with the modernisation of local roads, another three with environmental protection (description of a low carbon local economic plan, the construction of a sanitary sewage system and the reclamation of a landfill), four projects aimed at improving the educational system, and the last two supported the commune office and fire station.

The Pearson's correlation between the Sci index and the amount of population as well as between the Sci index and the density of the population proved to be insignificant (0.03). The Pearson's correlation between the Sci index and the total budget revenues per capita (0.35) appeared to be stronger, although they were still not significant.

## Conclusions

All rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie benefitted from EU funding under OPs in 2007–2013. Although the rural communes are more numerous (101 out of 116 communes in the region), they absorbed much less than the urban areas, i.e. 30.4% of EU funding was obtained by all communes of warmińsko-mazurskie. The rural communes of warmińsko-mazurskie carried out different numbers of projects under operational programmes in 2007–2013, i.e. 'Regional Operational Programme for Warmińsko-Mazurskie', 'Human Capital OP', and to a much smaller degree the 'Innovative Economy OP' and the 'Infrastructure and Environment OP'. None of them benefitted from the PO Development of Eastern Poland.

Projects carried out under ROPWM represented the widest range of SIMIK priorities, as they aimed at different development needs. Projects carried out under HCOP were most numerous – all rural communes benefitted from this programme. However these were mostly soft projects of a relatively low value. Values of the Sci index ranged from 50 to 5,420 PLN per 1 inhabitant, but nearly 60% of the analysed communes obtained the lowest values between 50 and 500. Values of the Rscr index ranged from 1% to 164%, and the largest group of communes obtained EU funding resulting in the lowest Rscr between 1% and

25% of average annual budget revenues. In both cases, rural communes who had obtained different index values were located in different areas of the region, and did not create any spatial patterns. There were only three rural communes, namely Biskupiec (nowomiejski LAU 1), Ryn and Świątajno (olecki LAU 1), whose Rscr was higher than 100% of their average annual budget revenues.

Such characteristics as population, density of population and total budget revenues per capita were not correlated with the value of absorbed EU funding per capita (Sci index), which proves that these factors did not influence the absorption of regional policy funding by the surveyed communes.

Translated by Author

Proofreading by Michael Thoene

Accepted for print 12.04.2018

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