Cross-border Cooperation Between Local Action Groups from Poland and the Czech Republic: Three Case Studies

Marek FURMANKIEWICZ* and Gabriela TRNKOVÁ

1 Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Wroclaw, Poland; marek.furmankiewicz@upwr.edu.pl
2 University of Hradec Kralove, Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, gabriela.trnkova@uhk.cz
* Corresponding author: marek.furmankiewicz@upwr.edu.pl

Abstract: The paper presents three case studies of cooperation projects involving Local Action Groups (LAGs) from Poland and the Czech Republic. The research involved an analysis of the content of documents, LAG websites and interviews with LAG representatives. The projects were financed from the funds of “Sub-measure 19.3” of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme (RDP) in Poland. The aims of the projects concerned, among others: promoting the area of the LAG by exchanging experiences related to tradition, culture, including the promotion of healthy or traditional local dishes; promoting methods of waste segregation and processing; and developing local tourist services through international promotion and networking of services. As the main difficulty the respondents indicated differences in the principles behind accounting the projects, which had to be settled separately with regard to national RDP programmes, even though they are components of a single cooperation project. Czech respondents pointed to a high level of limitations regarding the scope of financing LAG activities. The COVID-19 pandemic, language barriers and geographical distance were mentioned much less. Cross-border cooperation between the LAGs remains relatively weak as partnerships tend to focus on local issues and needs. This may limit the diffusion of innovation and good practices between rural areas.

Keywords: community led-local development; rural development programme; local action groups; cross-border cooperation; Poland; Czech Republic

JEL Classification: O21; D71; L31

1. Introduction

Much attention is paid in contemporary development policies to both the participatory methods of resource management at the local level (Castro et al., 2020; Silva, 2020) and the international cooperation of local communities (Baldersheim et al., 2002; Handley, 2001). Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), derived from European Union (EU) LEADER-type initiatives and programmes (Masot & Alonso, 2017), is nowadays an important method of increasing the participation of local communities in managing local resources and supporting sustainable socio-economic development (Konečný, 2019; Kostalova & Vavra, 2021). In literature on economy it is often analysed as neo-endogenous development, within which an attempt is made to combine local (bottom-up) and supra-local (top-down) aims and needs (Bosworth et al., 2020; Furmankiewicz et al., 2020, 2021a). This results in the forming
of territorial partnerships known as Local Action Groups (LAGs), which receive EU funds for the preparation and implementation of local development strategies (Boukalova & Kolarova, 2014; Furmankiewicz et al., 2021b). One of the important principles of CLLD is cooperation and networking, which means initiating cooperative relations and information exchange between LAGs (European Commission, 2006; Zajda, 2013a) and between local stakeholders within the partnership (Doitchinova & Zaimov, 2015). This principle allows for activity at four levels: the European, the national, the regional and the sub-regional (Magryś, 2009). The first level covers the activities of organizations with a European scope, such as the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), which supports about 2,200 LAGs from 26 countries, including non-EU states that implement the LEADER methodology (Marhoff, 2019). Examples of national level organizations include the Polish LAG Network - Federation of Regional LAG Networks based in Łagów, and the National Network of LAGs in the Czech Republic based in Hradec nad Moravici. The Lower Silesian LAG Partnership Network (Poland) in turn is a regional level example. Both national and international rural networks facilitate access to intangible resources of rural communities such as skills, knowledge or social networks (Magryś, 2009; Skrzypczyński et al., 2021). Literature on the subject often considers cross-EU CLLD approach, as well as European trans-border networks and information transfer as a form of “Europeanisation” processes (Furmankiewicz et al., 2020; Heidenreich, 2019; Maurel, 2008).

Individual LAG engagement in national and international cooperation projects, involving from two to a dozen LAGs, may also be of great importance for local development (Pylkkänen et al., 2020). Collaboration projects usually consist of joint activities over a specified period of time and are financed by the EU or using other sources. Such projects may include both LAGs located in one region (creating, for example, a single marketing product, promoting innovation in short food supply chains), as well as supra-regional and international agreements between LAGs located in many different countries (implementing, for example, the exchange of experiences and information). Territorial partnerships focus on local development, hence literature on the role of international cooperation in the transfer of knowledge and innovation between LAGs is relatively poor. Information on international LAG cooperation projects appears mainly in descriptions within the context of general, national cooperation of local communities. In this paper, we try to contribute to the popularization of the subject of international LAG cooperation, which has so far been relatively rarely discussed in European literature. We focus on regional cross-border cooperation and discuss three examples of projects involving LAGs located in the Lower Silesia region in Poland, and the Liberec and Hradec Králové regions in the Czech Republic.

2. International Cooperation of LAGs in Literature

Local Action Groups, both in Poland and the Czech Republic, are associations of partners representing the public sector (municipalities, municipal budgetary units such as museums, community centres), the economic sector (enterprises, businesspeople, farmers) and the social sector (non-governmental organizations and private persons). They can operate in a selected functional region covering several municipalities in rural areas or several units (districts) in the
city, in accordance with the principles of the CLLD approach promoted by the EU (European Commission, 2014; Furmankiewicz, 2021; Kola-Bezka, 2020; Konečný, 2019). They prepare local development strategies and receive funds (incl. from the EU) for local initiatives supporting social activity and economic development in line with local needs. Such form of territorial governance is one of the possible ways to increase the effectiveness of managing local resources (Babczuk et al., 2017; Boukalova et al., 2016). In addition to local activities the EU documents also draw attention to the “networking” and “collaboration” of LAGs (European Commission, 2018), allowing support for the creation of national and regional LAG networks (Magryś, 2009), as well as their voluntary individual cooperation within so-called cooperation projects for which a special budget line is often allocated (De Luca et al., 2018; Zajda, 2013a). As part of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme in Poland, international cooperation may be carried out under Sub-measure 19.3. “Preparation and implementation of activities in the field of cooperation with the local action group”. Cooperation projects may include LAGs located in one region, but also supra-regional and international agreements. They can, inter alia, exchange experiences and information on methods of stimulating development and local social activity.

Similar types of cooperation projects were implemented in the 2007-2013 programming period. According to the research by Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska (2017) 34 international and 189 national projects were implemented in the years 2007-2013 as part of the “Axis 4” of the RDP (within “Measure 421” of the LEADER approach) in Poland. Joint activities most often concerned the development of tourism and the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. The costs and difficulties related to the coordination of activities due to geographical distance, language barriers and the diversity of legal conditions and formal requirements for LAGs in different EU countries were considered by the author to be the main barriers to international cooperation (Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2017).

Hoffmann and Hoffmann (2018) presented three examples of LAG-formulated international projects concerning the development of the tourist offer in rural areas. One of the projects included the promotion of the international “European St. James Route” with cooperation between partners from Poland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Studies of 22 LAGs from the Lubelskie Province (województwo lubelskie) in Poland showed only one organization to have expressed the will to implement an international project (Guzal-Dec, 2018). According to Kalisiak-Mędelska (2013) three LAGs (among 20 existing partnerships) in the Łódź Province (województwo łódzkie) in the 2007-2013 Programming Period have prepared international cooperation projects: Przymierze Jeziorsko (two projects with partners from Germany), Gniazdo (one project with a partner from Lithuania) and Mroga (one project with a partner from France). The efforts involved within these activities were focused towards, inter alia, the promotion of local tourist and cultural resources, as well as pro-ecological traditions and attitudes, including joint events integrating communities from different countries. The author assessed that the projects of interregional and international cooperation in this voivodeship have been implemented to an “insufficient degree”. Similarly, Zajda (2013b) noticed a relatively weak international cooperation of LAGs from the Łódź Province (województwo łódzkie), offering insight into the cooperation project of the Mroga LAG with a partner from France (LAG Nord Meusien), which involved the
preparation of an open-air museum and the reconstruction of a historical battle aimed at tourists (Zajda, 2014).

Also, in the Czech Republic the international cooperation of LAGs attracted less attention when compared to local issues. An analysis of the content of articles related to the LEADER programme in regional newspapers indicated that only 5% of them provided information on the international activity of LAGs (Lošťák & Hudečková, 2010). According to an ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme in the Czech Republic, LAGs expressed more interest in inter-territorial cooperation than in transnational cooperation – an observation similarly valid in Poland (EKOTOXA & IREAS, 2016). During this period, Czech LAGs were involved in more than 40 transnational cooperation projects supported by the RDP. In more than half of these, the partner LAG was from Slovakia. Only four Czech-Polish cooperation projects have been supported by the State Agricultural Intervention Fund of the Czech Republic (State Agricultural Intervention Fund, 2021).

An analysis of European LAGs’ international cooperation projects in the 2007-2013 programming period by Pylkkänen et al. (2020) found that local rural stakeholders showed little interest in developing international contacts. Krasniqi (2020) reported the cooperation of the Vitia LAG in Kosovo with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) in the area of training local leaders. Similar problems have been noticed in Slovenia, which led to the conclusion that there is a need for additional efforts at promoting interregional and international cooperation among local communities operating in the LAG (Bedrac & Cunder, 2010).

The analysis of the literature discussed above shows that local communities have been involved in implementing international projects mainly in the field of knowledge and information exchange, with a prevalence of trainings and projects related to the creation of tourism products. In the following sections we analyse three case studies of Polish-Czech cooperation.

3. Methodology

Three examples of cooperation projects implemented by LAGs from Poland (Lower Silesia region) and the Czech Republic (Liberec and Hradec Králové regions) serve as the subject of the analysis detailed in this paper (Figure 1). These include:

1. Sustainable tourist traffic in the Western Sudetes on the Polish-Czech border (two LAGs from Poland and one from the Czech Republic);
2. Culinary festival: traditions cultivated in Polish and Czech villages (two LAGs from Poland and the Euroregion Glacensis association from the Czech Republic);
3. ECO LAG international cooperation project (five LAGs from Poland and one from the Czech Republic).

The projects were financed under Sub-measure 19.3 “Preparation and implementation of activities in the field of cooperation with the Local Action Group of the Rural Development Program in Poland” financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
Figure 1. Case study of cooperating groups of LAGs: 1) “Sustainable tourist traffic in the Western Sudetes on the Polish-Czech border” project; 2) “Culinary Festival: Traditions cultivated in Polish and Czech villages” project; 3) “ECO LAG Project of international cooperation”. Source: Authors own work based on data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Warsaw, Poland and the National Network of Local Action Groups of the Czech Republic in Prague.

The research made use of the methodology of analysing the content of documents formulated by LAGs for the 2014-2020 EU Programming Period (actions planned in practice most commonly for 2022 or 2023), as well as LAG websites and telephone interviews with the managers of specific projects or heads of LAG offices. The interviews on the Czech side involved each LAG participating in cooperation projects in stages of both preparation or implementation. In Poland, the interviews were carried out only in the offices of the lead partners responsible for the coordination of the entire project.

The questions included matters such as: the objectives and scope of activities in the project, and respondents' views on the following matters: to what extent have the original plans been achieved, what benefits has the LAG obtained from the project, what were the main problems regarding the cooperation, what is the possible scope of activities for the future, and why are there only relatively few LAGs involved in international cooperation. The interviews have been conducted in November and December of 2021.

Cartographic materials have been obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Warsaw, Poland and the National Network of Local Action Groups of the Czech Republic in Prague. This paper is used to present the preliminary results of ongoing research across the Polish-Czech borderland.
4. Results

The “Partnerstwo Duch Gór”, “Kwiat Lnu” LAGs (Poland) and “Rozvoj Tanvaldska” LAG (Czech Republic) implemented a project named "Sustainable tourist traffic in the Western Sudetes on the Polish-Czech border" (case study group 1). The main goal of this project was the international promotion and networking of services in lesser-known places in the area of operation of all 3 partners. Part of the project involved the preparation of joint advertising material and the organization of joint conferences. The partnerships operate in the attractive tourist area of the Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mountains and the Izerskie/Jizerské Mountains, where tourism is an important element of income for local communities (Böhm & Šmída, 2019; Przybyła & Kulczyk-Dynowska, 2017).

The objectives and tasks of the project on the Polish side were considered by the representative of the “Partnerstwo Duch Gór” Partnership to have been successfully achieved. Nevertheless, great difficulties have also been indicated in the implementation of the project, as each task involved had to be separately approved by the national RDPs. Despite many meetings and arrangements, the Czech side did not receive financial support from its RDP, while the project on the Polish side had already been approved and could boast a signed contract, which made it impossible to adjust the scope of the ultimate enterprise. As stated by the project manager: “The Czechs had not abandoned us, but they had to carry out tasks using their own resources. Had they not done so, we would have a problem with settling the project”. As a result of these problems with financing joint actions, the respondent expressed the opinion that she did not see the possibility of further cross-border and international cooperation due to the unfavourable way of financing the projects. The LAG also does not intend to implement cross-border projects using funds distributed by the Nisa/Nysa Euroregion, due to the lack of funds for pre-financing activities and the long time it takes to have funds reimbursed after the completion of a project. The LAG’s own income as an association’s is insufficient to finance such activities.

On the Czech side, a mutual meeting, such as a conference, is the only sort of activity which can be considered a valid project output. It should be emphasized that the project was not financed from the Czech RDP and the entire affair was perceived by “Rozvoj Tanvaldska” LAG representative as “bringing about costs without much benefit for the Czech side”. He saw no potential for further development of cooperation under the current conditions of the Czech RDP. The existing collaboration with Polish partners is implemented mainly through the Nisa/Nysa Euroregion. The LAG representative identified the main problem as resulting from the difference in conditions set by the RDP for the Czech Republic and for Poland. For the Czech Republic these rules exclusively allow “nothing more than meetings and the creation of promotional materials”.

The “Partnerstwo Sowiogórskie” and “Ujście Baryczy” LAGs (Poland) pursued the “Culinary Festival: Traditions cultivated in Polish and Czech villages” project (case study group 2). Initially, the Polish LAGs planned to work in cooperation with the “Sdružení Splav” LAG (Czech Republic). The project was aimed at promoting the area of operation of the respective partners and exchanging experiences related to tradition, culture and local
heritage, including the promotion of healthy eating and culinary workshops on local dishes. Ultimately, the Czech LAG did not participate in the project because they could not reach an agreement with the Polish partners on the particular activities and outputs. The project leader (the “Partnerstwo Sowiogórskie” LAG) turned to the Czech association of the Glacensis Euroregion for assistance, as the organization had experience in the implementation of cross-border projects. It eventually agreed to help and provide cooperation on the condition that it would act as a cost-free partner and would not be involved in financial settlements. The resulting project yielded the following results: a promotional film, a set of video clips on the preparation of local dishes (available online), and a publication in the form of a culinary book entitled “Tastes of the past”. A series of workshops with public participation was planned but ultimately abandoned due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A representative of the “Sdružení Splav” LAG stated that there is ongoing cooperation with the various Polish organizations (e.g., with regard to environmental projects in collaboration with the Polish Ecological Club), but that they are not receiving support from the Czech RDP. This leads the respondent to conclude that: “there would certainly be room for cooperation in a number of activities”, indicating that the main obstacle towards the successful implementation of the project was that the thematic definition of the supported activities was too narrow. As a result of the demands by the Czech RDP the projects were difficult to prepare and there were difficulties in the cooperation with the State Agricultural Intervention Fund of the Czech Republic. Support was offered mainly with regard to soft projects (educational events, creation of promotional materials, brochures), without the possibility of undertaking actions based around investment. This was considered a significant limitation.

Five LAGs from Poland (the “Qwsi” LAG, the “Dobra Widawa” LAG, the “Szlakiem Granitu” LAG, the “Krina Wzgórz Trzebnickich” LAG, the “Brzesko-Oławskas Wieś Historyczna” LAG) and the “Královédvorské” LAG (Czech Republic) participated in the “ECO LAG Project of international cooperation” (case study group 3). This particular project was educational in nature and was devoted to promoting useful methods of segregating and processing (upcycling) waste among LAG residents. A total of 107 upcycling workshops were held in the Polish LAGs participating in the project, with the additional publication of an educational brochure. Representatives of the Polish LAGs participated in two-day study trips in the Dvůr Králové nad Labem municipality. They became familiar, inter alia, with the operation of the municipal waste segregation and utilization system, including the waste segregation plant in Rychnovek. The Polish participants of the project also learned about modern techniques of waste processing, as well as the consequences of incineration and storage of waste in illegal places, and the correct way of segregating waste and upcycling. The project leader intends to further enhance the Polish-Czech cooperation with regard to developing tourism. The Polish respondent mentioned the following major obstacles to cooperation: the COVID-19 pandemic, language barriers and geographical distance resulting in a lack of opportunity for frequent personal contacts with the foreign partner.

No mutual international meeting has taken place on the Polish side. According to the Czech LAG representative, the exchange of experience served as the only practical benefit
drawn from the project. He believed that Poland enjoyed better conditions within the RDP than the Czech Republic in terms of transnational cooperation projects. The Czech LAG representative saw no potential for further development of Czech-Polish cooperation.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysed cooperation projects concerned mainly know-how exchange, educational events, and the development of tourist and local gastronomic products. The recognized obstacles were related mainly to differences in RDP procedures observed in both countries and the lack of own funds to finance the cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic, language barriers and the geographical distance between the partners were less frequently mentioned difficulties in cooperation. The feeling of no tangible benefit discouraged further cooperation.

The implemented projects often involved LAGs located in the mountainous area of the Sudetes, which is an important cross-border tourist region on the border of Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany (Dołzbłasz, 2017; Jędruch et al., 2020; Potocki et al., 2014). Such activities undoubtedly favour the diversification of rural development towards undertakings other than those typically related to agriculture and are considered an important direction of development in contemporary EU rural development policy (Stacherzak & Heldak, 2019; Struś et al., 2020; Trnková, 2021). Areas located in the Sudetes, struggling with unfavourable social and economic phenomena like depopulation, decapitalization of fixed assets and development difficulties in the protected border zone, were referred to in the 20th century as a “problematic area”, in large part also due to their peripheral, border location (Ciok et al., 2006; Sikorski et al., 2020). Currently, due to the far-reaching integration of Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany within the European Union, the border is no longer a strong administrative barrier, also in the Sudetes. This ensures the relative technical ease of developing tourism, establishing economic links and fostering the cooperation of local communities in border regions, with the added boon of support from EU funds (Kachniarz et al., 2019; Kulczyk-Dynowska, 2018). The Czech Republic has the second longest border with Poland. However, while individual cooperation between Polish and Czech towns is developing intensively (Böhm et al., 2021; Furmankiewicz, 2007), LAGs as formal associations enjoy relatively little involvement in such activities.

The conducted questionnaire survey shows an asymmetry in the perception of the benefits from collaborative projects. The activities within the case study groups were financed by the Polish RDP and were seen as beneficial mainly by Polish LAGs. The Czech LAGs expressed dissatisfaction with the established rules for providing support from the Czech RDP within the measures made available in the current programming period. In their opinion, the supported activities were very narrowly defined and limited only to educational events, meetings or the producing of promotional materials. The preparation of the project was substantially difficult and the supported undertakings were not perceived by the Czech LAG representatives as beneficial. The interviewed Czech managers stated that the Czech-Polish cooperation is an ongoing process, but it continues outside any support from the RDP. Under the conditions of the Czech 2014-2020 RDP the three interviewed Czech LAG representatives did not anticipate any further significant development of cooperation.
The respondents recognized differences in the procedures of the national RDP as a significant barrier to the implementation of international cooperation projects. This problem has already been noticed in the evaluation of the 2007-2013 LEADER programme in the Visegrad Group countries (Dvořáková Lišková et al., 2019). This should be alarming for policy makers, who specify the goals and rules of programmes that support the networking of LAGs. Analyses suggest that the current RDP procedures provide very limited actual support to the promotion of international networking. This is not conducive to European integration understood as an increase in social ties (networking) and an increase in positive attitudes between local communities from different countries. Our and also other researchers’ outcomes suggest that most LAGs focus on local traditions and are internally socially closed, i.e., they rarely engage in international contacts (Pylkkänen et al., 2020; Schiller, 2008). This subject requires further research on a larger scale.

Acknowledgments: In this paper, we used data collected under two projects: 1) Research in Poland was supported by project no. 2019/33/B/HS4/00176 “The concept of absorptive and transformational Europeanisation of subnational entities on an example of the Local Action Groups in Poland” (OPUS 17) financed by the National Science Centre, Kraków, Poland, and 2) The research in the Czech Republic was supported by the internal project “SPEV – Economic Impacts under the Industry 4.0 / Society 5.0 Concept “, 2022, University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Informatics and Management, Czech Republic”. The authors would like to express their gratitude to student Martin Matějíček (University of Hradec Králové) who collaborated on data collection and processing, as well as on feedback on the overall concept and editing of the article.

Conflict of interest: none

References

Babczuk, A., Kachniarz, M., & Piepiora, Z. (2017). Work efficiency of local governments. In P. Jedlička, P. Marešová, & I. Soukal (Eds.), Proceedings of the 15th International Scientific Conference on Hradec Economic Days (pp. 20–28). Hradec Králové: University of Hradec Králové. https://uni.uhk.cz/hed/site/assets/files/1046/proceedings_2017_1.pdf

Baldersehime, H., Bucek, J., & Swianiewicz, P. (2002). Mayors Learning across Borders: The International Networks of Municipalities in East-Central Europe. Regional and Federal Studies, 12(1), 126–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/714004723

Bedrác, M., & Cunder, T. (2010). “Leader” approach and local development strategies in Slovenia. In A. Fieldsend (Ed.), Linking competitiveness with equity and sustainability: new ideas for the socio-economic development of rural areas (pp. 245–256). Warszawa: European Rural Development Network. http://erdn.eu/wp-content/uploads/Volumes/Vol%207/Vol%207-Volume_7.pdf

Böhm, H., Opiola, W., & Siatkowski, J. (2021). Cross-border Cultural Cooperation as the Principle Paradiplomacy Form: Evidence from the Czech-Polish Borderland. Cultural Management: Science and Education, 5(1), 105–124. https://doi.org/10.30819/cmse.5-1.08

Böhm, H., & Šmída, J. (2019). Borders on the old maps of Jizera Mountain. Miscellanea Geographica - Regional Studies on Development, 23(4), 199–209. https://doi.org/10.2478/mgrsd-2019-0021

Bosworth, G., Price, L., Hakulien, V., & Marango, S. (2020). Rural Social Innovation and Neo-endogenous Rural Development. In E. Cejudo, & F. Navarro (Eds.), Neoendogenous Development in European Rural Areas: Results and Lessons (pp. 21–32). Cham, Switzerland: Springer Geography. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33463-5_2

Boukalova, K., & Kolarova, A. (2014). Místní akční skupiny a multifondové financování (Local Action Groups and Multi-funding). In P. Jedlička (Ed.), Recenzovaný sborník mezinárodní odborné konference Hradecké ekonomické dny 2014 Hradec Králové 4. a 5. února 2014 (pp. 93-103). Hradec Králové: Univerzita Hradec Králové. https://uni.uhk.cz/hed/site/assets/files/1049/proceedings_2014_1.pdf

Boukalova, K., Kolarova, A., & Lostak, M. (2016). Tracing shift in Czech rural development paradigm (Reflections of Local Action Groups in the media). Agricultural Economics – Czech (Zemědělská ekonomika), 62(4), 149–159. https://doi.org/10.17221/102/2015-AGRICECON
Castro, D. G., de Elizagarate Gutiérrez, V., Kazak, J. K., Szewrański, S., Kaczmarek, I., & Wang, T. (2020). Nuevos desafíos para el perfeccionamiento de los procesos de participación ciudadana en la gestión urbana. Retos para la innovación social [New challenges in the improvement of the citizen participation processes of the urban management. Social innovation challenges]. Cuadernos de Gestión, 20(1), 51DG. https://doi.org/10.5295/cdg.170751dg

Ciok, S., Dolszblas, S., & Raczyk, A. 2006. Dolny Śląsk: problemy rozwoju regionalnego (Lower Silesia: Problems of regional development). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

De Luca, A. I., Iofrida, N., Gulisano, G., & Strano, A. (2018). Toward an evaluation model for transnational cooperation activities in rural areas: a case study within an EU LEADER project. Bulletin of Geography. Socio–Economic Series, 42, 19–45. https://doi.org/10.2478/bog-2018-0029

Doitchinova, J., & Zaimov, D. (2015). Innovative rural development through networks and partnerships. Trakia Journal of Sciences, 13(1), 282–293. https://doi.org/10.15547/tjs.2015.s.01.048

Dolszblas, S. (2017). From Divided to Shared Spaces: Transborder Tourism in the Polish-Czech Borderlands. In D. Hall (Ed.), Tourism and geopolities: issues and concepts from Central and Eastern Europe (pp. 163–177). Wallingford, Boston, USA: CABI. https://doi.org/10.1079/9781780647616.0163

Dvořáková Lišková, Z., Klufová, R., & Rost, M. (2019). Ex post evaluation of the Rural Development Program 2007–2013 – Final Report). Praha: Ministerstvo zemědělství. https://eagri.cz/public/web/file/568806/Ex_post_PRV_2007_13_ZZ_final.pdf

European Commission. (2018). European Structural and Investment Funds. The LEADER approach: a basic guide. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/iti_en.pdf

European Commission. (2006). The LEADER approach: a basic guide. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/leader-approach-basic_guide_en

European Commission. (2014). Community-Led Local Development. Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/iti_en.pdf

European Union Community. (2018). European Structural and Investment Funds. Guidance for Local Actors on Community-Led Local Development (EGESIF_18-0034-00; 17/09/2018). Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/guidance_clld_local_actors_en.pdf

Furmankiewicz, M. (2007). International Cooperation of Polish Municipalities: Directions and Effects. Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, 98(3), 349–359. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2007.00402.x

Furmankiewicz, M. (2021). Urban Local Action Groups in Poland: Monofunctional social activities within Community Led Local Development. In K. Antlová, & T. Semerařová (Eds.), Proceedings of the 15th International Conference Liberec Economic Forum 2021 (pp. 259–268). Technical University of Liberec.

Furmankiewicz, M., Królikowska, K., & Przybyła, K. (2020). Goals of Elites and Local Communities in the European Union Neo-endogenous Development: Differences as the Constraints on Europeanisation? In P. Marešová, P. Jedlička, K. Firlej, & I. Soukal (Eds.), Proceedings of the international scientific conference Hradec Economic Days 2020 (pp. 176-187). https://doi.org/10.36689/uhk/hed/2020-01-020

Furmankiewicz, M., Janc, K., Kaczmarek, I., & Solecka, I. (2021a). Are Rural Stakeholder Needs Compliant with the Targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy? Text Mining Analysis of Local Action Group Strategies from Two Polish Regions. In J. Mači, P. Marešová, K. Firlej, & I. Soukal (Eds.), Proceedings of the international scientific conference Hradec Economic Days 2021 (pp. 195–205). https://doi.org/10.36689/uhk/hed/2021-01-019

Furmankiewicz, M., Janc, K., & Macken-Walsh, Á. (2021b). Implementation of the EU LEADER programme at member-state level: Written and unwritten rules of local project selection in rural Poland. Journal of Rural Studies, 86, 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.05.020

Guzał-Dec, D. (2018). Local Action Groups as a New Marketing Entity in Local Governments: a Case Study from the Lubelskie Province. Olsztyń Economic Journal, 13(2), 167–181. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.olsj.2021.05.02010.31648/oej.2770

Handley, S. (2001). The links effects. A good practice guide to transnational partnerships and twinning for local authorities. London: Local Government International Bureau.

Heidenreich, M. (2019). The Europeanisation of social fields and the social space: a theoretical framework. In M. Heidenreich (Ed.), Horizontal Europeanisation: The Transnationalisation of Daily Life and Social Fields in Europe (pp. 9–35). London and New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351189996

Hoffmann, R., & Hoffmann, N. (2018). The LEADER Programme as an Impulse for New Projects in Rural Areas Quaestiones Geographicae, 37(2), 141–150. https://doi.org/10.2478/quageo-2018-0014
Jędruch, M., Furmankiewicz, M., & Kaczmarek, I. (2020). Spatial Analysis of Asymmetry in the Development of Tourism Infrastructure in the Borderlands: The Case of the Bystrzyckie and Orlickie Mountains. ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information, 9(8), 470. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijgi9080470

Kachniarz, M., Szewranski, S., & Kazak, J. (2019). The Use of European Funds in Polish and Czech Municipalities. A Study of the Lower Silesia Voivodship and Hradec Králové Region. IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, 471, 112047. https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1757-899X/471/11/112047

Kalisiak-Mędelska, M. (2013). Partnerstwo lokalne – istota i znaczenie na przykładzie lokalnych grup działania. Biblioteka Regionalisty, 13, 73–96. https://dbcz.wroc.pl/Content/33003

Kola-Bezka, M. (2020). Community-led local development in urban and other areas: lessons from Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship. Ekonomia i Prawo – Economics and Law, 19(3), 505–521. https://doi.org/10.12775/EiP.2020.034

Konečný, O. (2019). The Leader Approach Across the European Union: One Method of Rural Development, Many Forms of Implementation. European Countryside, 11(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.17221/407/2020-AGRICECON

Krasniqi, N. (2020). The Role and Impact of Local Action Groups in Rural Development of Kosovo. Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development, 55(1), 17–28. https://doi.org/10.17306/JARD.2020.01306

Kulczyk-Dynowska, A. (2018). Spatial and Financial Aspects of National Parks Functioning in Poland Based on the Example of the Parks Situated along the Borderland of Lower Silesia Region and Liberecky and Kralovohradecky kraj. In P. Jedlička, P. Marešová, & I. Soukal (Eds.), Proceedings of the international scientific conference Hradec Economic Days 2018. Part I. (pp. 501–512). Hradec Králové: University of Hradec Králové. https://uni.uhk.cz/hed/site/assets/files/1072/proceedings_2018_1.pdf

Lošták, M., & Hudečková, H. (2010). Preliminary impacts of the LEADER+ approach in the Czech Republic. Agricultural Economics – Czech (Zemědělská ekonomika), 56(6), 249–265. https://doi.org/10.17221/407/2020-AGRICECON

Magryś, W. (2009). Porozumienia i sieci Lokalnych Grup Działania. In K. Wasielewski (Ed.), Doświadczenia z funkcjonowania programu LEADER w Polsce w latach 2004-2009 (pp. 107–114). Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Wyższej Szkoły Gospodarki w Bydgoszczy.

Marhoff, J. (2019). A Leader Journey through Rural Europe: National LAG Networks Revealing the Diversity of Leader Implementation. Lisbon, Portugal: MINHA TERRA & ELARD. http://elard.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ELARD-Booklet-web_2.pdf

Masot, A. N., & Alonso, G. C. (2017). 25 years of the LEADER initiative as European rural development policy: The case of Extremadura (SW Spain). European Countryside, 2, 302–316. https://doi.org/10.1515/euco-2017-0019

Maurel, M.-C. (2008). Local Development Stakeholders and the European Model: Learning the LEADER Approach in the New Member States. Sociologický časopis – Czech Sociological Review, 4(3), 511–529. https://doi.org/10.13060/00380288.2008.44.3.04

Potocki, J., Kachniarz, M., & Piepiora, Z. (2014). Sudetes – cross-border region? In P. Jedlička (Ed.), Hradec Economic Days 2014 (pp. 191–200). Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus. https://uni.uhk.cz/hed/site/assets/files/1049/proceedings_2014_5.pdf

Przybyla, K., & Kulczyk-Dynowska, A. (2017). Transformations of Tourist Functions in Urban Areas of the Karkonosze Mountains. IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, 245, 072001. https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1757-899X/245/7/072001

Pylikkänen, P., Hyryläinen, T., & Navarro, F. (2020). Transnational Cooperation—The Underutilized Potential of the European LEADER Method. In E. Cejudo, & F. Navarro (Eds.), Neoendogenous Development in European Rural Areas. Results and Lessons (pp. 133–148). Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

Schiller, H. (2008). Networks of Local Action Groups in Rural Areas. The example of the EU Initiative Broads and Rivers LEADER+. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

Sikorski, D., Latocha, A., Szymtke, R., Kajdanek, K., Miodorńska, P., & Tomczak, P. (2020). Functional changes in peripheral mountainous areas in east central Europe between 2004 and 2016 as an aspect of rural revival? Kłodzko County case study. Applied Geography, 122(102223). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2020.102223

Silva, C. N. (2020). Contemporary Trends in Local Governance. Reform, Cooperation and Citizen Participation. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
Skrzypczyński, R., Dołzbłasz, S., Janc, K., & Raczyk, A. (2021). Beyond Supporting Access to Land in Socio-Technical Transitions. How Polish Grassroots Initiatives Help Farmers and New Entrants in Transitioning to Sustainable Models of Agriculture. *Land, 10*(2), 214. https://doi.org/10.3390/land10020214

Stacherzak, A., & Heldak, M. (2019). Borough Development Dependent on Agricultural, Tourism, and Economy Levels. *Sustainability, 11*(2), 415. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11020415

Struś, M., Kalisiak-Mędelska, M., Nadolny, M., Kachniarz, M., & Raftowicz, M. (2020). Community-Supported Agriculture as a Perspective Model for the Development of Small Agricultural Holding in the Region. *Sustainability, 12*(7), 2656. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072656

State Agricultural Intervention Fund. (2021). Approved Support Applications for Measure IV.2.1 [Dataset]. Retrieved 20 November 2021, from https://www.szif.cz/cs/realizace-projektu-spoluprace

Trnková, G. (2021). The Economic and Social Importance of Farm Diversification towards Nonagricultural Activities in EU. In J. Mačí, P. Marešová, K. Firlej, & I. Soukal (Eds.), *Proceedings of the international scientific conference Hradec Economic Days* 2021 (pp. 823–831). https://doi.org/10.36689/uhk/hed/2021-01-081

Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, A. (2017). Znaczenie podejścia LEADER 2007-2013 w rozwoju współpracy międzyregionalnej na obszarach wiejskich w Polsce. *Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu, 19*(5), 217-222. https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.294508

Zajda, K. (2013a). Cooperation between local action groups. Comparison of networks created by organizations from the Lubuskie and Małopolskie voivodeships. *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development, 1*(27), 233-247. Retrieved from https://www1.up.poznan.pl/jard/index.php/jard/article/view/608

Zajda, K. (2013b). Projekty współpracy lokalnych grup działania z województwa łódzkiego. *Wieś i Rolnictwo (Village and Agriculture), 4*(161), 116-132. Retrieved from https://kwartalnik.irwirpan.waw.pl/wir/article/view/470

Zajda, K. (2014). *New forms of social capital of rural areas. A case study of selected Polish local action groups*. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.