



ENGINE

Education for Rural
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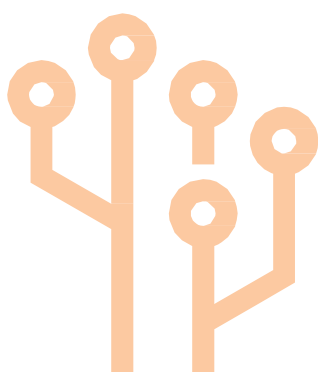


D2.03. Rural Development Potential Map

Małopolska Region



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Contents



1. Socio-economic profile of the region and its rural areas.....	5
2. Visualization of the development potential of rural areas in the region.....	31
3. Overview of E&I Initiatives in the region's rural areas.....	32
References:	81



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1. Socio-economic profile of the region and its rural areas

1.1. General socio-economic characteristics of the region and its rural areas

Małopolska region, located in southern Poland, is one of the country's most distinctive regions. It stands out for its rich cultural and natural heritage, as well as its high dynamics of socio-economic development. The capital of the region is Kraków, the second largest city in Poland, serving as an important academic, scientific, cultural, and economic center. Administratively, Małopolska comprises 22 counties, including 3 city counties (Kraków, Tarnów, and Nowy Sącz) and 182 municipalities, of which 14 are urban, 118 rural, and 50 urban-rural. Małopolska is one of the smallest regions in Poland in terms of area, ranking 12th with a total area of 15,200 km², which constitutes 4.8% of the country's territory (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2024a, p. 1). Nevertheless, the voivodeship has the fourth largest population of around 3.4 million people (9.1% of Poland's population) (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2024b, p. 10). As a result, Małopolska has the second-highest population density in Poland (226 people per km²) (Statistics Poland, 2023, *Population density and indicators*). Rural areas occupy as much as 88.8% of the region's area and are home to 52.1% of its inhabitants (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2024a, p. 2; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, p. 9). The region is distinguished by having the highest rural population density in Poland (133 people per km²), reflecting a unique demographic structure with a significant share of rural inhabitants. The level of urbanization is below the national average, with the highest rates found in the counties of the region's western part (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, p. 33).

Małopolska is one of the regions with a rapidly developing economy. The economic potential of the voivodeship, measured by Gross Domestic Product, ranks Małopolska 5th in the country, accounting for 8% of Poland's GDP (Statistics Poland, 2023, Total gross domestic product). The region is the fourth-largest labor market in the country, providing employment for approximately 1.4 million people (Statistics Poland, 2022, *Employed in the national economy by section of PKD*). The strength of Małopolska's labor market lies in its competitiveness, driven by a relatively young age structure and a high level of education among its residents. As much as 59.4% of the region's population (about 2.0 million people) is of working age, compared to the national average of 58.4%. On average, the rural population is younger than the urban population (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2024b, p. 10). The proportion of people with higher education in the region is 25.9%, compared to the national average of 24.6%. It is worth noting that in 2011, the proportion was only 17.2%, indicating a significant increase in the level of education



among the region's residents over the past decade (Statistics Poland, 2011, 2021, National census – Population).

Małopolska is a leading investment destination in Poland, thanks to its strategic location at the crossroads of international transport routes and its excellent accessibility. The region's well-developed infrastructure, including Kraków-Balice International Airport and an extensive road and rail network, makes it a major transportation hub (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, p. 267). Małopolska is also distinguished by its strong research and development capabilities, a highly skilled workforce, and a wealth of business support institutions. The region, home to renowned universities like Jagiellonian University, AGH University of Science and Technology, Cracow University of Technology, and Krakow University of Economics, all located in Kraków, is the second-largest academic center in Poland (Statistics Poland, 2023). Moreover, the region is home to numerous research institutes and R&D centers conducting internationally recognized research. This makes Małopolska a significant contributor to Poland's R&D capacity; together, the Mazovian and Małopolska regions account for nearly half of Poland's internal expenditure on research and development (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, p. 90). The region's innovation centers, technology transfer hubs, and modern technology parks, such as the Kraków Technology Park, support startups and tech companies, fostering innovation and facilitating technology transfer between academia and business (Marshal Office of the Małopolska Region, Department of Ownership Supervision and Economy, 2020, p. 30). The region's extensive business support ecosystem also includes numerous development agencies, business incubators, cluster initiatives, chambers of commerce, business centers, coworking spaces, financial institutions, and other institutions (Kubaś et al., 2021, p. 28; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 54).

Małopolska has a vibrant and dynamic economy, blending traditional industries with cutting-edge technology and services. This diversity fosters balanced regional development, leveraging the region's rich resources. Key industrial sectors include chemicals, pharmaceuticals, metals, electrical engineering, and machinery. The region also has a thriving food processing industry, particularly in high-quality regional products. The growth in the number of enterprises over the past decade has been accompanied by the expansion of modern sectors such as ICT, creative industries, and business services, which are driving economic development. Małopolska is a major ICT hub in Poland, ranking second in ICT employment. Kraków, the region's capital, is home to numerous global IT companies, including Google, IBM, Motorola, and Cisco as well as a thriving startup scene (Motif Sp. z o.o., 2024; Business in Małopolska). The presence of international corporations offering business process outsourcing has resulted in the dynamic development of financial and business services in the form of shared service centers (SSC/BPO), which serve clients worldwide. The operations of these



companies strengthen Małopolska's position as one of the most important shared service centers in Poland (Związek Liderów Sektora Usług Biznesowych (ABSL), 2023). The region's diverse economic structure is also enriched by a well-developed creative sector, generating approximately 6.0% of the region's GDP (Marshal Office of the Małopolska Region, Department of Ownership Supervision and Economy, 2020, p. 30). The region offers an excellent environment for the development of leisure industries, including tourism, entertainment, and recreation. Małopolska, with its unique natural assets and rich cultural heritage, attracts millions of tourists annually from both Poland and abroad. It is worth noting that the sectors and industries mentioned above (excluding the business services sector) fall within the region's identified smart specializations, which include (Marshal Office of the Małopolska Region, Department of Ownership Supervision and Economy, 2020, p. 4):

1. Life Science
2. Sustainable Energy
3. Information and Communication Technologies
4. Chemistry
5. Production of Metals, Metal Products and Non-metallic Mineral Products
6. Electrical Engineering and Machinery Industry
7. Creative and Leisure Industries.

Additionally, this enhances their significance in the region's development. The combination of traditional industrial sectors with modern technologies and services makes Małopolska one of the most promising and dynamically developing regions in Poland, offering excellent conditions for both investment and living.

Rural areas constitute a significant part of the region, both geographically, socially, and economically. They are home to 1.8 million people, making up a substantial portion of the region's total population. The Małopolska countryside is characterized by a relatively young demographic structure. In 2023, 57.5% of the pre-productive age population resided in rural areas, which is a result of higher natural growth and fertility rates compared to urban areas. Moreover, rural dwellers accounted for 52.5% of the working-age population, highlighting the importance of these areas to the regional labor market (Statistics Poland, 2023, Demographic changes). It should be noted, however, that the demographics of these areas are undergoing significant changes due to the aging population and migration. Similar to the national trend, the population of the Małopolska region is aging. Although this process is less pronounced in rural areas than in urban ones (the proportion of people of retirement age in rural areas is, on average, lower than in urban areas, standing at 19.1% compared to 24.0%) (Statistics Poland, 2023, Demographic changes), it is rapidly advancing in many rural municipalities,



significantly affecting the socio-economic structure of these areas. The high proportion of elderly people generates increased demand for healthcare and long-term care services, access to which, especially in rural areas, is highly uneven (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2022, p. 22). At the same time, it reduces the number of working-age people, negatively impacting the local labor market and economic development. Additionally, migration is another significant factor influencing the demographic structure. Young people are leaving rural areas in search of better educational and professional opportunities, choosing to live in larger cities. This trend is leading to depopulation in some areas, particularly in the northern part and on the outskirts of the region. Migration not only reduces the population but also hinders local economic development, as young people are key drivers of innovation and growth. Despite these challenges, some rural municipalities in the Małopolska region are experiencing positive demographic changes, particularly those near large cities, especially Kraków, where there is an influx of people and a strong suburbanization process.

A positive trend in rural areas of Małopolska is the improving quality of human capital. The 2021 National Census revealed a significant increase in the educational attainment of rural residents. However, there are still significant disparities in education levels between rural and urban populations. In 2021, the proportion of individuals with higher education in urban areas was 34.4%, nearly double the rate in rural areas, which stood at 17.7% (national average was 29.2% and 17.6%, respectively) (Statistics Poland, 2021, National census – Population).

The rural economy of Małopolska is characterized by its diversity. Traditional activities coexist with modern industries, creating a unique character for the region. While agriculture remains an important sector, it is not dominant. The region's geological diversity, fragmented agriculture, and areas with unfavorable climatic and soil conditions limit the sector's development. However, the small average farm size encourages highly specialized production, particularly of fruits and vegetables. Moreover, the prevalence of extensive and traditional farming methods contributes to the production of high-quality food (Wojcieszak-Zbierska & Bogusz, 2020, pp. 351-359). The large number of small farms, combined with the region's rich natural and cultural heritage, including a rich culinary tradition, provides a foundation for the development of local food processing. As a result, Małopolska offers a rich variety of traditional, regional, and organic products made from local sources (Pajdzik, 2019, p. 7). The relatively new and increasingly popular branch of Małopolska's agriculture is viticulture and wine production (Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego, n.d.).

Rural entrepreneurship in Małopolska has been experiencing dynamic growth in recent years. According to the REGON register, which collects information on business entities and other organizational units operating in



Poland, the number of entities in the region's rural areas increased by 26.9% from 2018 to 2023. In 2023, these entities represented 38.1% of all entities in the region, well above the national average of 29.8%. This indicates a high level of economic activity among rural residents (Statistics Poland, 2023, National economy entities in the REGON register). While the growth of rural entrepreneurship is impressive, it is unevenly distributed across the region, influenced by factors such as proximity to urban centers and the availability of unique natural and cultural resources. The highest concentration of businesses is found near Krakow, in western Małopolska, and in the tourist municipalities of the southern part of the region. Tatra County stands out as a leader in entrepreneurship, using its unique natural and cultural assets to develop tourism, hospitality, and other services. (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 107). Tourism plays a significant role in diversifying income sources for rural residents. Rural areas in Małopolska feature a wide range of tourism activities, including agritourism, educational tourism, active tourism, culinary tourism, and eco-tourism. Additionally, the region has a strong tradition of crafts and folk arts (Muzeum Etnograficzne w Krakowie). Rural communities in Małopolska also demonstrate a high level of civic engagement, as shown by the formation of various partnerships, associations, and community organizations. Many of these, such as Local Action Groups (LAGs), rural housewives' associations or volunteer fire brigades, are unique to rural areas (Binda, 2022, p. 77).

Rural areas in Małopolska play a significant role in the region's development strategy, as evidenced by their inclusion in key documents such as the "Małopolska 2030 Development Strategy". This strategy emphasizes the need to support education, innovation, and entrepreneurship in rural areas, as well as the development of social and technical infrastructure (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 107).

1.2. Local resources of rural areas in Małopolska region

This section presents the local resources of rural areas in the Małopolska region, identified through a two-stage research process. In the first stage, rural local resources were identified through an analysis of secondary sources, including quantitative data, academic publications, reports, development strategies, case studies, and information from websites characterizing the region. In the second stage, the findings were further validated and enriched with insights from focus group research conducted by the Krakow University of Economics project team during a meeting with rural stakeholders of the Engine project, held on February 28, 2025. While this overview does not constitute a comprehensive inventory of the region's rural local resources, it highlights key assets that can support the development of entrepreneurship and innovation in the rural areas of the Małopolska region.



Universal resources

RLR 1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills

Rural areas in Małopolska possess a significant human capital resource, with 1.8 million people in 2023, well-equipped with universal knowledge, thanks to a strong educational foundation, access to universities and educational programs, and active participation in skills development initiatives and EU projects. The growing proportion of rural residents with higher education—nearly doubling from 9.8% to 17.7% between 2011 and 2021—indicates an improvement in the quality of human capital (Statistics Poland, 2011, 2021, National census - Population). However, the availability of skilled labor in rural areas varies significantly depending on proximity to urban centers. Rural areas near larger cities like Krakow, Tarnów, and Nowy Sącz have better access to a skilled workforce. The proximity of these cities allows rural residents to access urban educational and training opportunities, resulting in higher qualifications. Consequently, the increase in educational attainment in rural areas is closely linked to the development of suburban areas (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2024c, p. 37). In contrast, rural areas located far from major urban centers continue to face challenges related to limited access to a skilled workforce, due to factors such as a smaller number of educational institutions, limited training opportunities, and the outmigration of younger, educated individuals in search of better job prospects. This outmigration is particularly pronounced in municipalities located in the northern part of the region and on its periphery (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2020, p. 2).

RLR 2. Physical capital and technologies

According to the REGON register, nearly 12% of all entities in Poland located in rural areas were situated in Małopolska in 2023, ranking the region third nationally (Statistics Poland, 2023, National economy entities in the REGON register). Rural areas of Małopolska are therefore distinguished by well-developed entrepreneurship, which is largely based on physical capital and technologies of a universal nature.

Only 1.6% of entities in rural Małopolska (excluding farms) are involved in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, clearly highlighting the limited role of these traditional rural functions. The remaining entities operate in non-agricultural sectors, with the largest shares in construction (24.4%), trade and repair of motor vehicles (19.1%), manufacturing (11.1%), professional, scientific, and technical activities (7.1%) which encompass a wide range of services requiring specialized knowledge, scientific and technical skills (7.1%), transportation and storage (6.2%) and health care and social assistance (4.0%) (Statistics Poland, 2023, Entities by sections and divisions of PKD 2007 and ownership sectors). These sectors require investments in equipment, machinery, industrial and information and communication



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technologies, as well as infrastructure that are versatile and can be applied in various locations. The high share of entities in these sectors indicates the availability of universal physical capital and technologies, as well as universal knowledge and skills in rural areas of Małopolska, highlighting their capacity to engage in economic activities independent of traditional rural functions.

RLR 3. Natural resources

RLR 3.1. Mineral resources and renewable energy resources

Małopolska is rich in mineral resources, with nearly 700 documented mineral deposits, including thermal water. However, these deposits are less abundant compared to those in other regions of the country. Currently, approximately 40% of these deposits are being exploited (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 91; Jaśkiewicz et al., 2023, p. 49). The region is home to significant reserves of energy resources such as coal, petroleum, natural gas, and peat. Coal reserves in the region make up 22% of the country's total. Peat plays a crucial role as a raw material in medicine. The region is also rich in metallic ores, particularly zinc and lead, though mining of these ores has ceased.

The region is also rich in construction materials, including sedimentary rocks like sandstones and limestones, as well as igneous and metamorphic rocks. The region is also home to loose sedimentary rocks, which include sands, gravels and specialty sands that are highly valued nationwide, such as molding, quartz and filler sands. Clay minerals, used in building ceramics, also play a significant role. Extraction takes place at a modern plant in Wola Rzędzińska, near Tarnów. Małopolska is particularly rich in mineral and thermal waters, as well as brine, which underlines the region's potential for health tourism (Jaśkiewicz et al., 2023, p. 49-51).

Sustainable resource exploitation, reclamation of mining areas, and the protection of mining heritage sites, which enrich Małopolska's tourism and recreational offerings, are key priorities in the region. However, the need to protect nature and landscape is a significant constraint on the exploitation of many deposits, especially those located within protected areas.

Like other regions in Poland, Małopolska is actively developing renewable energy sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the share of green energy in the national energy mix. Photovoltaic installations and individual heating systems powered by renewable energy sources are experiencing particularly rapid growth (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024b). Małopolska is the second region in the country in terms of solar energy potential (Juszczak & Maj, 2020, p. 15). Hydropower, harnessed from rivers such as the Dunajec, Poprad, and Raba, is also used in small hydroelectric plants to meet local energy needs. Currently, about 78% of the amount of electricity generated from RES in the region comes from hydropower. Due to geographical conditions, the development of large



wind farms in Małopolska is limited. Analyses show that only about 1% of the region's area is suitable for wind turbines, primarily in the northern counties such as Dąbrowski, Miechowski, Proszowicki, and Oświęcimski. Małopolska, particularly its southern part, possesses significant potential for geothermal energy development, which can be utilized for heating and recreational purposes (Projekt LIFE-IP EkoMałopolska). Currently, in the Tatra Mountains, geothermal energy is used to heat homes in Szaflary and Białka Tatrzańska, as well as to warm over a dozen swimming pools in four rural towns, including Bukowina Tatrzańska, Szaflary, Chochołów, and Białka Tatrzańska (Gil, 2021, p. 75).

RLR 3.2. Natural productive assets

The diverse geography of the Małopolska region leads to significant environmental variations. With an altitudinal range of approximately 2,300 meters, the region boasts the greatest elevation difference of any Polish regions. This results in a vertical zonation of climatic, hydrological, soil, and vegetation conditions. Małopolska is characterized by 7 climatic zones and numerous mountain microclimates, including some with therapeutic properties. Moreover, it experiences the highest annual precipitation in Poland (Regionalny System Biuletynów Informacji Publicznej w Małopolsce). The region has a temperate continental climate, blending characteristics of both oceanic and continental climates. The varied topography and local geographic conditions result in significant differences in temperatures, precipitation and the duration of winter in different parts of the region. Małopolska's diverse climate plays a crucial role in its socio-economic development. The mild conditions in the lowlands support the development of agriculture, while the mountainous areas are ideal for raising sheep and growing crops adapted to the harsher climatic conditions. Małopolska is also a popular tourist destination. In summer, the region attracts hiking enthusiasts, while ski tourism flourishes in winter, thanks to the snowy and cold conditions in the mountains. Thanks to its climatic diversity, Małopolska is not only an attractive place to live and work, but also plays a key role in the country's tourism and economy.

Małopolska, situated in the upper Vistula basin, has significant surface water resources, which serve as a primary source of water supply for industry, agriculture, and municipal services. Groundwater resources, while lower compared to the national average, are primarily used for public water supply, domestic purposes, and the production of food and pharmaceuticals. Soils in Małopolska exhibit great diversity, with over 60% classified as good or very good. However, high-quality agricultural soils (classes I and II) make up only about 6% of the region's agricultural land and are primarily found in the north (Jaśkiewicz et al, 2023, pp. 51-54).



RLR 3.3. Raw materials of agricultural or forestry origin:

Rural areas in Małopolska have significant potential for agricultural and forestry raw material production. The region boasts a thriving fruit-growing sector, particularly in the Sądecki region and the foothills, where apples, plums, pears, currants, strawberries, and raspberries are cultivated. Łąckie apples, with their Protected Geographical Indication certificate, are one of the symbols of local agriculture (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, n.d). Vegetable production includes cabbage, carrots, beets, onions, cucumbers, potatoes, and leafy vegetables, cultivated on various scales. Cabbage is one of the most important vegetables grown in Małopolska, with Charsznica playing a key role in the national production of this vegetable (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2023a).

Agriculture in Małopolska is characterized by small-scale vegetable production, largely due to the significant fragmentation of farms. Most farms are family-owned, which limits mass production but promotes diversity and high-quality products. Dairy and beef cattle farming also play a role in the agriculture of the Małopolska region, especially in the foothills. Sheep farming is equally important and is an integral part of the region's traditions and economy. Due to its unique geographical and climatic conditions, Małopolska has one of the largest sheep populations in Poland (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2023b, p. 3).

The mountainous and foothill regions of Podhale, Beskids, and Pieniny offer excellent conditions for sheep farming, which plays not only an important economic role but also a cultural one, being an integral part of the local heritage. Małopolska also cultivates grains like wheat, rye, oats, and barley, though they do not dominate agricultural production. Małopolska's forests are valuable to the timber industry and abundant in mushrooms and berries, which are prized ingredients in regional cuisine. Additionally, fish farming plays a significant role in the regional economy, particularly in the Carp Valley, which is known for its long tradition of aquaculture, especially carp farming (Stowarzyszenie Dolina Karpia). Małopolska also has significant potential for using biomass and biogas in energy production. With a large number of farms in the region, there is ready access to raw materials such as straw, hay, and green plants (Projekt LIFE-IP EkoMałopolska).

RLR 4. Natural heritage

The region's unique geography and diverse natural features are undeniable assets driving Małopolska's tourism sector (Business in Małopolska, n.d., *Tourist sector in Małopolska*). Małopolska is one of the most landscape-diverse regions in Poland. The lowest point, 158 meters above sea level, is in the Vistula River valley near Słupca, while the highest, Rysy, rises to 2,499 meters above sea level, making it the highest peak in Poland. In the southern part of the region, majestic mountain ranges dominate the landscape: the



Tatra Mountains, the only alpine-type range in Poland; the Beskids, with their gently shaped flysch peaks covered in forests, fields, and picturesque reservoirs; and the Pieniny Mountains, known for their limestone peaks and the Dunajec River Gorge, a natural monument of international significance.

The central part of the voivodeship is traversed by Poland's largest river, the Vistula, which forms a natural boundary between the mountains in the south and the lowlands in the north. North of the Vistula lies the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, famous for its limestone rock formations, scenic gorges, and numerous caves. Among its most notable attractions are Hercules' Mace in Pieskowa Skała and the Prądnik Valley in Ojców. This area also features the unique Błędów Desert, a rare phenomenon in Europe (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego; Baturo et al., 2023, p. 36–43).

Małopolska is also one of Poland's most bio diverse regions, thanks to its varied natural conditions and relatively unspoiled environment. The region encompasses alpine meadows, stretches of dwarf mountain pine, vast forests, and rare animal species such as brown bears, Tatra chamois, and marmots. More than 53% of Małopolska's area is under nature protection (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 56).

The region's natural heritage is protected within six national parks (two of which, Tatra and Pieniny, are among the most visited by tourists in the country), eleven landscape parks, ten protected landscape areas, and eighty-three nature reserves. Additionally, Małopolska is home to over 2,200 natural monuments, showcasing its immense natural wealth and the necessity of its preservation (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Gil, 2021).

RLR 5. Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage

Tangible cultural resources encompass the physical manifestations of culture—objects, structures, and sites of historical, artistic, or social value. In Małopolska, it is best exemplified by the Wooden Architecture Route. The Wooden Architecture Route is over 1,500 km long and includes 255 buildings and complexes of buildings. Among these are globally significant monuments inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List, such as Catholic churches in Binarowa, and Sękowa and Orthodox churches in Brunary Wyżne, Kwiaton, Owczary and Powroźnik (Baturo & Bzowski, 2023, p. 18).

The Route also features manor houses (rural nobility residences) such as those in Śmiłowice and Stryków, homesteads and cottages (traditional wooden houses with characteristic architectural details), open-air museums like Nowy Sącz Ethnographic Park and Wygiełzów Ethnographic Park with authentic peasant cottages, manor houses, hundred-year-old inns and wooden windmills.



In addition, Małopolska's rural landscape is enriched by watermills and forges reflecting the region's industrial past, such as Roztoka-Brzeziny Mill Village—a historic complex of wooden buildings related to rural industries like milling and sawmilling. In turn, numerous wooden belfries which can be found in many rural churches, exemplify the exceptional craftsmanship of local carpenters (Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego, n.d., The Wooden Architecture Route).

Beyond the Route, the 'Dunajec' Castle in Niedzica stands as a symbol of the region's feudal history, offering a glimpse into the architecture of the past (Muzeum-Zamek w Niedzicy, 2025). The region is also home to several historic chapels, which embody the spiritual and cultural heritage of Małopolska.

RLR 6. Intangible cultural heritage

Cultural intangible resources refer to the non-physical aspects of culture, including traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, crafts, and knowledge passed down through generations.

Małopolska's rural areas are rich in intangible cultural heritage, including: folk music and dance (essential to the region's identity, showcased through festivals and events that preserve and promote local traditions), traditional costumes (e.g. the colorful attire of the Podhale region, worn during festivals and cultural events), crafts and handicrafts (e.g. wood sculpting, blacksmithing, wood carving, pottery, weaving and embroidery), traditional cuisine (e.g. dishes like 'oscypek' (smoked cheese) and 'kwaśnica' (sauerkraut soup), prepared using age-old methods), folk art (e.g., vibrant paper cuttings, painted ceramics, and decorative wooden items); and luthiers (skilled artisans who craft traditional instruments like violins and dulcimers).

The region is also steeped in local legends of devils, ghosts, and weather sorcerers, reflecting Małopolska's rich folklore. Rural communities continue to observe customs and beliefs, including seasonal rituals such as Dożynki (Harvest Festival—a celebration marking the end of the harvest, with feasts, dancing, singing, and the creation of decorative wreaths from harvested grains) and Święto Matki Boskiej Zielnej (Feast of the Assumption—when people gather herbs and flowers to create decorative arrangements, honoring nature's abundance) (Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego, n.d., Małopolska countryside and its cultural heritage; Zaręba, 2022). Many old traditions associated with church holidays, such as contests for the tallest Easter palm, have also survived in the Małopolska countryside to this day (Baturó et al. 2023, p. 60).



RLR 7. Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities (i.e. local processing, handicraft)

A characteristic feature of agriculture in the Małopolska region is the high fragmentation of farms, the highest in Poland. The average farm size is 5.3 ha, compared to the national average of 12.7 ha (Urząd Statystyczny w Olsztynie, 2024, p. 94). The most favorable conditions for agricultural production can be found in the northern part of the region, where traditional agriculture predominates, primarily focused on meeting the needs of farmers and their families, with small surpluses sold at nearby markets (Kudełko et al., 2020, p. 82). In contrast, the southern mountainous zone faces the most challenging geological, geomorphological, climatic, and soil conditions.

Crop production predominates in the structure of agricultural production. Cereals are the leading crop, followed by root vegetables. The region ranks sixth in the country for the area cultivated with root vegetables, and it is the leading producer of ground cabbage, holding first place. Małopolska, thanks to favorable climatic conditions and the growing interest in wine tourism, is also a leading region in Poland in terms of the number of vineyards. At least 200 such plantations have been established, of which around 90 are registered and operate commercially (Małopolski Szlak Winny, n.d.). In livestock production, Małopolska ranks first in the country for the number of sheep. Additionally, the number of pigs, poultry, and turkeys is increasing, while the number of cattle, ducks, and geese is decreasing (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, pp. 205-212).

The extensive and traditional production methods prevalent on small-scale farms are a regional asset, offering promising prospects for producing high-quality food, including traditional and organic regional products (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 107). There is a large number of organic producers in the region (739 at the end of 2023). Processing based on the region's culinary heritage has flourished, as seen in the numerous traditional and regional products made from local raw materials. The list of products certified as Traditional Products of Małopolska includes 232 regional specialties, ranking the region third in the country in this respect. These products include: rainbow and brook trout from Ojców, fir honeydew honey from Pogórze Rożnowskie, pickled saffron milk caps from Uście Gorlickie, plums in spicy marinade from Wolica, sauerkraut from Charsznica, quern bread from Łomna, ice cream from Nowy Sącz, capuchin balsam, traditional homemade pasta from Wiśnica, and non-ripening cottage cheese or milk from Polish Red cows (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, pp. 205-212). The European Commission has also issued certificates for 15 traditional specialties from the region (46 in total across Poland).

Farm resources in Małopolska are used not only for agricultural production, but also for other activities. Many farmers are engaged in agrotourism. Farmers adapt various facilities: old wooden cottages, farm buildings, old



mills, sawmills, bakeries etc. that make the farm more attractive and increase the interest of tourists. Activities related to sports and recreation are also offered at some farms, including ski lifts, tennis courts, and rentals of mountain bikes, canoes, and more. Many farmers in the region also generate income through educational activities, offering workshops on ecological topics, as well as sculpture, painting, and pottery, along with horseback riding lessons (Pajdzik, 2019, p.9).

The region is also renowned for its carp and salmonid fish, particularly in the vicinity of Ojców National Park.

Forested land in the region makes up 29.4% of the total area, slightly below the national average of 31.0%. The relatively low forest cover results in a limited supply of timber, as well as forest fruits, mushrooms, and game (Statistics Poland, 2024, pp. 103-132). Private forests make up a significant portion of the ownership structure, accounting for 43% of the total forest area, compared to the national average of 22%. The forest species structure is dominated by coniferous stands, primarily fir, while beech is the dominant species in deciduous forests (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 91).

RLR 8. Local, traditional knowledge and skills

Traditional professions continue to be practiced in rural areas of Małopolska, with the most common being beekeeping, sculpture, carpentry, lacemaking, embroidery, blacksmithing, pottery, plaiting, weaving, and musical instrument production. Many of these professions are closely tied to traditional farming, requiring not only skills passed down through generations but also adaptation to the modern processes of effective food production. Producing traditional food offers an opportunity to promote local and regional culinary heritage while stimulating local businesses. Rooted in history, traditions, and customs, local and regional products often play a key role in determining the tourist appeal of a locality. Less-known or less-common professions in the region include shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, stove-making, cheese-making, decoupage, bouquet-making, wreath-making, felt-making, tanning, glass and custom painting, cabinetmaking, paper craft, beekeeping, crochet, wicker production, winemaking, honey production, sheep pasturing, and the creation of folk toys (Zaręba, 2022).

Traditional food processing methods can still be found in rural municipalities, with herb cultivation and its use being one of the most interesting and significant. Many dishes are unique to specific regions, with some recipes known only to local communities or even individual families. These recipes are often distinctive and have yet to be included in official registers or lists, lacking special packaging or labeling. To taste these delicacies, one typically needs to visit an agritourism or agricultural farm in person. The influence of



such practices extends across various sectors, including agricultural production, food processing, trade, culture, and the development of regional image and branding (Zatorska, 2021, pp. 251-260).

Małopolskie Voivodeship is home to numerous unique plant species and animal breeds, such as the Polish Red cattle. This diversity is largely a result of local environmental conditions, including significant forest cover and characteristic topography, which have influenced farming patterns and led to fragmented, and extensive small-scale farming. The region is abundant in food commodities, including plants, edible mushrooms, and naturally found products like European blueberries, as well as lesser-known species such as elder, rowan, bird cherry, and the *Viburnum* genus. Mushroom picking is a popular activity in the voivodeship. Additionally, traditional dishes made from barley, black oats, wild oats, potatoes, and swedes are gaining popularity due to their low environmental and crop requirements. These plants thrive in poor soils typical of the mountain and submontane climates of southern Małopolska. The voivodeship has a well-developed food culture based on accessible, affordable, and nutritious plants like cabbage, groats, and potatoes (Zatorska, 2021, pp. 251-260). Traditional plant and animal species form the foundation for local dishes, which can help shape the region's image and brand. Furthermore, their effective use will contribute to defining strategic directions for regional development (Knapik & Król, 2023).

RLR 9. Social capital

The social capital of rural areas in the Małopolska region is manifested at individual, institutional, and international levels, as well as across regional and interregional dimensions.

The region is home to about 3,000 community councilors and 1,900 village heads, who serve as potential individual partners for establishing and strengthening relationships. Around 25% of residents engage in community activities at least once a year, with slightly fewer participating multiple times, and about 6% engage regularly. Both formal and informal individual contacts can lead to cooperative outcomes in the form of projects and initiatives such as harvest festivals, wafer meetings, competitions for the best village leader, and consultation meetings with representatives of academia on development policy. In terms of individual activity, Małopolska ranks relatively well compared to other regions in the country.

The institutional strength of the region's rural areas, in addition to public administration representatives, is reflected in the functioning of various groups and organizations. The region is home to 20 social enterprises, 5,088 associations, 3,343 foundations, 129 social cooperatives, 969 rural housewives' circles, 31 social integration clubs, 12 social integration centers, and 13 vocational activity centers. In total, there are approximately 10,000 social economy entities that contribute to the community's institutional



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potential (Regionalny Ośrodek Polityki Społecznej w Krakowie, 2025). Małopolska ranks 3rd in the country for the number of registered entities, and in terms of organizations per capita, it is the leader nationwide.

70% of Małopolska's municipalities with populations of up to 50,000 residents are engaged in international cooperation, compared to just over half at the national level (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021, p. 95). Agreements and initiatives of particular importance to Małopolska focus on foreign regions with Polish communities (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a, p. 258). However, Małopolska's municipalities exhibit a relatively low inclination to view inter-municipal cooperation as a key factor for success in local development.

Social capital in rural areas of Małopolska is well-developed, fueled by active social participation, strong interpersonal bonds, high community engagement, and support from local institutions. Numerous non-governmental organizations, such as associations, foundations, rural women's circles, and volunteer fire brigades, operate throughout the region. Additionally, Małopolska is home to 32 Local Action Groups that implement community development projects and support local initiatives (Krajowa Sieć Obszarów Wiejskich).

Rural communities in Małopolska are characterized by strong interpersonal ties built on trust and mutual assistance. Forms of self-help and neighborly support are widespread. A prime example is the actively operating rural women's circles, which not only preserve traditions but also organize events and support local initiatives (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024c). Additionally, numerous cultural centers, libraries, community centers, and village halls serve as hubs for integration and the development of social activities (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024d).

Volunteer fire brigades also play a crucial role, not only as emergency response units but also as community hubs that organize festivals, charity events, and social initiatives. In this way, they are instrumental in fostering social integration and building a sense of community (Adamiak et al., 2016, p. 4).

Community traditions are particularly strong in Małopolska, such as the organization of harvest festivals, fairs, regional festivities, and cultural events that strengthen social bonds. Local communities take care of their cultural heritage, which translates into a shared sense of identity.

1.3. Rural development potentials of Małopolska region

This section presents the development potentials of rural areas in the Małopolska region, identified through a two-stage research process. In the first stage, the potentials were identified through an analysis of secondary



sources, including quantitative data, academic publications, reports, development strategies, case studies, and information from websites characterizing region. At this stage, based on the guidelines outlined in the Methodology for the Identification of Rural Development Potential for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the most significant development potentials of the region's rural areas were also identified. In the second stage, the findings were further validated and enriched with insights from focus group research conducted by the Krakow University of Economics project team during a meeting with rural stakeholders of the Engine project, held on February 28, 2025.

Preliminary research based on secondary sources as well as Engine focus group findings indicate that rural areas in the Małopolska region possess development potentials in the following areas: Tourism & Recreation, Bio & Circular Economy, Bio & Renewable Energy, Education, Skills & Sport, Agribusiness, Cultural, Historical, Architectural & Natural Heritage Preservation, Health & Care Services, and Universal Production & Services.

Table 1 presents the correlations between rural local resources and the respective potentials, along with research findings supporting the identification of these potentials in the rural areas of the Małopolska region.

Table 1. Correlations between rural local resources and the development potentials in the rural areas of the Małopolska region

Rural local resources	Rural development potentials	Supporting research findings
RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR3. Natural resources - renewable energy resources (thermal waters); natural productive assets (climatic conditions) RLR4. Natural heritage RLR5. Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage RLR6. Intangible cultural heritage RLR7. Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities RLR8. Local, traditional knowledge and skills	RDP1. Tourism & recreation	Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego; Business in Małopolska, n.d., Tourist sector in Małopolska; Pajdzik, 2019; Marshal Office of the Małopolska Region, Department of Ownership Supervision and Economy, 2020; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Gil, 2021; Zatorska, 2021; Zaręba, 2022; Baturo et al., 2023; Baturo & Bzowski, 2023; Engine focus group findings (2025)
RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR2. Physical capital and technologies	RDP2. Bio & circular economy	Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Engine focus group findings (2025)

RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR 3. Natural resources – natural productive assets RLR 7. Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities RLR 8. Local, traditional knowledge and skills RLR 9. Social capital	RDP 3. Agribusiness	Pajdzik, 2019; Wojcieszak-Zbierska & Bogusz, 2020; Zatorska, 2021; Jaśkiewicz et al., 2023; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024a; Engine focus group findings (2025)
RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR 2. Physical capital and technologies RLR 3. Natural resources – renewable energy sources	RDP 4. Bio & renewable energy	Juszcak & Maj, 2020; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2024b; Projekt LIFE-IP EkoMałopolska; Engine focus group findings (2025)
RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR 4. Natural heritage, RLR 5. Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage, RLR 6. Intangible cultural heritage, RLR 7. Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities RLR 8. Local, traditional knowledge and skills, RLR 9. Social capital	RDP 5. Education, skills & sport	Pajdzik, 2019; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Goj et al., 2023; Baturo et al., 2023; Engine focus group findings (2025)
RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR 4. Natural heritage RLR 5. Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage RLR 6. Intangible cultural heritage RLR 7. Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities RLR 8. Local traditional knowledge and skills	RDP 6. Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	Kwaśniewska & Brodka, 2020; Edmunds, 2022; Knapik & Król, 2023; Baturo et al., 2023; Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego; Marshal's Office of the Małopolska Region, 2024; Engine focus group findings (2025)
RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR 2. Physical capital and technologies RLR 3. Natural resources (mineral waters, brine) RLR 4. Natural heritage RLR 6. Intangible cultural heritage RLR 7. Resources of agriculture RLR 8. Local, traditional knowledge and skills RLR 9. Social capital	RDP 7. Health & care services	Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2022; Baturo et al., 2023; Jaśkiewicz et al., 2023; Regionalny Ośrodek Polityki Społecznej w Krakowie 2023a, 2023b; Engine focus group findings (2025)

RLR1. Human capital: universal knowledge and skills RLR 2. Physical capital and technologies RLR 9. Social capital	RDP 8. Universal production & services	Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2021; Kudełko et al., 2020 Żmija, 2022; Engine focus group findings (2025)
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Source: own elaboration based on conducted research

Based on the analysis of secondary sources, the guidelines outlined in the Methodology for the Identification of Rural Development Potential for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, as well as Engine focus group findings the following significant potentials have been identified for rural areas in the Małopolska region:

Tourism & recreation

This domain holds significant potential for the development of rural areas in Małopolska region due to the wealth of natural and cultural resources, its key role in the economy and employment, and its alignment with sustainable development principles. Several factors have contributed to the recognition of this potential. Primarily, it is supported by resources commonly found in the region's rural areas, such as:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills
- Renewable energy resources (thermal waters)
- Natural productive assets (climatic conditions)
- Natural heritage
- Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage
- Intangible cultural heritage
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities (i.e. local processing, handicraft)
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills

This potential holds significant economic value for the region's rural areas. Tourism is one of the key sectors of the rural economy in Małopolska, generating substantial revenues from accommodation, gastronomy, and recreational services. The tourism industry provides thousands of jobs, not only in hospitality and catering but also in related services, contributing to the reduction of unemployment in the region's rural areas. Moreover, tourism and recreation stimulate the development of other sectors of the economy, such as organic farming, handicrafts, local food processing, and a variety of services offered to tourists. Rural residents can thus find additional sources of income, such as selling local products, conducting handicraft workshops, or offering guiding services. Tourism also fosters direct relationships between producers and consumers, shortening supply chains and increasing producers' margins.

Tourism and recreation also hold significant social value, supporting the



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preservation and promotion of local natural and cultural heritage, while reinforcing the regional identity of its inhabitants. The development of rural tourism helps generate income in less developed areas, reducing the gap between urban and rural regions. Cultural and historical attractions not only educate the public but also attract domestic and international visitors, promoting the region and fostering intercultural dialogue. The development of tourism and recreation can also have a positive environmental impact, as the growth of eco-friendly forms of tourism, such as agritourism, cycling tourism, and hiking, helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions. National parks and nature reserves play a key role in biodiversity conservation while attracting tourists in a way that aligns with the principles of sustainable development. Additionally, efforts to preserve the region's natural heritage for both present and future generations enhance the region's resilience to the impacts of climate change

Tourism and recreation also offer significant potential for innovation and entrepreneurship, acting as a powerful catalyst for business development, particularly for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. This sector is marked by high levels of innovation, demonstrated by a variety of unique attractions and the ongoing pursuit of new ideas for tourism products. To keep pace with the rapidly changing expectations of tourists, entrepreneurs must adopt innovations such as mobile applications and online platforms.

Furthermore, tourism and recreation encourage collaboration between various sectors, including agriculture, food processing, culture, education, and environmental protection. This leads to the exchange of knowledge and experience and the creation of new products and services. Public support for sustainable tourism initiatives, such as those funded by EU programs, provides additional incentives for the development of rural tourism.

Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation

The preservation of cultural, historical, architectural, and natural heritage in Małopolska represents a significant potential, underpinned by its rich resources, economic impact, social importance, environmental sustainability, and opportunities for innovation. This potential is primarily derived from the abundant resources commonly found in the region, including:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills
- Natural heritage
- Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage
- Intangible cultural heritage
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities (i.e. local processing, handicraft)
- Local traditional knowledge and skills

Małopolska's rural areas are rich in cultural heritage, playing a vital role in the



region's socio-economic development (Knapik & Król, 2023). Traditions in folk music, dance, crafts (e.g., ceramics, woodcarving), and cuisine (e.g., oscypek cheese, highlanders' cuisine) offer a glimpse into the past and continue to thrive in modern times. Małopolska is also home to numerous historical sites, including castles, palaces, and ancient settlements. The region is rich in religious heritage, with monasteries, UNESCO-listed wooden churches (Intopoland, n.d), and well-preserved wooden architecture. Renaissance and Baroque palaces, manor houses, and churches further contribute to its cultural wealth. The Tatra Mountains offer stunning landscapes and diverse flora and fauna, attracting tourists for hiking, skiing, and mountaineering (Baturó et al., 2023, p. 14). The picturesque Dunajec River Gorge in the Pieniny Mountains is a key natural attraction with opportunities for rafting, kayaking, and exploration (Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego, n.d., *Rafting down the Dunajec River Gorge*). Known for its unique geological formations, caves, and diverse ecosystem, Ojcowski National Park is another vital natural resource (Baturó et al., 2023, p. 36). All these abundant resources form the foundation for the sustainable preservation of cultural, historical, architectural, and natural heritage.

Małopolska's rich cultural and natural heritage, including the Dunajec River Gorge, and the painted village of Złipie renowned for its intricately decorated cottages, generates substantial revenue from heritage tourism, supporting local businesses (Dom Malarek w Złipiu, n.d). Heritage preservation also creates employment opportunities, from tourism-related jobs in hospitality, guiding, education and transport, to growing demand for skilled labour in restoring historical buildings. Additionally, reviving traditional crafts and local industries fosters job creation in sectors such as woodworking, ceramics, and textiles. The Żywiec Highlander culture and Dożynki harvest festivals connect communities to their traditions, safeguarding the region's unique cultural identity (Kwaśniewska & Brodka, 2020; Edmunds, 2022). And initiatives, such as the Małopolska Village of the Year competition help maintain traditions while fostering community engagement and social inclusion (Marshal's Office of the Małopolska Region, 2024).

By promoting responsible tourism practices, and conservation efforts, the region can minimize environmental impact. Sustainable practices like eco-tourism and heritage tourism support environmental preservation while benefiting local economies. The preservation of natural areas, such as the Tatra and Pieniny Mountains, alongside sustainable tourism, enhances the region's resilience to climate change.

The development of innovative heritage-based products, such as cultural tourism packages and experiential tours, creates new entrepreneurial opportunities. Integrating digital technologies in heritage tourism, including virtual tours and online platforms, expands the reach of Małopolska's cultural



heritage. Małopolska's social enterprises focused on heritage preservation—such as community-based tourism initiatives and local craft workshops—offer inclusive opportunities for rural populations, blending entrepreneurship with social impact. Combining cultural experiences, such as folk music performances, traditional craft workshops, and culinary tourism with heritage tourism enhances the visitor experience. Małopolska can capitalize on these synergies (Król, 2021). And the region's focus on traditional agricultural practices, like sheep grazing in Podhale, strengthens the connection between agriculture, culture, and tourism (Oficjalny portal turystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego, n.d. *Autumn Trailing of the Sheep* (Redyk) Szczawnica).

Limited funding remains a significant challenge for heritage preservation projects. The shortage of skilled professionals, such as architects, archaeologists, and restoration specialists, is another obstacle. In some rural areas, insufficient infrastructure—like transportation, accommodation, and internet connectivity—limits the development of heritage tourism. Climate change also poses a significant risk to both the natural and cultural heritage of Małopolska, as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and increased erosion can negatively impact heritage sites.

Education, skills & sport

The rural areas of Małopolska have significant potential in terms of education, skills and sports. This potential results from the rich resources that occur in these areas, including:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills
- Natural heritage,
- Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage,
- Intangible cultural heritage,
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills,
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities (i.e. local processing, handicraft)
- Social capital

The wealth of natural resources, cultural heritage and social activity of residents can be effectively used both to maintain local traditions and to implement modern educational and economic solutions. The diverse landscape of Małopolska, including mountains, forests and rivers, is conducive to ecological education and learning about sustainable management of natural resources.

Local resources, such as traditional agriculture, processing and crafts, are a source of knowledge and practical skills that can be developed through craft workshops, organic farming courses or agritourism management training. In addition, the introduction of modern technologies, including e-commerce training, digital marketing and modern agricultural methods, allows for



better adaptation of the local economy to the requirements of the modern market. The development of education in the Małopolska region can be supported by digitalization and access to online courses, which opens up new professional and educational opportunities for residents of rural areas.

Sport plays an important role in social integration and promotion of the region. The natural conditions of the Małopolska region enable the development of both seasonal sports, such as skiing or snowboarding, as well as year-round activities, including hiking, cycling and water sports. The organization of sports camps and outdoor events attracts tourists and influences the economic development of the region. Sports infrastructure, such as sports fields, sports halls or running routes, not only promotes the popularization of sports among residents, but also increases the tourist attractiveness of the village.

Sport is also an important element of social integration, helping to build interpersonal bonds. Organizing tournaments, cross-country runs or competitions based on traditional folk games engages different age groups and activates residents. The activities of local sports clubs, ski schools or football academies not only create new development opportunities for children and young people, but also help create jobs and develop the local economy.

The social capital of Małopolska region, manifested in the activities of local organizations, schools and associations, plays an important role in creating space for learning, professional development and active spending of time. Cooperation of these entities can lead to the organization of workshops, professional courses and sports events, which will strengthen the regional identity and improve the quality of life of residents. Both education and sports can generate new jobs and support entrepreneurship. Vocational training, development of ecotourism and organization of sports events can become a source of income for local entrepreneurs, increasing the competitiveness of the region in comparison to other parts of the country.

Combining tradition with modern solutions in education and sports can be the basis for further development of rural areas of Małopolska region. Integration of education with ecotourism, digital transformation and green economy will contribute to lasting and sustainable growth. The potential of rural areas of Małopolska region is based on the natural and cultural wealth of the region and the activity of its inhabitants. Thanks to appropriate investments and development strategies, countryside in Małopolska can become a place of dynamic progress, combining local traditions with modern solutions. Education and sports play a key role in building identity, improving the quality of life and stimulating economic growth, which contributes to the development of the entire region.



Agribusiness

The rural areas of Małopolska have significant potential for development in agribusiness. This potential is derived from the abundant resources typically found in these areas, including:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills
- Natural productive assets,
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities (i.e. local processing, handicraft)
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills,
- Social capital.

Agribusiness generates significant economic value. Agriculture and food processing can be one of the key sectors of the rural economy, generating income for food producers. Rural areas have the potential to further develop and improve vegetable crops, especially ground vegetables, fruit and cereals, livestock production and fish farming. In addition, the traditional production methods used and the large number of organic producers, offer prospects for further development of the production of high quality food and organic products. Traditional and handed down from generation to generation skills in food processing methods according to unique recipes provide the potential for efficient production of certified traditional food products.

Agribusiness also holds significant social value. The development of agriculture, particularly traditional and organic farming, supports local producers, creates job opportunities, and helps reduce income disparities within local communities. At the same time, offering unique local products on the market helps promote local culture and heritage. Agricultural producers come together to form producer groups, associations, and cooperatives, thereby building social capital by strengthening trust, fostering mutual cooperation, and increasing awareness of the benefits of local collaboration.

The development of ecological agricultural practices, which eliminate the use of artificial fertilizers and chemicals, supports soil and water conservation. At the same time, it enhances the potential for reusing agricultural waste, such as straw and organic materials, to produce biomass, which positively impacts the environment.

The development of agribusiness fosters innovation in rural areas. To meet the demands of a competitive food market, there is a growing need to adopt innovative technologies in agriculture and food production, such as in storage, sorting, processing, and transport. Integrating traditional agricultural practices with modern technologies and services is essential for the development of this sector.

At the same time, agribusiness creates opportunities for the development of other activities in rural areas. There are strong connections between the growth of traditional agriculture and sectors like agritourism, education, and



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the promotion of local culture and heritage. Traditional farming practices are essential for the development of agritourism, which combines recreation with the chance to stay in a clean environment and enjoy ecologically produced food and unique local culinary specialties. Farms often establish 'educational homesteads' that offer workshops on traditional farm activities. This provides an engaging educational experience for school groups and individual visitors. The production of traditional culinary products plays a key role in preserving and promoting local culture while maintaining traditional skills.

The development of agribusiness potential is supported by both national and EU policies. The Rural Development Programme promotes and finances initiatives aimed at supporting young farmers, organic farming, fostering closer cooperation between farmers and the processing sector, and land consolidation. This creates more opportunities to accelerate the development of rural areas. Market trends also reinforce this growth. Increasing public awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating, has led to greater consumer interest in both organic and conventionally produced agricultural products.

Health & care services

Rural areas in Małopolska region possess rich resources and big potential for developing entrepreneurship and innovation in the field of health & care services. Their development can be supported by various local resources, such as:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills
- Physical capital and technologies
- Natural resources (mineral waters, brine)
- Natural heritage
- Intangible cultural heritage
- Resources of agriculture
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills
- Social capital

The dynamic development of private entrepreneurship in the healthcare and social care sectors in rural Małopolska demonstrates growing economic activity and openness to such forms of business (Statistics Poland, 2023, National economy entities in the REGON register). This is particularly important in light of observed demographic trends. The aging process in the region, although less pronounced in rural areas than in cities, generates increasing demand for healthcare and support services for seniors (Marshal Office, 2022). Significant deficits in meeting these needs are especially evident in caregiving services, where public institutions are unable to provide sufficient support (Regional Social Policy Center in Kraków, 2023a, p. 73). The growing share of elderly people changes the social structure and forces the development of economic and social activities that respond to the



needs of an aging society. In some rural areas agritourism facilities, facing reduced demand, could be adapted to meet the standards required for care-related or even healthcare services. Existing infrastructure, especially accommodation, along with the owners' or staff's experience in guest service, may be valuable assets in developing such functions. There is also a demand for services related to childcare. Although the number of nurseries, kindergartens, and children's clubs in Małopolska is steadily increasing, the demand for these services still far exceeds the available institutional resources, especially in rural areas (Regional Social Policy Center in Kraków, 2023b, p. 31).

Rural areas in Małopolska are equipped with numerous rural local resources—from strong human and social capital, through an abundance of natural and cultural resources, family-run small farms that can serve as caregiving establishments, as well as developed infrastructure and research and development capabilities. These factors together create a solid foundation for developing entrepreneurship and innovation in the field of health & care services.

The development of this sector provides economic added value: generates new jobs, raises household incomes, and through multiplier effects stimulates the growth of the local economy. The possibility of extensive funding from public funds, local government budgets, and EU sources ensures the stability of facilities and enables the implementation of innovative solutions in this area. In social terms, health & care services in rural areas play a key role in building human and social capital, improving residents' quality of life, and strengthening the integration of local communities. Their significance is particularly critical in rural regions with limited access to medical and caregiving services, where they not only serve as a means of maintaining good health but also help prevent social exclusion.

The development of health and care services in the countryside in Małopolska has great potential for synergy with other fields: the tourism sector (agritourism, health and wellness tourism), food production (using local food products in facilities), the education sector (activating, educational workshops), as well as other modern industries that are already developing in the region, such as ICT or the creative industry. Caregiving facilities, by collaborating with local institutions, can organize events and projects that not only support rehabilitation and social integration of the beneficiaries, but also contribute to the promotion of the region's cultural heritage. Such connections foster the creation of comprehensive business models in which health and care services, education, tourism, preservation of regional heritage, and agribusiness form an integrated offer. Equally important is the great innovative potential of this sector. Telecare and telemedicine, intelligent monitoring systems, virtual assistants, smart care management systems, personalized care enabled by artificial intelligence,



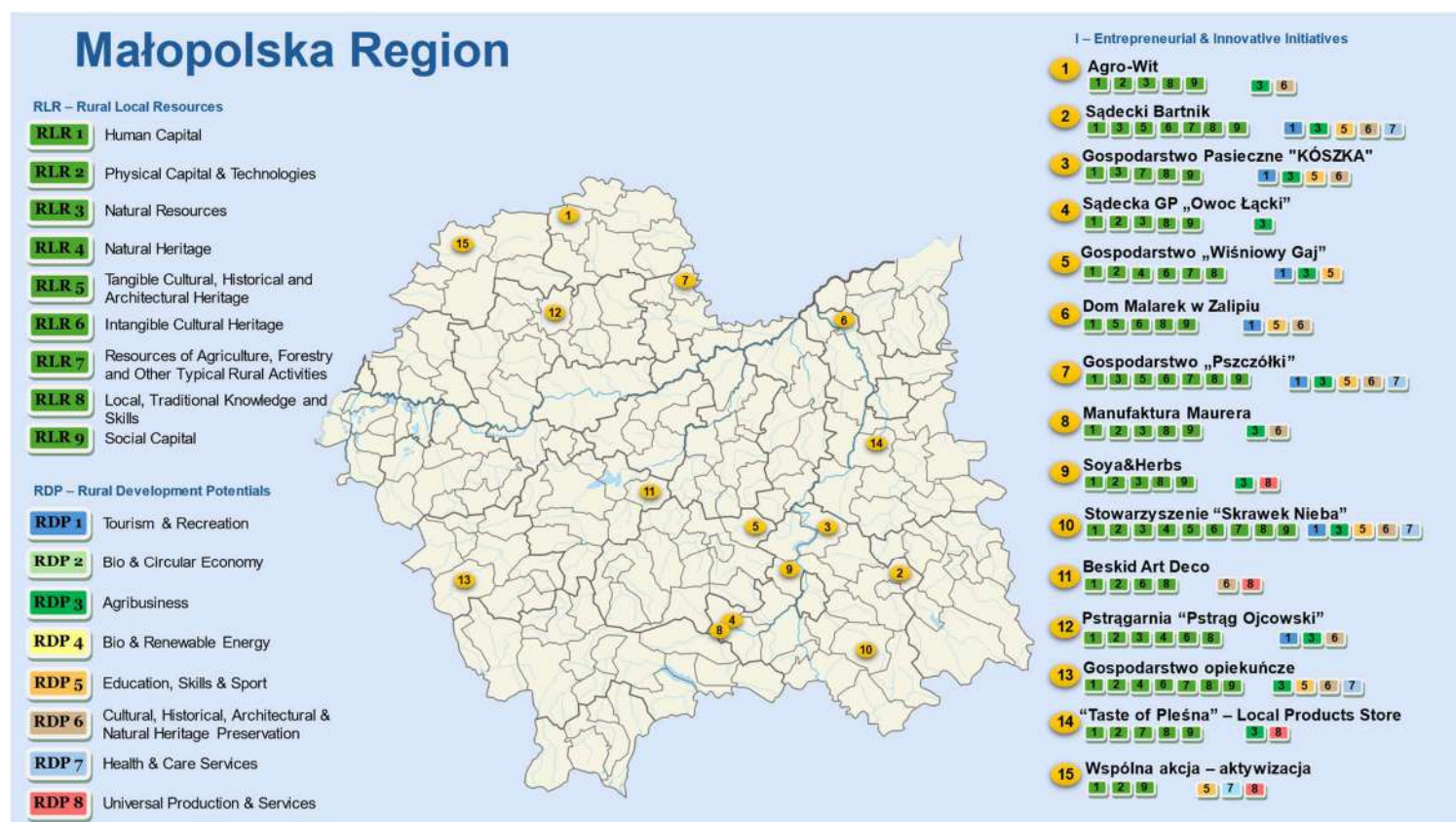
smart home solutions, and modern VR-based rehabilitation technologies are just some of the possible directions for the innovative development of this sector.

The development potentials of rural areas in Małopolska are accompanied by a number of significant challenges. Haphazard urban expansion and chaotic residential development lead to conflicts between traditional farmers and new rural inhabitants. Such developments also threaten the preservation of the natural and cultural assets of rural areas and create the risk of eroding the distinctive characteristics of these regions by fostering an urban-like environment. Furthermore, stringent environmental and sanitary regulations constrain animal production, while traditional forms of pastoral and livestock farming are progressively disappearing. Another critical challenge is the retention of young people in rural areas, who are essential for sustaining family businesses and maintaining local traditions and identities. A significant issue is also the decline in vocational education, which would otherwise provide the essential workforce for traditional rural trades. These factors collectively create substantial barriers to entrepreneurial growth in sectors identified as key development potentials, particularly in agribusiness as well as preservation of cultural heritage, and pose a risk of destabilizing the balance between progressive development and the preservation of conventional farming practices and rural uniqueness.

At the same time, the diversity of the region's rural areas necessitates a differentiated approach to harnessing their inherent local potential. Areas near Kraków benefit from well-developed infrastructure, dynamic market access, and a concentration of innovative activities. In contrast, peripheral parts of the region—such as those in Proszowicki and Dąbrowski counties—are more reliant on traditional agricultural practices. Moreover, the potential for tourism development or health services also exhibits strong regional disparities. Recognizing these differences is essential for designing targeted policies and strategies at both the regional and local levels that effectively support entrepreneurship and innovation, tailored to the unique potentials of each area.



2. Visualization of the development potential of rural areas in the region



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3. Overview of E&I Initiatives in the region's rural areas

3.1. AGRO-WIT

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

AGRO-WIT

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Jelcza (village) in the Charsznica municipality within the Miechów county.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Entrepreneur in the agri-food production sector

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project

2. Description of initiative:

The Agro-Wit company, founded in the 1990, specializes in producing high-quality pickled foods. Located in Jelcza, the company grows cabbage on over 15 hectares. The company offers both conventional and organic products, including various types of sauerkraut, kimchi, and pickled vegetables. The company's conventional products include: carrots with orange peel sterilized, pickled cucumber, sauerkraut Charsznicka, Staropolska cabbage and mushroom stuffing from Charsznicka sauerkraut, sterilized chickpeas, sterilized green lentils, sterilized red beans, sweetcorn boiled on the cob.

The company's ecological products include: BIO pickled beetroot juice, BIO pickled cucumber juice, BIO pickled cucumbers, BIO sauerkraut, BIO sauerkraut juice, dill kraut – BIO dill salad, eco chilli sin carne, eco vegan bigos from Charsznicka sauerkraut with black cumin, Kimchi BIO, organic baked



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beans with chickpeas, organic pickled salad with black cumin, organic vegan bigos from Charsznicka sauerkraut with chickpeas and lentils, organic vegan bigos from Charsznicka sauerkraut with kimchi, pickled radish BIO. Its aim is to produce high-quality, naturally processed foods free from artificial enhancers, meeting the growing demand for healthy, minimally processed foods.

Recognized for excellent service, the company has received various certificates and awards. It is a member of the Małopolska Culinary Heritage Network, which aims primarily to promote natural food (traditional, local, regional, organic). It is also a winner of National Agro Polska Promotional Competition, Medal of Tastes of Regions Fair in Poznań, Małopolski Smak plebiscite, and Polish Food Producer. Its products have been awarded promotional sign Appreciate Polish! and it won awards and distinctions in the competition 'Our Culinary Heritage – Tastes of the Regions.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital – universal knowledge and skills: knowledge in food processing and safety standards to ensure high-quality pickling products.
- Physical capital and technologies: machinery, equipment, and technologies (operates a facility adhering to the International Food Standard, ensuring hygienic conditions from raw material reception to fermentation, packaging, storage, and distribution).
- Natural resources: natural productive assets (soil-fertile land used for agriculture, raw materials of agricultural or forestry origin (carrots, cabbage, mushroom, sauerkraut, beetroots, cucumbers, beans).
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: specific knowledge and skills related to traditional farming practices (cultivates cabbage since the 1970s and passes down traditional cultivation and pickling techniques through generations).
- Social capital: various rural organizations and producer groups, contacts with local suppliers (member of the Małopolska Culinary Heritage Network, promoting natural and regional foods).

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	



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5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- **Management:** strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations.
- **Marketing:** knowledge of marketing tools such as branding, promotion, direct sales, e-commerce, customer relationships building, digital marketing (competence in e-commerce platforms and social media tools, and the use of digital tools to promote products, ability to create and manage digital campaigns targeting both local and international audiences, ability to use digital tools to promote products and build a brand), local marketing (promoting products in local markets, building brand awareness, building relationships with local communities, local processors, restaurants, and stores), skills in organizing and participating in regional food fairs and events to enhance visibility and sales.
- **Finances:** ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions).
- **Legal and regulatory knowledge:** knowledge of regulations governing business activities, food production, hygiene standards and consumer protection.
- **Cultural and social engagement:** cultural heritage promotion (ability to incorporate the region's cultural heritage into the branding and storytelling of the products), relationships building (skills in cooperating with local producers, and agricultural stakeholders).
- **Analytical and strategic competencies:** forecasting and analyzing market needs as well as identifying key development trends, enabling accurate business decision-making, making informed, data-driven strategic decisions, designing and implementing enterprise development strategies and innovative initiatives.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local farmers, food producers and processors, other entrepreneurs operating in rural areas providing raw materials (cabbage, cucumbers, and other produce essential for pickling), skilled workers (involved in cultivation, fermentation, packaging, and distribution processes).
- Local businesses such as hotels, restaurants and shops that can engage in joint promotions of local products, culinary and tourism businesses that align with the Małopolska Culinary Heritage Network.
- Local residents that can be brand advocates, and consumers of pickling products, members of the Małopolska Culinary Heritage Network who promote traditional, high-quality food products.



- Financial institutions and banks that provide loans and credit to support agricultural expansion.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Limited market: the target market for traditional pickled products may be limited, especially in rural areas where purchasing power or demand for premium products is lower, changing consumer preferences, competition (presence of other local brands with similar heritage-based products).
- Labor shortages: difficulty in finding skilled workers who are familiar with traditional pickling methods.
- Food safety regulations (meeting international food safety standards can be time-consuming and costly).
- Climate change (changes in weather patterns may disrupt crop cycles, reduce yields, and increase production costs).
- Financial constraints: limited access to funding.

3.2. Gospodarstwo pasieczne "Sądecki Bartnik"

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Gospodarstwo pasieczne "Sądecki Bartnik"

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Stróże (village) located in the Grybów municipality, within the Nowy Sącz county.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Entrepreneur in the agriculture, tourism and education sectors

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Medium

1.6. Legal form:

Limited liability company

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project



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2. Description of initiative:

The Sąddecki Bartnik, founded in 1973, is located in the Polish Carpathians and manages over 1500 bee colonies. It specializes in beekeeping, producing natural honey and bee products. Beyond beekeeping, it operates a museum, the 'Bartna Chata' restaurant, a publishing house, and a farm shop. Additionally, it offers a granary for meetings, exhibitions and entertainment for organized groups as well as a specially designed houses for api inhalations. Guests can also enjoy accommodations at 'Grandma Marysia's' guest houses.

It offers over 340 products, including honey, bee products, honey delicacies, cosmetics, medicines, beekeeping equipment, and queen bees. Continuously raising product quality standards, it has obtained certifications in food safety. It is IFS, BRC, Organic, and Kosher certified.

The aim of the Sąddecki Bartnik initiative is to preserve and promote traditional beekeeping practices, produce high-quality honey and bee products, and support sustainable farming methods. It also seeks to foster environmental conservation, educate the public about the importance of bees, and showcase the region's cultural heritage through its museum, agritourism, and other activities.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital - universal knowledge and skills: knowledge in food processing and safety standards to ensure high-quality honey products, business management skills encompassing marketing, sales, and customer relations.
- Natural resources: natural productive assets (diverse and rich flora), raw materials of agriculture (high-quality honey and other bee products).
- Tangible cultural, historical, and architectural heritage (Museum of Apiculture, showcasing historical beekeeping artifacts and educating the public on the cultural significance of beekeeping),
- Intangible cultural heritage (preserving traditional beekeeping methods and knowledge, passing them down through generations)
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: machinery, equipment, and technologies (modern beekeeping facilities equipped with advanced extraction and processing equipment laboratory for honey quality analysis ensuring product purity and adherence to standards, quality control technologies to maintain high standards in honey production).
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: expertise in apiculture, including bee biology, hive management, and honey production techniques
- Social capital: networks, relationships, and trust that facilitate cooperation and collective action. It includes social capital related to the local beekeeping community in Poland, particularly in the



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Sądeckczyzna region, local farmers, honey producers, and traditional beekeepers, as well as aspiring beekeepers. It also includes bridging social capital, built across different groups, such as urban consumers, schools, tourists, and businesses. This capital is built through participation in local and national beekeeping associations, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange, educational initiatives, including workshops and guided tours, to raise awareness about the importance of bees and beekeeping.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	✓
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing short supply chains, local distribution, and partnerships.
- Marketing: knowledge of creating a strong brand identity emphasizing authenticity, tradition, and high quality, skills in using e-commerce platforms and social media to promote products and reach a broader audience, skills in using digital tools to promote products, create and manage digital campaigns targeting both local and international audiences, and promote products and build a brand, local marketing (promoting products in local markets, building brand awareness, building relationships with local communities, restaurants, and stores), competence in promoting the Museum of Apiculture and workshops as part of agrotourism initiatives.
- Agricultural expertise: knowledge of the types of flora.
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions).
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of food safety standards and regulations to ensure high-quality, certified honey products, competence in conducting quality tests for purity, moisture content,



and other honey properties

- Cultural and historical knowledge: knowledge of traditional beekeeping practices, tools, and methods passed down through generations, knowledge of regional folklore, history, and traditions related to apiculture to enrich the visitor experience, skills in preserving and showcasing historical artifacts, such as antique beekeeping tools in the Museum of Apiculture.
- Knowledge and skills in the field of sustainable development and ecology: sustainable practices and responsible management of natural resources, implementation of eco-innovation, environmental education and communication.
- Social conflict management – the ability to analyze sources of conflict, assess risks, and develop intervention strategies; negotiation and mediation skills (e.g., in cases of conflicts regarding agricultural and urban land use, the ability to find economic and social compromises).
- Innovative competencies: creating and implementing innovative solutions, adapting flexibly to dynamic market and technological changes.
- Work ethic and respect for the profession – attitude based on responsibility, commitment to the quality of work performed.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: collaboration with various stakeholders, effective communication and negotiation, building and managing a network of contacts

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local beekeepers (provide honey and other bee products, share knowledge, experience, and traditional beekeeping practices)
- Local farmers (collaborate on sustainable agricultural practices that benefit biodiversity).
- Local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and shops that collaborate on joint promotional packages.
- Community members (participate in workshops and guided tours).
- Tourism agencies (promote the Museum of Apiculture and agrotourism experiences as a regional attraction).
- Educational institutions: schools and universities (partners for educational programs, internships, and research in apiculture and sustainable agriculture), vocational training centers (offer training programs in beekeeping and honey production for potential entrepreneurs).
- Financial institutions and banks that offer loans and credit to support expansion and upgrades of facilities.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Market challenges: limited market (dependency on niche customers interested in traditional and organic products), intense competition



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(competing with mass-produced, lower-cost honey products, including imports).

- Environmental challenges: declining bee populations (pesticides, and diseases affecting bee colonies), climate change (weather conditions that affect flowering cycles), habitat loss (decreasing biodiversity and shrinking green spaces).
- Tourism challenges (reliance on tourists for the Museum of Apiculture and workshops can suffer during global or regional crises, such as pandemics).
- Labor shortages: difficulty in finding skilled workers knowledgeable in traditional beekeeping methods.
- Food safety regulations (adhering to national and international standards for food safety and quality may require additional resources).
- Natural disasters (extreme weather events like floods and droughts can destroy apiaries).
- Financial constraints: limited access to funding.

3.3. *Gospodarstwo Pasieczne "KÓSZKA"*

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Gospodarstwo Pasieczne "KÓSZKA" Piotr Kołacz

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Gródek nad Dunajcem (village) in Gródek nad Dunajcem municipality within the Nowy Sącz county.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Entrepreneur in the agriculture and education sectors

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project



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2. Description of initiative:

The apiary KÓSZKA founded in 2002 is a family-run beekeeping venture that combines traditional and modern practices to produce high-quality honey and bee-related products, while promoting environmental sustainability and cultural heritage. Located in the Małopolska region, the initiative highlights the rich traditions of beekeeping, with a strong emphasis on sustainable agriculture and community engagement. The initiative operates at the intersection of agriculture, environmental conservation, and education. Its activities go beyond honey production to include educational workshops.

The apiary's economy is based not only on stationary apiaries located in the Gródek nad Dunajcem county, where multiflower and lime honeydew honeys are produced, but also on migratory beekeeping in the regions of Małopolska and Podkarpacie to harvest acacia, rapeseed, buckwheat, and heather honeys. The apiary also specializes in the collection of pollen, bee bread, and propolis. Since 2003, the apiary has expanded its offerings to include the production of candles and beeswax products.

The initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of bees and beekeeping in maintaining ecological balance, while preserving and passing down the art of beekeeping as part of the region's cultural heritage.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital - universal knowledge and skills: expertise in apiculture, including bee biology, hive management, and honey production techniques, knowledge in food processing and safety standards to ensure high-quality honey products, business management skills encompassing marketing, sales, and customer relations.
- Natural resources: natural productive assets (diverse and rich flora), raw materials of agriculture (high-quality honey and other bee products).
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: beekeeping equipment (tools such as hives, protective clothing, smokers, extractors, and storage facilities).
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: expertise in apiculture, including bee biology, hive management, and honey production techniques
- Social capital: building relationships with local farmers, residents, and businesses.



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Business planning: ability to create a solid business plan that outlines market analysis, financial projections, marketing strategy, and operational objectives.
- Management: effective management of financial and human resources, supporting the optimal use of funds and maximizing the team's potential, managing short supply chains, local distribution, sale, and partnerships
- Marketing: branding and promotion (skills in creating a brand identity that highlights the unique qualities of the products, ability to develop and execute marketing campaigns, both online and offline, to reach local and broader markets), e-commerce and digital marketing (competence in managing an online store, including website maintenance, digital advertising, and social media engagement).
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions).
- Education: competence in designing and delivering workshops on beekeeping, and honey production.
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities, food safety standards and regulations to ensure high-quality, certified honey products.
- Knowledge and skills in the field of sustainable development and ecology: sustainable practices and responsible management of natural resources, implementation of eco-innovation, environmental education and communication.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local farmers that provide access to pesticide-free fields, orchards, and other areas for apiaries.
- Local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and shops that collaborate on joint promotional packages.



- Customers and visitors (consumers of honey and other bee-related products, participants in workshops, and apiary tours).
- Educational institutions (schools and universities that can organize field trips to the apiary or host workshops on beekeeping and biodiversity).
- Local communities (participate in workshops, and purchase products).
- Financial institutions and banks that offer loans and credit to support expansion and upgrades of facilities.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Environmental challenges: climate change (weather patterns, including extreme heat, heavy rains, or prolonged droughts, can reduce flowering cycles and nectar availability), pesticide use, decline in biodiversity (reduced plant diversity due to monoculture farming).
- Market challenges: competition from large-scale honey producers or cheap imports
- Labor shortages: difficulty in finding skilled workers knowledgeable in traditional beekeeping methods.
- Food safety regulations (compliance with food safety laws, labelling requirements, and certification standards can be complex and time-consuming).
- Natural disasters (extreme weather events like floods and droughts can destroy apiaries).
- Financial constraints: limited access to funding.

3.4. Sądecka Grupa Producentów Owoców i Warzyw „Owoc Łącki”

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Sądecka Grupa Producentów Owoców i Warzyw „Owoc Łącki”
(Fruit and Vegetable Producers Group)

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Łącko (village) in Łącko municipality within the Nowy Sącz county

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Producer group of individual fruit growers

1.4. Initiative type:

Business



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1.5. Scale of activity:

Large

1.6. Legal form:

Limited liability company

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

This is an example of local fruit growers' initiative that has gradually developed into a large enterprise. The Group of Fruit and Vegetable Producers has been in business since 2003, thanks to the initiative of 17 fruit growers. They had a common goal of improving the profitability of fruit farms. Therefore, in 2006, the group of producers built the first controlled atmosphere cold rooms and obtained preliminary recognition status. In the following years, further investments were made in refrigeration and sorting facilities to meet the expectations of the most demanding customers.

Currently, the Company already has 91 shareholders, who produce the highest quality fruit on a joint area of approximately 400 ha, with a potential of 12.000 tons of fruit.

The fruit orchards, where apples are grown primarily, are located far from urban agglomerations and public roads. Fruit growers supply the market with organic products: apples, pears and freshly pressed juices without added preservatives. They use modern technology for sorting, storing and transporting fruit. They have an automatic fruit storage system with a capacity of 7,000 tons of product. Additionally, they have a modern sorting line, which selects fruit based on quality and stores it in a cold store with an appropriate controlled atmosphere. They sell their products to wholesale and retail customers, also abroad.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital – universal knowledge and skills: knowledge in food production and safety standards to ensure high-quality products.
- Physical capital and technologies: machinery, technologies used for storage, sorting and transport of fruit.
- Natural resources: environmental conditions (climate, soil) favorable to fruit cultivation
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: experienced fruit growers have knowledge and experience of fruit cultivation.
- Social capital: the ability of local fruit growers to cooperate, mutual trust, seeing the benefits of cooperation.



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities in the production and sale of food products, regulations concerning food safety, certification of regional and traditional products.
- Agricultural expertise: knowledge and skills in fruit growing.
- Marketing: knowledge of marketing tools such as promotion and digital marketing.
- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing supply chains, distribution, sale, and partnerships.
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions).
- Innovative competencies: creating and implementing innovative solutions, adapted to the specificity of the region, using local resources and potential
- Analytical and strategic competencies: anticipating and analyzing market needs and identifying key development trends to make sound business decisions.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: building and managing a network of contacts.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local farmers: Local farmers benefit from working together in a producer group.
- Local residents: can find employment in this enterprise and offer their services to it.
- Local governments: can support the local enterprise and benefit from



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its development (e.g. by participating in the taxes paid).

- Customers: wholesalers and retailers, as well as individual consumers.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Natural conditions: Dependence of fruit growing on natural conditions (weather, sunlight, rain, unusual weather phenomena).
- Strong market competition: competition from other producers, including large entities and imported products, may limit the group's market opportunities and negotiating power
- Complex legal and administrative regulations

3.5. Gospodarstwo sadowniczo-agroturystyczne „Wiśniowy Gaj”

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Gospodarstwo sadowniczo-agroturystyczne “Wiśniowy Gaj” (Orchard and Agritourism Farm "Cherry Grove")

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Kobyłczyna (village) in Laskowa municipality within the Limanowa County

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Micro-enterprise

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The initiative consists of running an agritourism enterprise that, in addition to the typical agritourism service (accommodation, gastronomy), also offers educational services to increase the attractiveness of this farm for various groups of tourists. The offer includes:

Agrotourism - a place for family holidays, in an attractive location in the



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garden, surrounded by picturesque orchards, in close proximity to lake and river and the gentle mountain hills; having an open-air playground for children, providing tasty regional meals prepared from own products. Children have the opportunity to participate in educational workshops, learning about old customs and life on the farm.

Educational farm – a place created to organize educational trips for children. Educational activities are organized, combined with fun. This makes it possible to organize active recreation in the open air with simultaneous education, in an interesting way bringing closer the Polish countryside and its traditions.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital – universal knowledge and skills: the owners of the farm possess knowledge and transferable skills in running a tourism business.
- Physical capital and technologies – infrastructure for tourists
- Natural heritage: landscape
- Intangible cultural resources – rural traditions, rural life, farm work methods.
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: farm resources
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: expertise in fruit growing, food production and processing, knowledge on culinary traditions.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities in tourism and education, consumer protection.
- Marketing: Knowledge of marketing tools such as promotion, e-commerce, digital marketing, building a brand based on authenticity, cultural heritage, and locality.
- Agricultural expertise: Knowledge and skills in running a traditional farm.
- Pedagogical competencies: competences to conduct educational



activities for children.

- Innovative competencies: demonstrating creativity in developing and implementing innovative ideas for tourist attractions and educational workshops that support the development of the enterprise.
- Management: effective management of financial and human resources, supporting the optimal use of funds and maximizing the team's potential, managing short supply chains, local distribution, and partnerships
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing.
- Contemporary trends in tourism: ecotourism, agritourism, educational tourism, culinary tourism, cultural tourism, creating tourism products based on local culture and regional heritage.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: cooperation with various stakeholders, such as local communities, institutions and entrepreneurs.
- Digital and technological competencies: Integrating innovative digital and e-commerce solutions into business strategies.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local residents: can find employment in this enterprise and offer their services to it.
- Local tourism organizations: can collaborate on joint promotions.
- Local governments: can support the local enterprise and benefit from its development (e.g. by participating in the taxes paid).
- Customers: tourists visiting the farm.
- Schools and kindergartens: can benefit from the educational offer of the farm.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Seasonality of tourism: fewer customers outside the tourist season.
- Low competences: insufficient competence to implement attractive educational activities for children.
- Market competition: competition from other agritourism farms.
- High operating costs of the farm: may result in high prices for services and reduce the attractiveness of the offer.

3.6. Dom Malarek w Zalipiu

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Dom Malarek w Zalipiu – Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Oleśnie z siedzibą w Zalipiu (House of the Painters in Zalipie)



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1.2. Location of the initiative:

Zalipie (village) in Olesno municipality within the Dąbrowski county

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Social organisation of local folk artists

1.4. Initiative type:

Social

1.5. Scale of activity:

Medium

1.6. Legal form:

Association

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The initiative is an example of a local initiative implemented by women, residents of the village of Zalipie, cultivating a local tradition. The village of Zalipie is famous for its homesteads painted in colorful floral compositions. This tradition arose from the need to beautify the sooty rooms, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The tradition of decorating homesteads (houses, household buildings) with characteristic floral motifs is the greatest and unique cultural heritage of the Zalipie village and its surroundings.

The House of the Painters was established in Zalipie, which also serves as a community cultural centre. In the House of the Painters, the works of folk artists are exhibited and open to the public. The initiative of Women Painters from Zalipie was established in response to a social need to bring together local folk artists.

The main goals of the initiative are the cultivation and promotion of folk art, the promotion and dissemination of the custom of painting Zalipie floral motifs, the care of the tangible and intangible heritage characteristic of this region, activities for the preservation and proper protection of the artistic heritage, support for artists cultivating the characteristic art of the region.

The painters are engaged in educational activities to popularize artistic folk traditions. They also disseminate and promote the culinary traditions of the region and other traditional forms of social activity. The women painters conduct profit-making activities. They organize art workshops on Zalipie decorating techniques, creating tissue paper flowers or cutouts resembling stained glass. In addition, the artists design and make painting patterns for



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clients, on walls, furniture or gazebos. The sale includes decorative items such as kitchen accessories, bookmarks and lampshades.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital - universal knowledge and skills: knowledge and skills related to the functioning of social entities.
- Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage: farmsteads decorated with Zalipie floral patterns
- Intangible cultural heritage: traditional methods of decorating farmsteads and painting techniques of painting floral patterns.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: local artists possess the knowledge and skills to decorate buildings and household objects with traditional folk patterns.
- Social capital: the ability of local folk artists to cooperate, awareness of the need to cultivate tradition, a strong sense of local identity.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing social activity.
- Expertise skills: knowledge and skills in performing folk art, traditional for the Zalipie village.
- Pedagogical competencies: competences to conduct educational workshops.
- Management: translating the social mission into concrete operational activities, strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities financed by public or private funds, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting negotiations.
- Social marketing and sales: building a brand based on authenticity, cultural heritage, and local identity, building marketing and promotion strategies for social initiatives, knowledge of marketing tools such as social media and digital marketing, skills in selling products and services: the ability to establish and maintain relationships with



customers.

- Finances: financing models and sources of funding for social economy entities.
- Contemporary trends in tourism: cultural tourism, creating tourism products based on local culture and regional heritage
- Entrepreneurial competencies: creating and developing new business models, adapted to local resources and market competition conditions.
- Innovative competencies: creating and implementing social innovative solutions, adapted to the specificity of the region, using local resources and potential, and combining social goals with market requirements.
- Interpersonal and social competences: building and managing a network of contacts, building local partnerships, engagement, organizing activities, supporting initiatives, and strengthening relationships and social capital within a given environment, bringing community together around common initiatives.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local artists: They are the core of the association, providing expertise.
- Local community: promotion of the village, development of local identity and preservation of local traditions and heritage.
- Local governments: can support the local enterprise and benefit from its development (e.g. by participating in the taxes paid).
- Local tourism organizations: can collaborate on joint promotions.
- Customers: visitors to the village and purchasers of products and services offered by the association.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Limited funding and institutional support – difficulties in obtaining external funds, lack of ongoing support from local authorities
- Lack of modern marketing tools and managerial competencies – a deficit of resources for conducting professional marketing activities (e.g., branding, e-commerce, online advertising), limited skills in project management, fundraising, or collaborating with business partners
- Difficulties in passing down traditions to younger generations – decreasing interest in folk art among the youth and an outflow of young people from small towns to larger cities
- Risk of losing authenticity – as popularity increases and the desire to attract tourists grows, there is a danger of commercializing art in favor of mass-produced souvenirs



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3.7. Gospodarstwo ekologiczno-edukacyjne „Pszczółki”

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Gospodarstwo ekologiczno-edukacyjne „Pszczółki”

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Niezwojowice (village) in the Pałecznica municipality within the Proszowicki County

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Microenterprise

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small (local business with growing regional reach)

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The ecological and educational farm "Pszczółki" is located in the Pałecznica municipality, in the town of Niezwojowice in the Małopolska region. It is an educational farm that is part of the National Network of Educational Farms. Situated in the vicinity of fish ponds with a total area of 4 hectares, it offers a peaceful and natural environment conducive to relaxation and ecological education. On the farm there is a fruit orchard, which houses an apiary and a beekeeper's house, acting as an inhalation room and a bee didactic room, allowing you to discover the world of bees. Since 2007, the hosts have been organizing nationwide painting pleinars, and since 2012 – a unique project "Beauty through the eyes of children – history through art". During this event, children, under the supervision of experienced painters, develop their artistic talents and gain knowledge about painting. Educational beekeeping classes allow you to learn about seasonal work in the apiary, present beekeeping tools and taste bee products. Visitors can also look into the hive, where they can observe the life of the bee family through glass, while at the same time taking advantage of the beneficial properties of essential oils, honey and other bee products. For the braver, shows are organized at the open hive, during which you can see the entire composition of the bee family and its



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supplies. An additional attraction is a workshop on making candles from beeswax, the burning of which has a beneficial effect on health.

The farm also offers a number of other attractions:

- Carp fishing – the fish ponds available to guests allow you to catch carp yourself, which can then be prepared on the grill, in the smokehouse or in the pan.
- Feather plucking – a reminder of old traditions by participating in the manual plucking of feathers and creating soft down for pillows.
- Plum Drying Week – in autumn, guests can observe the traditional process of drying plums and frying jam.
- Farm for the youngest – meetings with domestic animals (geese, ducks, quails, chickens, rabbits), feeding and watering them and collecting eggs.
- Eco-shop – a place where you can buy fresh, ecological products such as vegetables, fruit, herbs, eggs, traditional country bread, cow and goat milk, cheese, cereal products, fruit and vegetable preserves, as well as poultry and fish.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital – universal knowledge and skills: the owners of the farm possess knowledge and transferable skills in running a business in tourism and education.
- Natural resources: agricultural raw materials from own farm, e.g. honey, herbs, vegetables, fruits.
- Tangible cultural, historical and architectural heritage – “Pszczółki” farm is a place where tradition meets nature. On its premises there is a beekeeper’s house acting as an inhalation room and a bee educational room. The surroundings are enriched with an orchard, a linden alley and an apiary, which create a unique, historical rural landscape.
- Intangible cultural heritage – old customs and traditions, such as feather plucking, beeswax candle making, picking lime blossoms for tea, traditional methods of catching and preparing fish, or autumn plum drying. Through workshops, meetings and demonstrations, the farm owners actively pass on these traditions to the next generations, preserving and promoting local heritage.
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: farm resources.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills – extensive knowledge and experience in organic plant cultivation, beekeeping and traditional food processing methods, such as drying plums, pickling cabbage or making honey and candles from beeswax.
- Social capital – strong interpersonal ties and involvement of the local community in cultivating old traditions. An example is the organization



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of nationwide painting plein airs and educational events, such as “Beauty through the eyes of children – history through art”, during which the youngest develop their artistic skills under the supervision of experienced painters. Social capital is built in various groups, such as the local community, consumers, schools, tourists and enterprises. This capital is built through participation in local and nationwide associations (e.g. the National Network of Educational Farms), study trips organized by the Agricultural Advisory Center

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	✓
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: effective work organization, planning of deliveries, product sales and service to tourists and workshop participants.
- Human resources management: coordination of own work and that of collaborators
- Sales of products and services: the ability to establish and maintain relationships with customers, effectively present the offer and flexibly adapt it to changing seasonal needs. Good knowledge of sales techniques and customer service helps to increase interest in the farm's offer, as well as build long-term relationships with visitors, managing short supply chains, local distribution, and partnerships.
- Marketing: knowledge of modern marketing methods and tools, especially in the field of brand building and promotion in social media, e-commerce and online sales, networking and cooperation with various entities
- Finances: budget planning and cost optimization, fundraising and grant acquisition, creating a pricing strategy
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities, food production, hygiene standards, direct sales, tourism and educational activities.
- Contemporary trends in tourism: cultural tourism, creating tourism products based on local culture and regional heritage
- Entrepreneurial competencies: identifying and evaluating market



opportunities, taking initiatives and managing risks in business activities, adaptation to a changing environment.

- Innovative competencies: creativity and innovative approach to the offer.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: openness to cooperation with various stakeholders.
- Personal and psycho-social competencies: willingness to learn and develop.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local artists – play a key role in the initiative, running art workshops, such as plein-air painting sessions.
- Local community – supports the farm through active participation in events, promotion of the region and cultivation of tradition.
- Local governments, regional agricultural advisory centers coordinating the network of educational farms – support the development of the farm, recognizing its impact on tourism, the economy and promotion of the region.
- Tourists, workshop participants, customers – tourists visiting the farm, workshop participants and customers buying local products constitute an important group supporting the initiative. Their interest in the farm's offer contributes to its further development and promotion of the region as an attractive place to visit and relax.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Financial constraints – limited financial resources may hinder the development of the farm, especially in terms of infrastructure modernization, promotion and expansion of educational and tourist offers.
- Seasonality of tourism – although the farm provides year-round services, interest in visitors is much greater in the spring and summer. In winter and autumn it may be more difficult to attract tourists, which affects the instability of income and requires the implementation of new forms of activity in the less popular months.
- Limited access to qualified staff – running various workshops and attractions requires specialists. Difficulty in finding people with the right qualifications may limit the development of the farm's offer.
- Lack of ecological awareness among potential customers – some people in society may not see the value of an ecological lifestyle, which makes it difficult to promote natural products and traditional processing methods. Environmental education and the promotion of healthy food require additional marketing activities.
- Social constraints – younger generations often show less interest in traditional crafts and farming methods. The lack of people willing to continue local customs can lead to the gradual disappearance of these traditions. There is a need for promotional and educational



activities that will increase awareness and attractiveness of local heritage among young people.

3.8. Manufaktura Maurera

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Manufaktura Maurera

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Zarzecze (village) in Łącko municipality within the Nowy Sącz county.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Entrepreneur in the agriculture and food production sectors

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Manufaktura Maurera Sp. z o.o. (limited liability company)

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project

2. Description of initiative:

Manufaktura Maurera is a family farm, in fact a company, in a small village Zarzecze, situated by the river Dunajec in Łącko. The company, having installed a traditional ecological press in 2002, presses its own fruit. It produces completely natural cold pressed juice containing precious vitamins and microelements, however, for improved preservability the juice is currently pasteurized. The offer includes a variety of bio juices, pickled juices, syrups, and wines, produced using traditional methods passed down through generations. The company prides itself on using 100% Polish fruits and vegetables, including apples, pears, and plums from the company's own orchards, and maintaining natural production techniques, with no added sugars or preservatives. Products are made using traditional pressing and pasteurization methods, ensuring high-quality of natural beverages.

Thanks to its presence at various fair trade and other promotional events the interest in the company is increasing also among international clients. It has



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attended exhibitions BioFach in Norymberg, Polagra Farm and Polagra Food in Poznań. It also takes part in the organization of the Apple Blossom Festival in Łącko every year by providing free delivery of juices and regularly supports organizations as well as various social and cultural events. The company is dedicated to preserving local agricultural traditions and supporting sustainable farming practices.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital - universal knowledge and skills: knowledge in food production, processing and safety standards to ensure high-quality products.
- Physical capital and technologies: machinery, technologies used for production and transport of products (i.e. (the ecological press and pasteurization technology for preservation of products).
- Natural Resources: natural productive assets - soil (fertile land used for agriculture), raw materials of agricultural origin: local fruits like apples, pears, and plums, grown in fertile lands by the Dunajec River.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: the use of traditional cold-pressing methods passed down through generations.
- Social capital: various rural organizations and producer groups, contacts with local suppliers.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing supply chains, distribution, sale, and partnerships.
- Marketing: knowledge of marketing tools such as branding, promotion, direct sales, e-commerce, customer relationships building, digital marketing (competence in e-commerce platforms and social media tools, and the use of digital tools to promote products, ability to create and manage digital campaigns targeting



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both local and international audiences, ability to use digital tools to promote products and build a brand), local marketing (promoting products in local markets, building brand awareness, building relationships with local communities, skills in organizing and participating in local food fairs and events).

- Traditional knowledge: expertise in organic farming and traditional cold-pressing methods, as well as fruit preservation techniques such as pasteurization.
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions).
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities, food production, hygiene standards and consumer protection.
- Cooperation and networking: building strong community relationships through participation in local events like the Apple Blossom Festival.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local farmers and fruit producers: provide the raw materials (e.g., apples, pears, plums) for juice production, skilled workers (involved in pressing and pasteurising).
- Local businesses such as hotels, restaurants and shops that can collaborate to promote and distribute the products.
- Local community and residents that can be brand advocates through participation in local events.
- Financial institutions and banks that provide loans and credit for growth and expansion.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Limited market: expanding to larger or international markets due to competition and brand recognition can be challenging.
- Labor shortages: difficulty in securing skilled labour, especially for traditional production methods.
- Food safety regulations: meeting complex food safety and organic standards may be time-consuming and costly.
- Dependence on seasonal produce: variability in fruit harvests can affect production consistency and supply chain reliability.
- Financial constraints: limited access to funding for expansion, production, or technology upgrades.



3.9. Soya&Herbs

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

SOYA & HERBS

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Biczyce Dolne (village) in Chełmiec municipality within the Nowy Sącz county.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Entrepreneur in the eco-friendly products and wellness sector

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Micro-enterprise

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project

2. Description of initiative:

Soya&Herbs is a Polish brand specializing in hand-crafted soy candles that combine natural ingredients with unique fragrance compositions. It offers a variety of products, including soy candles in glass containers, which come in various sizes and feature a wide range of carefully selected fragrance notes, such as jasmine-scented freesia, lavender with lemon, and sandalwood with vanilla; decorative soy candles with original designs, which not only provide pleasant scents but also serve as stylish home decor pieces; and scented wax sachets, handcrafted from soy wax, that are perfect for adding a fresh fragrance to different spaces. Each product is designed to provide a unique and comforting fragrance experience while enhancing home decor. The brand also offers gift sets, making their products perfect for special occasions.

Fragrance pendants and accessories are additional items offered by Soya&Herbs that help infuse spaces with pleasant scents in a more portable or decorative form. These products are made with the same natural, eco-friendly ingredients as the soy candles and wax sachets. The pendants can be worn as jewellery or hung in various locations. Soya&Herbs also offers a range of accessories, such as reed diffusers, scented sachets, candle



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snuffers, and other decorative items. Additionally, the brand produces unique, prestigious gifts for business, including soy candles with company logos.

The products are made from ecological, non-GMO soy wax that is free from herbicides and pesticides, reflecting the brand's commitment to environmental sustainability and the health of its customers. All Soya&Herbs products are vegan and crafted with a focus on nature, using natural essential oils, dried flowers, and herbs. The brand emphasizes creating exceptional scent combinations that wrap the user in a delicate fragrance and complemented by the warmth of a candle's flame, creating a cozy atmosphere in any room. Soya&Herbs blends artistry with eco-consciousness, striving to create an inviting and relaxing atmosphere in homes while promoting environmental responsibility. Through this initiative, the company aims to inspire a more natural and mindful way of living by offering products that align with a sustainable, vegan lifestyle.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills: knowledge in craftsmanship and artisan skills.
- Physical capital and technologies: manufacturing facilities or artisanal workshops that are essential for producing products like candles, oils, and decorative packaging; simple packaging technologies.
- Natural resources: natural productive assets (land and fertile soil, clean water and air); raw materials of agricultural or forestry origin: soybeans for soy wax, herbs and flowers, wild plants, oils and fragrances.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: herbal knowledge (understanding of plants, herbs, and flowers), knowledge how to cultivate and harvest plants for sourcing raw materials; expertise in organic farming to cultivate soybeans; knowledge of handmade production techniques such as candle-making.
- Social capital: local agricultural cooperatives; artisan groups and craft networks; local suppliers.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	✓



5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing supply chains, distribution, sale, and partnerships.
- Marketing: competency in defining and establishing a strong brand identity; knowledge of target markets; skills in creating a compelling brand story that resonates with eco-conscious consumers and differentiates Soya&Herbs from competitors; knowledge of digital marketing; competence in designing promotional materials; skills in customer service; knowledge of market trends.
- Traditional knowledge: craftsmanship and production skills (candle making expertise, herbal and floral knowledge)
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions).
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities as well as health and safety regulations.
- Cooperation and networking:: building relationships with local suppliers and artisans.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local farmers and suppliers: provide raw materials such as soybeans (for soy wax), herbs, flowers, and oils.
- Artisans and craftspersons: contribute to the handcrafting of products, such as candle-making, fragrance blending, and packaging.
- Local businesses that can collaborate to promote and distribute the products.
- Local community and residents that can be brand advocates.
- Financial institutions and banks that provide loans and credit for growth and expansion.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Limited market: scaling the production process to meet increasing demand while maintaining product quality can be complex, especially for a handmade, artisanal product like soy candles.
- Labor shortages: difficulty in securing skilled labour, especially for traditional production methods.
- Competition from larger brands: the eco-friendly and natural products market is becoming increasingly competitive, with larger brands and multinational corporations entering the space.
- Regulations and certification: navigating the complex regulatory landscape for eco-friendly and vegan products can be time-



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- consuming and costly.
- Financial constraints: limited access to funding for expanding production.

3.10. Stowarzyszenie “Skrawek Nieba”

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Stowarzyszenie „Skrawek Nieba”

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Łosie (village) in Łabowa municipality within the Nowy Sącz county.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Entrepreneur in the tourism and education sectors

1.4. Initiative type:

business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Association

1.7. Planned implementation period:

long-term project

2. Description of initiative:

Skrawek Nieba is an agritourism farm and an association that provides comfortable conditions for spending free time and active recreation all year round. It is a unique educational and eco-tourism initiative located in the picturesque region of Łosie, Poland, in the heart of the Beskid Niski mountains. It offers a blend of nature, culture, and community-focused activities, with a primary emphasis on sustainability, local heritage, and educational development.

It operates an educational farm that is part of the National Network of Educational Farms. This initiative aims to provide hands-on learning experiences for children, adults, and senior citizens. Workshops focus on environmental education, nature conservation, and regional culture. It also offers educational programs on traditional farming and rural life. Additionally, occasional events are organized, including spring women's workshops, photography exhibitions, evenings of magic and spells, ecological activities, and conferences on environmental topics.



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The Skrawek Nieba farm and association maintains ongoing cooperation with local and regional governments, secures external funding for educational initiatives, and works to prevent social exclusion among the elderly. It has implemented numerous programs, including recent initiatives such as spring nature workshops under the 'Environmental Education Against Social Exclusion' program, nature workshops with forest bathing, educational art workshops, artist meet-and-greets, and music and dance integration events as part of the 'Active and Creative Senior' program, as well as a culinary journey through the Return to the Roots – A culinary Journey into the Traditions and Culture of the Low Beskids' project.

Visitors can enjoy comfortable accommodations in four rooms available for individual or group bookings. Guests are treated to home-cooked local meals, with traditional breakfasts and dinners. There are also various activities for children, including a farmyard with animals and educational games designed to engage younger visitors with nature.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills: educators, local guides, and specialists in ecology, culture, and tourism.
- Physical capital and technologies: educational facilities, eco-friendly accommodations, workshop spaces, and digital tools for educational programs.
- Natural resources: natural productive assets (climate, land used for traditional farming education).
- Natural heritage: landscape and quality of environment that provides a setting for sustainable tourism and outdoor activities; biodiversity that supports environmental education.
- Tangible cultural, historical, and architectural heritage: traditional wooden houses, churches, and historical sites that enrich cultural tourism experiences; preserved rural homesteads used for educational and tourism activities.
- Intangible cultural heritage: music, dance, storytelling, and spiritual traditions passed down through generations; culinary traditions forming the basis of food-related educational and tourism experiences.
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: farm resources
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: experts in traditional crafts, regional cuisine, and storytelling.
- Social capital: collaboration with local residents, volunteers, and artisans; partnerships with local and regional authorities.



4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	✓
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: effective work organization, planning of deliveries, product sales and service to tourists and workshop participants.
- Human resources management: coordination of own work and that of collaborators
- Marketing: digital marketing and social media management; content creation and storytelling; branding (establishment of a recognizable identity that aligns with eco-tourism and heritage conservation), customer relations (building trust with local communities, tourists, and program participants).
- Sales of services: effectively present the offer and flexibly adapt it to changing seasonal needs. Good knowledge of sales techniques and customer service helps to increase interest in the farm's offer, as well as build long-term relationships with visitors.
- Traditional Knowledge: traditional craftsmanship and artisan skills, culinary heritage, folklore, music, and storytelling.
- Finances: ability to manage budget, keep accounting records, and secure financing (ability to write grant applications, build relationships with local banks and financial institutions), creating a pricing strategy.
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities, tourism and hospitality, environmental protection.
- Contemporary trends in tourism: cultural tourism, creating tourism products based on local culture and regional heritage
- Cooperation and networking: partnership building.
- Personal and psycho-social competencies: willingness to learn and develop.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Artisans and craftspersons who contribute to cultural preservation and the creation of authentic products for tourism and workshops.
- Local farmers and businesses: farmers that provide locally grown produce, tourism operators (guides, transport providers), retailers and



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craft stores.

- Local community and residents: their knowledge of local traditions, oral histories, and cultural practices is vital for educational programs and workshops.
- Local governments, regional agricultural advisory centers coordinating the network of educational farms – support the development of the farm, recognizing its impact on tourism, the economy and promotion of the region.
- Financial institutions and banks that offer loans, grants, or financial support.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Limited market demand: the audience for eco-tourism, cultural heritage activities, and environmental education may be limited.
- Labor shortages: finding qualified professionals with expertise in eco-tourism, environmental education, and cultural heritage management can be a challenge.
- Competition from established eco-tourism locations and commercialized tourism.
- Regulations and certification: complex regulations and environmental and conservation restrictions.
- Financial constraints: dependence on external funding.

3.11. Beskid Art Deco

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Beskid Art Deco

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Poznachowice Dolne (*village*) in Wiśniowa municipality within the Myślenice county

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Micro-enterprise

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship



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1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The initiative is an example of an entrepreneurial initiative that combines traditional artistic activities with business. The initiative consists of running a business that produces and sells products made in the traditional way as handicrafts.

The company deals with the tailor-made sewing of folk and folk styled costumes: corsets, skirts, blouses, kaftans, waistcoats, dresses. All costumes are made from natural fabrics and decorated with handmade embroidery. The company also makes jewellery, mainly beads, hats and other accessories for regional costumes, hand-painted gadgets, e.g. Easter eggs, baubles, Christmas decorations, as well as regional souvenirs.

Its advantage is the promotion of Polish folk art and cultivating tradition by creating and selling handicrafts. The company cooperates with local artists and craftsmen, commissioning them to make works. The company uses modern methods of selling its products, conducting sales in an online store. As a result, it acquires customers from all over Poland and abroad.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills: knowledge and skills in manufacturing and sales activities.
- Physical capital and technologies: equipment and facilities used for production and the smooth operation of a business.
- Intangible cultural resources - rural traditions, methods of creating folk costumes and art.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: the business owners and employees have local, traditional knowledge and skills in the field of embroidery, crochet lace, traditional ornamentation and making accessories for regional costumes.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	✓



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5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing supply chains, distribution, sale, and partnerships.
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities and consumer protection
- Marketing: Knowledge of marketing tools such as promotion, e-commerce, digital marketing, skills in customer service; knowledge of market trends.
- Expertise knowledge and skills: knowledge and skills related to Polish folk costumes, Polish handicrafts, and regional souvenirs.
- Knowledge and skills related to the operation and development of family businesses – especially issues related to succession.
- Work ethic and respect for the profession – attitude based on responsibility, commitment to the quality of work performed.
- Analytical and strategic competencies: anticipating and analyzing market needs and identifying key development trends to make sound business decisions.
- Digital and technological competencies: integrating innovative digital and e-commerce solutions into business strategies.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: cooperation with various stakeholders, such as employees, suppliers, customers.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local residents, including local artists and craftsmen: have opportunities for employment with this enterprise, enabling them to contribute their skills and services
- Local governments: can support the local enterprise and benefit from its development (e.g. by participating in the taxes paid).
- Customers: folk groups, song and dance groups, cultural organizations, individual customers
- Suppliers of materials and components for costume production: provide essential raw materials, such as fabrics, laces, and other elements that affect the authenticity and quality of the final products.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- High operating costs: high prices of natural fabrics and the costly and lengthy handmade production process result in high product prices and reduce the attractiveness of the offer.
- Labour market: the decline in vocational education, which would otherwise provide the essential workforce for traditional rural trades. This results in difficulties in recruiting competent artists in the field of embroidery and folk art.



- Social constraints: the retention of young people in rural areas, who are essential for sustaining family business and maintaining local traditions and identities.

3.12. *Pstrągarnia “Pstrąg Ojcowski”*

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Pstrągarnia “Pstrąg Ojcowski”
 (The Ojcowski Trout Farm)

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Ojców (*village*) in Skała municipality within the Kraków county

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Micro-enterprise

1.4. Initiative type:

Business

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Sole proprietorship

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The Ojcowski Trout Farm is an example of an entrepreneurial initiative that combines an agricultural activity (trout farming) with business activity (gastronomy). It is a family business set up by mother and daughter, who wanted to bring back to life pre-war ponds located in the very heart of the Ojców National Park.

The tradition of farming the brown trout in the town of Ojców dates back to the 1930s. Founded in 1935 on Duchess Ludwika Czartoryska’s land, the fish farm was one of the first in this area. In 2014, the current owners leased the unused ponds that otherwise were to be neutralised. Owing to their hard work and full involvement, they have managed not only to revive the brown trout fishery but also to create a place where you can take a rest, relax and enjoy a culinary delight. Their aims are to restore brown trout farming, promote thoughtful and ethical breeding, educate society about regional history and culinary traditions.



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The farming process is based on traditional methods of production. The trout growers do not use industrial techniques to increase the growth or weight of fish. Feeding is not automated but done by people. The brown trout are harvested in a traditional way, by pulling nets through a pond, which protects fish from suffocating or getting damaged. Their trout farm uses only traditional fishing tools, such as hand nets, seine nets and boat hooks. To recreate the typical features of the landscape, wooden monks were built. Thanks to a small amount of fish per pond, the brown trout enjoy natural food and are only partially fed with granular feed. They are provided with enough space to develop healthily and build muscles.

The Ojcowski Trout is a traditional product of the Małopolska region. It is certified by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Ojcowski Trout company is a member of the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage, which gathers together producers and restaurant owners. Its aim is to preserve and develop traditional local cuisine characteristic of a given region of the European Union.

Trout fished from the ponds are prepared on site for consumption and sold in the restaurant, located next to the ponds. The restaurant is located in the heart of the Ojców National Park, at the crossroads of the tourist paths. An exceptional brook trout is served here, in both smoked and grilled versions. At tourists' disposal, there are about 60 seats, a 160 m² large terrace equipped with deckchairs and a boat.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills: knowledge and skills in running a business.
- Physical capital and technologies: equipment and facilities used for breeding and running a restaurant.
- Natural resources: environmental conditions (microclimate, pond and stream water) favorable to farming trout.
- Natural heritage: picturesque location of Ojców National Park
- Intangible cultural heritage: The farming process is based on traditional methods of production.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: The trout growers possess the knowledge and skills to farm the brown trout using traditional methods.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	✓
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	✓



Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing business activities in the production and sale of food products and running a restaurant.
- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing supply chains, distribution, and sale.
- Expertise skills: knowledge and skills in farming the brown trout using traditional methods.
- Sales: skills in customer service.
- Marketing: knowledge of marketing tools such as promotion and digital marketing.
- Entrepreneurial competencies: identifying and evaluating market opportunities, taking initiatives and managing risks in business activities, adaptation to a changing environment.
- Analytical and strategic competencies: Anticipating and analysing market needs and identifying key development trends to make sound business decisions.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: cooperation with various stakeholders, such as suppliers, customers, public institutions.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Customers and tourists: visitors to the farm and consumers of fish products and culinary experiences, who contribute to promoting local traditions.
- Suppliers: entities that provide the business with essential raw materials, such as feed, traditional fishing tools, or operational supplies.
- Local community and authorities: residents and institutions, including those managing the Ojców National Park, who work together to preserve cultural and natural heritage.
- Organizations promoting cultural heritage: institutions and associations that support historical education, ethical farming, and traditional production methods, further strengthening regional identity.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Natural conditions: dependence of farming the brown trout on natural conditions (weather, water clarity and temperature).
- Breeding requirements: time-consuming breeding, minimum two



years of trout breeding and the need to meet ecological conditions of traditional breeding, increase the costs of doing business.

- Financial constraints: Limited financial resources of the small enterprise.
- Seasonality of tourism: fewer customers outside the tourist season.
- Environmental regulations: operating within a protected area, such as a national park, involves strict environmental protection laws that may limit the business.

3.13. *Gospodarstwo Opiekuńcze (Care farm)*

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Gospodarstwo Opiekuńcze (Care Farm)

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Various locations are possible that enable the provision of care services on a farm.

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Farm

1.4. Initiative type:

Social

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Various forms are possible, such as agricultural activity conducted by individuals, an agricultural cooperative, a civil law partnership, a social enterprise, or a foundation.

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project

2. Description of initiative:

Care farms are potential initiatives that could be implemented in rural areas in the future. The concept of a care farm fits within the framework of so-called social agriculture, which involves introducing social services into functioning farms. Services related to care and social integration are provided based on the farm's infrastructure and in conjunction with the agricultural activities carried out. These services are primarily aimed at



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seniors, due to the deteriorating demographic situation in rural areas, but they can also be directed at children, youth, people with disabilities, socially excluded individuals, those leaving correctional facilities, and people struggling with addiction. The services offered are based on ergotherapy, which includes therapeutic and engaging activities utilizing the agricultural potential of the farm. These activities involve participation in fieldwork, assistance with animal husbandry, plant cultivation, agricultural product processing, as well as involvement in traditional rural household activities (such as handicrafts, craftsmanship, folk art, and the preparation of regional dishes). A care farm can be run as part of a business activity or as a social economy entity, e.g. in the form of a foundation.

Agricultural advisory services are involved in the development and implementation of the care farm model in Poland, as this activity aligns with their mission of promoting social farming. Creating a network of farms performing care functions will make it possible to meet the challenges facing the countryside in Poland and in Małopolska, which are related to the ageing of society, the need to improve the quality of life of rural residents and the search for additional sources of income for farm owners. The services of care farms will be able to be indirectly financed by public entities, which will be able to conclude contracts with farmers for providing such services.

Proposals regarding the model of the care farm, strategies for its implementation, and relevant legal regulations were developed as part of the project Care Farms in Rural Development in the Face of Demographic Challenges (GROWID), carried out from 2019 to 2021 by a consortium consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów, the Jagiellonian University, and the University of Agriculture in Kraków. However, to date, no statutory solutions have been introduced in Poland regarding the operation of care farms. Therefore, this is not a widely implemented initiative, and individual examples of such activities are conducted within projects co-financed by the European Union.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Universal knowledge and skills: the owners of the farm possess knowledge and skills in running a tourism and recreation business.
- Physical capital and technologies: existing and functioning farms, buildings and accessories adapted to the implementation of therapeutic and activation activities
- Natural heritage: environmental conditions typical for farms located in rural areas, particularly landscape
- Intangible cultural resources: rural traditions, rural life, farm work methods.
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: farm resources



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- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: the owners of the farm possess local, traditional knowledge and skills.
- Social capital: relations with a wide range of stakeholders, including care recipients, local communities, suppliers, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	✓
Health & care services	✓
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Legal and regulatory knowledge: familiarity with the regulations governing care farm operations, including social agriculture, care services, and related food production standards.
- Management: expertise in strategic and operational planning specific to care farms, including effective organization of combined agricultural and care (therapeutic) activities, managing financial and human resources, securing funding, negotiating partnerships with public and private stakeholders.
- Expertise skills: proficiency in traditional farming techniques integrated with care services, as well as knowledge in therapeutic and recreational activities that form part of the care farm experience.
- Marketing: competence in using marketing tools (i.e. community engagement) to highlight the unique benefits of care farms.
- Entrepreneurial Competencies: Skills in identifying and evaluating opportunities within the realm of social farming and care services, taking initiatives, managing risks, and adapting to evolving market and regulatory environments.
- Silver economy: addressing the specific needs and expectations of seniors in various areas of life (health, recreation, education), tailoring offerings (products, services, public spaces) to the needs of older adults, promoting social and professional engagement among the elderly, and implementing marketing and communication strategies targeted at seniors.
- Innovative competencies: developing and implementing innovative solutions tailored to the unique needs of care farms, leveraging local



resources and community potential.

- Interpersonal and social competencies: empathy and emotional intelligence, ability to build an atmosphere of trust, to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including care recipients, local communities, suppliers, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Service users: beneficiaries such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, or those in need of social and therapeutic support.
- Local farmers: can diversify their income sources and gain additional income from non-agricultural activities.
- Suppliers: providers of agricultural inputs, care-related supplies, and equipment necessary for both production and service delivery.
- Local community: promotion of the village, development of local identity and preservation of local traditions and heritage.
- Local governments: support and regulate the farm's activities, ensuring alignment with community needs and environmental standards.
- Agricultural advisory services: institutions and networks that offer guidance, training, and support for integrating traditional farming practices with social care services.
- Social organizations and non-profits: entities that promote social inclusion and may partner with care farms to enhance community engagement and service outreach.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Regulatory framework: lack of legal framework and unclear regulations regarding the operation of care farms.
- Social and cultural constraints: a limited awareness of farmers and society of the care farm model, coupled with a reluctance among traditional farmers to transition due to the perceived complexity of services large number of requirements that care farms have to meet.
- Skill and competence gaps: insufficient training and expertise in delivering therapeutic and activation services, which can affect the quality of care provided.
- Financial constraints: limited access to funding, subsidies, or financial incentives for integrating social care into agricultural operations.
- Infrastructure limitations: rural areas may lack the necessary infrastructure and technological resources to support the efficient operation of care farms (i.e. lack of transportation means to commute to the farm).



3.14. “Taste of Pleśna” – Local Products Store

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

“Taste of Pleśna” – Local Products Store

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Pleśna municipality in the Tarnów county

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Local community, local food producers and food processors

1.4. Initiative type:

Mixed

1.5. Scale of activity:

Medium

1.6. Legal form:

Cooperative

1.7. Planned implementation period:

Long-term project

2. Description of initiative:

The potential initiative covers the Pleśna municipality, where family farms and vineyards operate such as Janowice, Dąbrówka, Uroczysko, Zadora, Epigon, and others. Located in the Małopolska region within Tarnów County, the municipality spans 84.9 square kilometers and is home to approximately 12,000 residents.

A market analysis revealed that small family farms and local producers, especially winemakers, have limited opportunities to sell their products. The absence of a dedicated sales venue combined with insufficient regional promotion results in low visibility and constrained sales for these authentic local products.

The primary goal of the initiative is to establish a cooperative that functions as both a sales outlet and a promotional platform for local products, sourced directly from family farms and local producers. The cooperative structure ensures that profits are reinvested into further enhancing regional promotion and supporting the members’ interests, rather than focusing solely on profit maximization.

The concept of “Taste of Pleśna” as a cooperative is built on a foundation of member-driven collaboration, where small farms and local producers join



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forces as active cooperative members. In this model, every member has the opportunity to take part in decision-making processes, sharing resources and contributing to collective marketing efforts. This democratic structure ensures that every voice is heard and that the decisions made reflect the interests of the entire community, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and mutual benefit.

Moreover, the cooperative is committed not only to facilitating product sales but also to promoting the unique qualities of local products. The marketing strategies are designed to highlight the authenticity and quality of goods produced in the Pleśna region, thereby enhancing its reputation as a hub for high-quality local products. This dual focus on sales and regional promotion ensures that the cooperative contributes to both economic sustainability and the broader development of the community.

The establishment of the cooperative is expected to create a sustainable sales channel for local products and strengthen collaboration among small family farms. By pooling resources and sharing responsibilities, the cooperative aims to improve the region's competitiveness, contributing to both economic growth and social development in the Pleśna commune.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills: knowledge and skills in running an enterprise.
- Physical capital and technologies: equipment and facilities used for the smooth operation of a business (store infrastructure, storage units, and point-of-sale systems that facilitate efficient handling, processing, and sale of local products).
- Resources of agriculture, forestry and other typical rural activities: farm resources: a wide range of local farm products and distinctive wines, which are produced using traditional methods that have defined the region's heritage.
- Local, traditional knowledge and skills: expertise in food production and processing, preserving traditional techniques that contribute to the authenticity and quality of the products.
- Social capital: the ability of local farmers and wine producers to cooperate and support each other.



4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	✓
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	✓

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: strategic and operational planning and effective organization of activities, management of financial and human resources, effective fundraising and conducting business negotiations, managing sale.
- Supply chain management: skills in managing inventory, coordinating deliveries with local farmers and producers, and ensuring product freshness and availability.
- Marketing: basic knowledge of marketing strategies, including local and online promotion, organizing tasting events, and building a recognizable brand for the store.
- Finances: ability to handle budgeting, cash flow management, and daily financial operations such as bookkeeping and reporting, ability to secure financing.
- Product knowledge: understanding the characteristics, origin, and production methods of local products (e.g., wines) to effectively communicate their value to customers.
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: familiarity with regulations governing business activities, food safety standards, labelling requirements, and legal regulations related to selling food and beverages.
- Skills in networking and collaborating with local farmers, wine producers, and organizations to strengthen the store's position within the community.
- Flexibility in handling operational challenges and quickly responding to changing customer needs or supply chain disruptions.
- Basic digital skills: ability to use point-of-sale (POS) systems, manage simple e-commerce platforms, and utilize social media to promote products and events.



6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local farmers and wine producers: primary suppliers of local products, they are essential partners providing fresh, high-quality goods for the store and actively participating in the cooperative.
- Potential customers (both locals and tourists visiting the region)
- Competing wineries and stores.
- Municipality of Pleśna (local government): can offer institutional support, assist with infrastructure, facilitate access to funding opportunities, and help promote the initiative within the region.
- Local development agencies / rural advisory centers: These organizations provide advisory services, training, and guidance related to business development, legal compliance, and accessing public or EU funds.
- Regional tourism boards, cultural centers, and local heritage associations: can help promote the initiative to tourists, linking local products to the cultural identity of Pleśna.
- NGOs focused on rural development, social economy, or sustainable agriculture: may support the project through knowledge sharing, networking, and capacity-building programs.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- High costs related to renting the premises and maintaining the cooperative's operations.
- Limited management and marketing skills among cooperative members.
- The need to intensify activities that integrate the local community around the initiative.
- Potential competition from existing retail and wine-producing businesses.
- Seasonality of tourism: visitor flows are highly seasonal, which can create fluctuations in demand, leading to financial instability during off-peak periods.

3.15. Wspólna akcja – aktywizacja (Collective Action – Activation)

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Wspólna akcja – aktywizacja (Collective Action – Activation) – support for disabled people from rural areas

1.2. Location of the initiative:

Cechłó (village) in Klucze municipality within the Olkusz county



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1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:

Social cooperative “Opoka”, local disadvantaged individuals

1.4. Initiative type:

Social

1.5. Scale of activity:

Small

1.6. Legal form:

Social cooperative

1.7. Planned implementation period:

2- year project

2. Description of initiative:

Initiative implemented by the social cooperative “Opoka” under Priority 6 European Funds for labour market, education and social inclusion, Action 6.16 Socio-professional activation, Project type B. Social and professional activation of people at risk of social exclusion and economically inactive people in reintegration entities. The main objective of the project is to increase the level of socio-professional activation of 43 disabled people with a significant or moderate degree of special needs, including the creation of 5 new work places at the OPOKA Vocational Activity Facility.

Within the framework of the project, the Participant(s), upon the basis of the developed or updated Individual Reintegration Program, will receive the following forms of social activation support: support of the personal assistant for people with disabilities, individual support tailored to specific needs, e.g. family therapy, family counselling, financial advisor, legal advisor, psychologist, etc., health-related services (limited to diagnostic or preventive purposes), e.g., consultations with a specialist doctor, support aimed at improving skills related to leisure activities, recreation, and cultural participation, including one-day trips to attractive destinations such as cinemas, theaters, museums, etc., digital skills training for participants aged 15-29, who, according to their Individual Development Plan, require improvement in this area, support of a Vocational Instructor, support of a Supported Employment Coach, study visits, job placement, vocational training, subsidies for employment in Vocational Activity Facility.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human capital: universal knowledge and skills: expertise in social work and activation of people at risk of social exclusion, particularly persons with disabilities, knowledge of vocational rehabilitation processes, competence in project management, experience in providing psychological, legal, and financial advisory services for vulnerable groups, knowledge of labor market integration strategies.



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- Physical capital and technologies: Vocational Activity Facility adapted for people with disabilities, office and IT equipment, tools and equipment for vocational training, adapted vehicles for participant transport).
- Social capital: a well-established network of local partners.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	✓
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	✓
Universal production & services	✓

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Management: ability to design and implement sustainable social enterprise models, especially within the framework of a social cooperative, strategic and operational planning and effective management of activities related to the professional and social activation of vulnerable groups, management of financial and human resources, logistics, and service delivery.
- Finances: competence in budgeting, financial planning, and managing public and private funding streams (e.g., grants, subsidies); skills to secure additional financing from donors, local government, or EU funds and to manage and report on project implementation and finances in line with donor requirements.
- Legal and regulatory knowledge: knowledge of regulations governing social activity, regulations concerning vulnerable groups
- Innovative competencies: skills in developing new methods of social and professional activation of people at risk of exclusion, creative problem-solving, capacity to adjust project activities to the diverse and changing needs of participants, competence in using digital tools to support training, social activation, and communication with stakeholders.
- Digital and technological competencies: knowledge of digital tools supporting management and marketing.
- Interpersonal and social competencies: leading multidisciplinary teams, motivating staff, and fostering a cooperative working culture, developing long-term relationships with public institutions, NGOs, local businesses, and labour market stakeholders, promoting the



project's social mission to local communities and potential partners, empathy and emotional intelligence, ability to build an atmosphere of trust.

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Project participants: people at risk of social exclusion, specifically individuals with disabilities who will benefit from activation and employment support.
- Social cooperative "Opoka": the main implementing organization responsible for project coordination.
- Local authorities and social welfare centers: partners providing referrals of participants, supporting the project's implementation, and helping integrate services with local social policies.
- Support professionals: personal assistants for people with disabilities, vocational instructors, supported employment coaches, psychologists, legal advisors, financial counselors, therapists, and medical specialists providing tailored support services.
- Funding bodies: institutions responsible for financing the project, monitoring its compliance, and ensuring it meets the objectives of Priority 6 and Action 6.16.

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- The project's limited duration poses a risk to the long-term sustainability of its results. The cooperative may rely heavily on external funding, making it difficult to sustain activities and job positions without continued financial support.
- Skills gaps among participants: some participants may lack the necessary vocational skills or work experience, which could slow down their reintegration into the labor market.
- Bureaucratic complexity: managing EU-funded projects and complying with labor, disability, and social economy regulations requires significant administrative capacity.
- Fragmentation in local support networks: insufficient cooperation among project stakeholders may hinder effective implementation of the initiative.
- Potential technical and infrastructural challenges that may affect the smooth running of project activities.
- Insufficient scale of the initiative to reach all potential participants at risk of social exclusion in the region.



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