

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN POLAND, THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND AUSTRIA

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Summary

For several reasons, rural areas in Poland developed much more slowly than urban areas, and to a large extent, they have been neglected. The situation was much improved after Poland's accession to the EU, with continuous flow of funds for the development of agriculture. These actions facilitated faster development of such areas, while the structure of the latter has improved. The current instrument for the implementation of the EU policy for rural areas, operating within the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, is the Rural Development Programme for the years 2007–2013 (RDP 2007–2013).

The present document contains a comparative analysis of the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 as implemented within three states, namely: Poland, Austria, and the Czech Republic. General conditions and limits to the granted financial assistance have been determined in the EU regulations, therefore they can not differ between Poland, the Czech Republic, and Austria. What differs, however, is the projects and investment tasks implemented within particular measures.

In the article, the aforementioned countries have been compared in terms of rural areas, and in terms of measures implemented within the Rural Development Programme in each of them.

It has been noted that there have been 44 measures implemented within the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013, while only 19 of these are implemented within thematic axis 2 – improving the environment and countryside. Poland is implementing 26 measures in total, the Czech Republic is implementing 32, and Austria – 31. The highest amount of financing per country's area went to Austria, and the lowest – to the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic possesses the most favourable structure of the rural areas, while Poland possesses the least favourable structure thereof. In the present work, the method of logical and descriptive analysis was employed, based on the Polish and international subject literature.

Keywords

rural areas • European Union • financing

1. Introduction

Rural areas in Europe are heterogeneous in terms of their inhabitants and social structures as well as in terms of their economies and labour markets. These differences are

desirable, as they represent the uniqueness of each of the European countries and regions. At the same time, rural areas everywhere in Europe often share common objectives and ambitions. Development of rural areas is an important sphere of European policy. In 2008, rural areas constituted 91% of the European Union territory. They were inhabited by more than 59% of all EU citizens, including 24% of the population in the areas with the majority of rural areas, and 35% residing in mixed areas – sub-regions, in which between 15% and 50% of the inhabitants live within local units (municipalities) classified as rural (i.e. with population density below 150 persons per square kilometre). These regions are responsible for 56% of all employment and they generate 49% of the gross added value within the European Union [Rural Development... 2011].

Within the EU-27 countries, there are approximately 14 million agricultural farms in operation. Agricultural and silvicultural activity covers 77% of all area of the European Union. Many areas still face problems of soil degradation, eutrophication, ammonia emissions, and decrease of biodiversity. Fortunately, ecological (organic, environmentally friendly) agriculture is becoming increasingly popular (5.4 million ha) as well as land use for the purpose of obtaining renewable resources, for instance, the production of bioenergy. Another instrument for combating the disappearance of biodiversity is the Natura 2000 programme, which covers approximately 12–13% of the EU farmland and forests.

Population in the rural areas on average has low-level educational qualifications. In many member states, persons in the rural community finish their education at primary or first grade secondary school more often than their city counterparts. Approximately 15% adults in the rural areas and 20% inhabitants of urban areas go on to higher education. This is often linked with migrations of qualified people to the cities. Due to broader potentials and higher possibilities of finding a job, graduates from higher education institutions remain in urban areas after completing their studies [Communication from the Commission to the Council... 2006].

The current instrument for the implementation of the European Union policy for the development of rural areas, operating within the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, is the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 (RDP 2007–2013).

Just as in the previous years, each member state was obligated to define their own rural development program, and to determine the amount of financing directed for particular measures implemented throughout the programming period of 2007–2013 [Polityka UE... 2008].

Basic principles of rural development policy for the years 2007–2013 as well as political instruments at the disposal of the member states and regions are defined by the Council Regulation (EC) no. 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on supporting the development of rural areas by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (Dz. U. L 277, 21/10/2005). Authors of the document conducted a comparative analysis of the measures implemented under the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013, as applied within three states, namely: Poland, Austria, and the Czech Republic.

These countries have been selected for the analysis, as member states of the European Union. Another significant factor in the selection was the fact that Poland

and the Czech Republic are Eastern bloc countries, which joined the EU at the same time, while Austria has been a member of the community for over twenty years.

2. Study material and method

In the present work, the method of logical and descriptive analysis was employed, based on a critical study of Polish and international subject literature. The heart of the method is adjusting the new problem to the knowledge to date, and it consists in demonstrating similarities, differences, interdependencies and significant features in scientific theories, hypotheses and assumptions, ideas and principles of operation, beliefs and opinions in terms of the value system and word view [Apanowicz 2000]. The study uses the latest available data from the European Communities Statistical Office (Eurostat) and the Polish Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS).

3. RDP (Rural Development Programme)

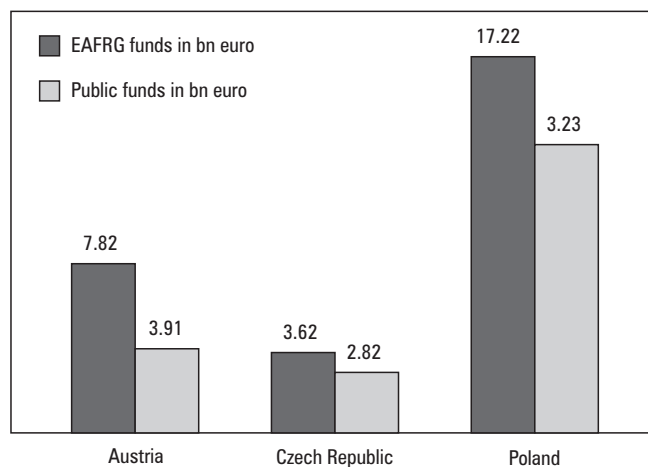
Each member state or region, participating in the RDP 2007–2013, is obligated to subdivide the funds for the development of rural areas into three thematic axes: Axis 1. Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector (economic axis), Axis 2. Improving the environment and the countryside (environmental axis), Axis 3. Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (social axis).

The fourth axis (the so-called LEADER axis) is of methodological character, and focuses on supporting individual rural development projects, implemented in order to solve particular local problems. It facilitates combining the three aforementioned objectives and fields – competitiveness, the natural environment and quality of life. In the framework of the LEADER axis, the local rural communities elaborate their local strategies for the rural development, with innovative projects, combining knowledge, skills, and resources of the representatives, are then implemented in real life. Public-private partnerships constitute the so-called local action groups. The support within the framework of the LEADER axis is also granted for the projects of trans-regional or international cooperation, which can be implemented by the local action groups. Thanks to such activities, the LEADER axis involves the local players in the decision making process, therefore reinforcing the sense of local community, where local players identify with European projects.[Council Regulation (EC) no. 1698/2005... 2005]

3.1. RDP financing in 2007–2013

Measures and activities conducted within the framework of the RDP are co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the State budget. Poland has over 17 billion euro in total to distribute, where approximately 3 billion of the total sum are the commitments made on the basis of the Rural Development Plan of 2004–2006. EAFRD invested 13.23 billion euro in the development of rural areas in Poland – the largest amount of all UE–27 member states.

Comparison of the public funds granted for Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria for rural development is presented in the Figure 1 below.



Source: author's study based on Przegląd unijnych... 2010

Fig. 1. Total amounts of EAFRD funds and public funds for rural development between 2007–2013

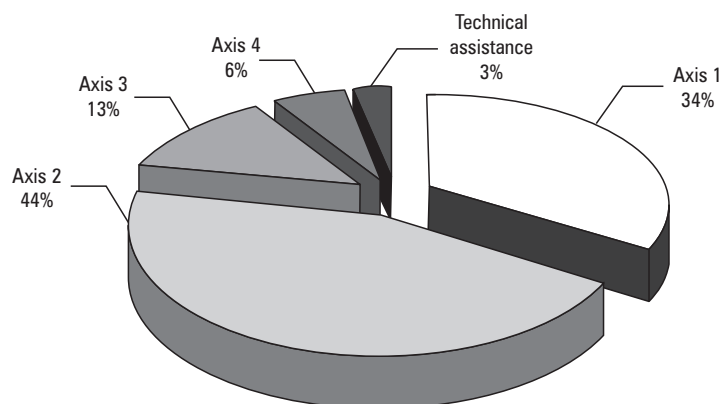
If we divide the whole amount allocated for the implementation of RDP 2007–2013 by square kilometres of rural areas and number of persons residing in these areas, the highest financial assistance is paid to the Austrians, and the lowest – to the Czechs. In Poland, the amount is approx. 1169 euro per person residing in rural areas, and 59.1 thousand euro per square kilometre of rural areas respectively. The figures are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. RDP 2007–2013 financing calculated per areas and population of rural areas

Country	Thousand euro per 1 km ² of rural areas	Euro per person residing in rural areas
Poland	59.1	1169
Czech Republic	46.4	402
Austria	103.6	1194

Source: authors' study based on National Strategic Plan... 2007, Europa. How the EU..., Dudzińska 2013

The largest amount of EAFRD funds was allocated for the implementation of the economic axis (axis 2), and the smallest, for the social axis (axis 3) and the LEADER axis. Technical assistance will consume approximately 3% of all funds. Figure 2 presents percentage share of respective thematic axes in the total amount of EAFRD funds.



Source: authors' study based on Przegląd unijnych... 2010

Fig. 2. Subdivision of EAFRD funds between respective thematic axes (without the national public funds)

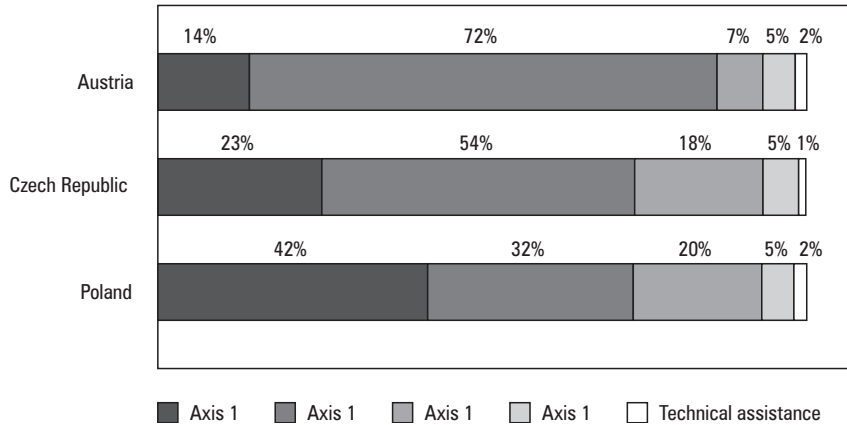
By the force of the Council Regulation (EC) no 1698/2005, the institutions of the European Community imposed upon the member states an identical structure of the Rural Development Programmes for the years 2007 – 2013, consisting of three basic axes, and the fourth, additional LEADER axis. Minimal level of financing was planned for each of the axes. For axis 1 and 3 the minimum was set as 10% each, and for the axis 2, at least 25% of the European Community funds. These ranges are aimed to guarantee the creation of programmes, which correspond to the main tasks of the European agricultural policy, and at the same time, they are sufficiently low for each of the member states and regions to adjust the measures to their own needs. The minimum amount for the implementation of the LEADER axis was set as 5% (and 2.5% for new member states) of the total funding.

Similarly to the Community funding, the minimum percentage share was set also for the public funds in the implemented Rural Development Programmes, respectively:

- for the implementation of the axis 1 measures – the minimum of 25%,
- for the implementation of the axis 2 measures – the minimum of 20%,
- for the implementation of the axis 3 measures – the minimum of 25%,
- for the implementation of the axis 4 measures – the minimum of 20%.

Considering the total outlay of public funds (both from the particular states and the Community), it is envisaged that their largest portion will be spent for the implementation of the second, environmental axis. Across the whole European Community, the measures under axis 2 will consume 46.2% of the public funds, contracted for all the Rural Development Programmes. The next position in terms of public funds consumed falls to axis 1 (33.0%). Expenditures for the measures under axis 3 average at 12.0%, and for the LEADER axis, at 6.0% of all public funds directed towards RDP 2007–2013. The

detailed planned subdivision of funds granted for the four axes of the RDP 2007–2013 in the selected countries is shown in Figure 3.



Source: authors' study based on Przegląd unijnych... 2010

Fig. 3. Subdivision of funds granted for the respective axes of RDP 2007–2013

We can note that Austria directs the largest amount of financial support to axis 2 – improvement of the natural environment and rural areas, which consumes as much as 72.3% of all resources of the RDP 2007–2013; also in the Czech Republic this axis is promoted and the share of 53.8% goes towards its financing. Only in Poland, the most substantial support is directed towards axis 1 – improved competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector.

The amount of Community funding for rural development, the subdivision of the funding for respective years, as well as the minimum amounts focused on the regions which qualify for convergence objectives – these are decided by the Council of the European Union. On the other hand, the European Commission watches over annual total allocations of community funds, including the EAFRD, not exceeding particular economic parameters. Each Rural Development Programme is set by the respective member state and consulted with the European Commission and appropriate agencies and entities, defined by the given member state by the force of national practices and regulations. Member states are obligated to submit the draft of each programme to the European Commission. The Commission verifies the correctness and compliance of the programme with the rulings of the Council Regulation (EC) no 1698/2005, strategic Community guidelines and the national strategic plan [Council Regulation (EC) no. 1698/2005 ... 2005].

It is a particular task of each member state to assign the following for each Rural Development Programme: the managing authority, the accredited financing agency, and the certification body. The member state is also obligated to establish the moni-

toring committee, which shall ensure the correctness and efficiency of programme implementation. The managing authority (which can be national, regional, local; or a public-private organisation) of each programme has the obligation to submit annual reports of programme's implementation progress to the European Commission.

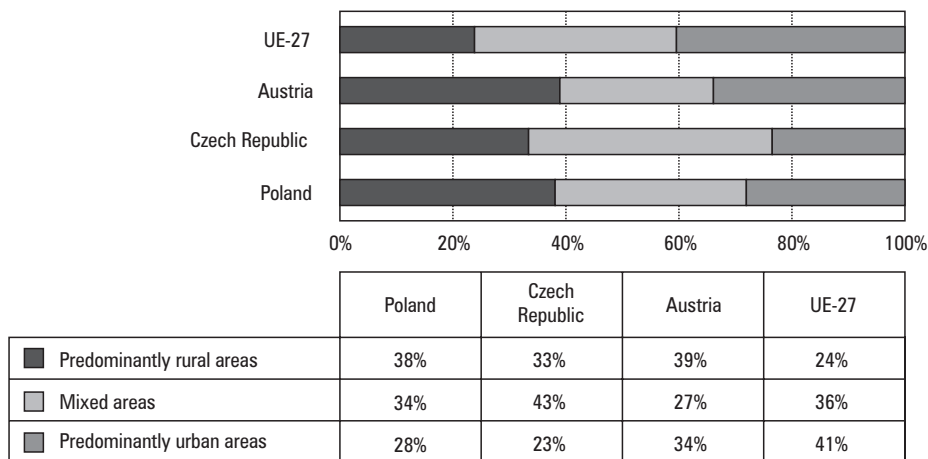
In order to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the implementation of Rural Development Programmes, these are evaluated *ex-ante*, mid-term, and *ex-post*.

Financial assistance is granted to farmers, entrepreneurs, local self-government units, and forest owners. Beneficiaries may apply for co-financing from EAFRD funds via contact with the managing authority or the financing agency, or by checking the information on the current offers, calls for proposals, and financing guidelines on the Internet [Przegląd unijnych... 2010].

4. Comparative analysis of selected countries

In the analysed countries, the total area of rural land according to OECD typology is significant: in Austria, it exceeds 72% of the whole state territory, in Poland, 55%, and in the Czech Republic, 48%. Also in the Czech Republic, according to the same classification, we find the largest percentage of urban areas, namely 14.6%. In Poland, territorial structure, in terms of breakdown into the different types of areas (rural, urban, and mixed) resembles the European Union average.

Comparison between the different states in terms of the subdivision of areas according to the OECD typology has been presented in Figure 4.

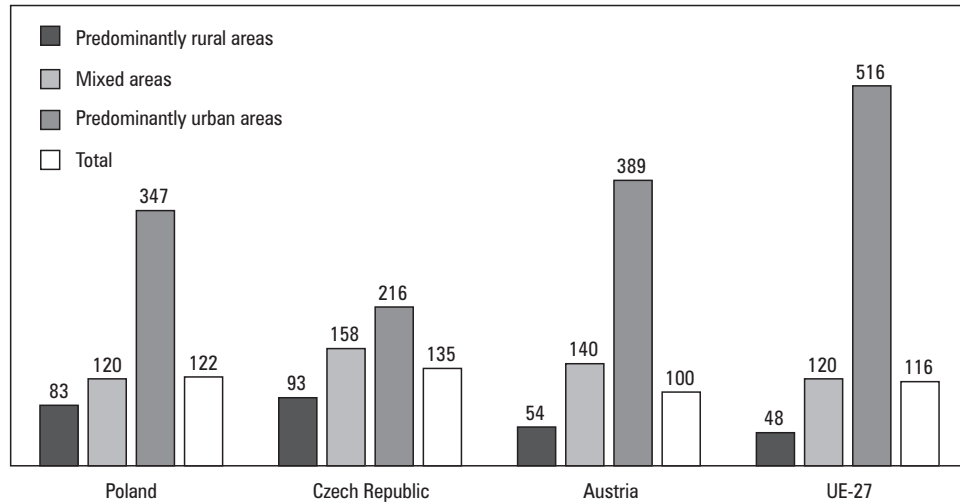


Source: authors' study based on Rural Development... 2011

Fig. 4. Territorial division of selected countries according to the OECD methodology (2008)

Austria has the highest share of population residing in rural areas, that is, above 72%. In Poland, this share is 55% – just like the EU average, and in the Czech Republic

– only 48%. On the other hand, population density in rural areas is the highest in the Czech Republic, reaching 92.7 persons · km⁻².



Source: Dudzińska 2013

Fig. 5. Population density in Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and the EU-27 in 2008

When comparing the demographics in the rural areas of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Austria, we clearly see that the highest share of agricultural population, as well as of the working population employed in agriculture, is observed in Poland. In 2009, this share reached 15.2% for agricultural population and 7.9% for working population employed in agriculture. In Austria only between 2 and 3% of population are involved in agricultural production (Table 2).

Table 2. Agricultural population and the working population in agriculture in 2009

	Agricultural population		Working population in agriculture	
	Thousand	% of all population	Thousand	% of all population
UE	22 527	4.5	11 090	2.2
Austria	293	3.5	150	1.8
Czech Republic	666	6.4	336	3.2
Poland	5798	15.2	3036	7.9

Source: authors' study based on Rocznik Statystyczny Rolnictwa 2011

The share of agricultural farms with arable land below 5 ha is 68% in Poland and 50% in the Czech Republic. In Austria, there is the highest share of farms with the size

of arable land between 5 and 20 ha (40%). The Table 5 below presents the subdivision of farms according to arable land size groups in the three analysed countries, and the European Union as a whole.

Table 3. Number of farms by area groups of agricultural land [in thousands] in 2009

	Total	Below 5 ha	5–20 ha	20–50 ha	Over 50 ha
UE	13 700	9645	2553	804	698
Austria	165	55.3	65.5	33.3	11.3
Czech Republic	39.4	19.8	8.5	4.5	6.6
Poland	2391	1637	629	101	23.6

Source: authors' study based on Rocznik Statystyczny Rolnictwa 2011

Table 4. The average farm size in 2007

	Average size of farm	Share of farms in particular classes (according to size)		
		< 5 ha	< = 5 < 50 ha	> = 50 ha
UE	12.6	70.4	24.5	5.1
Austria	19.3	33.5	59.7	6.8
Czech Republic	89.3	50.4	33.0	16.7
Poland	6.5	68.5	30.5	1.0

Source: authors' study based on Rural Development... 2011

In Poland, fragmentation is high, and size of agricultural farms is small. In 2007, average area of an agricultural farm amounted to 6.5 ha, which is far below the European average of 12.6 ha. In Austria, the average size was even greater than the EU average, that is, 19.3 ha. The Czech Republic very clearly takes the lead, with the average size of agricultural farms scoring 89.3 ha (Table 4).

Table 5. Average economic size of a farm in 2007

	Average economic size of an agricultural farm	Share of farms in different size classes		
		< 2 ESU	< = 2 < 100 ESU	> = 100 ESU
UE	12.6	70.4	24.5	5.1
Austria	16.7	29.4	68.7	1.9
Czech Republic	41.2	50.5	43.0	6.5
Poland	3.6	67.9	31.9	0.2

Source: authors study based on Rural Development... 2011

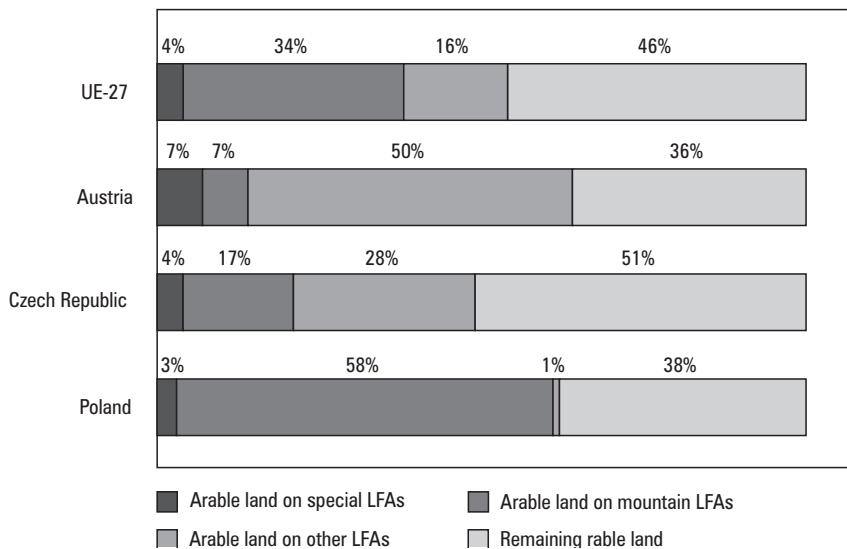
When comparing the average economic size of farms, the Czech Republic comes first with their average of 41.2 ESU (European Size Unit). In Austria, the value of this index is 16.7 ESU, and in Poland, it is lower than the European Union average (of 11.3 ESU), amounting to only 3.6 ESU.

In the category of ecological (organic) farming, Austria is at the forefront among the discussed countries. Austria's territory is four times smaller than Poland's, and yet it has almost 4 thousand more organic farms than Poland has, and over 150 thousand ha of arable land in those farms. Furthermore, out of the three discussed countries, Poland is the only one with the share of arable land in organic farms below the European Union average, which is 4.40% (Table 6) [Rocznik statystyczny rolnictwa 2011].

Table 6. Organic farming in 2009

	A number of organic farms	Size of arable land of the organic farms	
		[ha]	Total arable land [%]
UE	208 866	8 288 733	4.40
Austria	21 000	518 757	18.5
Czech Republic	2 665	398 407	9.38
Poland	17 092	367 062	2.37

Source: authors study based on Rocznik statystyczny rolnictwa 2011



Source: authors' study based on Rural Development... 2011

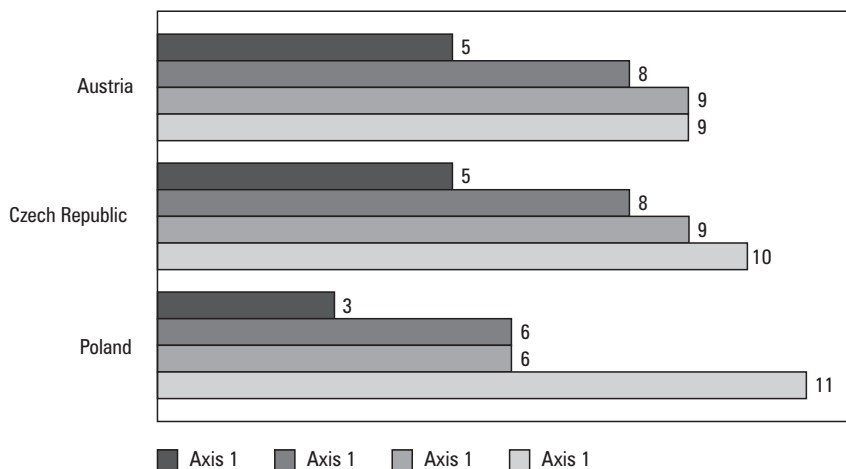
Fig. 6. Share of the area of LFAs in Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and UE-27 (2005)

From the point of view of land use, and the measures undertaken within the framework of RDP 2007–2013, the so-called LFAs (Less Favoured Areas) are an important consideration. We find the highest share of favourable land in the Czech Republic (50.8%). Due to the specificity of the natural topography, the highest number of arable land on LFAs – both mountain areas and total – is found in Austria, and the lowest number – in the Czech Republic. The comparison of arable land areas in LFAs is included in Figure 6.

5. RDP 2007–2013 measures in Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria

Each state and region received an opportunity to structure their own programme, compliant with the general rural development policy guidelines of the European Union, but above all, also adjusted to their own particular needs. This opportunity is afforded through selecting particular measures co-financed by the European Community. In Table 7, particular measures were presented, as implemented within the RDP, and being the components of the four axes. The measures included in the national – Polish, Czech, and Austrian – Rural Development Programme for the years 2007–2013, were marked with an “x” in the last column. [Przegląd polityki... 2013, Wsparcie rolnictwa... 2013].

We immediately observe that RDP 2007–2013 contains 44 measures in total, including 18 measures within the framework of axis 1, 13 measures within axis 2, 8 measures within axis 3 and 5 measures within axis 4. Poland is implementing 26 of all measures, the Czech Republic – 32, and Austria – 31 measures. Each of the states uses also the technical support. The distribution of the quantity of measures implemented within each axis by the countries in question has been presented in Figure 7.



Source: authors' study

Fig. 7. Number of RDP 2007–2013 measures implemented in Poland, Czech Republic and Austria

Table 7. Listing of axes and measures of RDP 2007–2013, indicating which measures are implemented in the three selected member states

AXIS 1 Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector					
Thematic groups	Code	Measures	Poland	Czech Republic	Austria
Promoting knowledge and improving human potential	111	Vocational training and information actions	X	X	X
	112	Setting up of young farmers	X	X	X
	113	Early retirement	X	X	-
	114	Use of advisory services by farmers and forest owners	X	X	-
	115	Setting up of management, relief and advisory services	-	-	-
Restructuring and developing physical potential and promoting innovation	121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	X	X	X
	122	Improvement of the economic value of forests	-	X	X
	123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products	X	X	X
	124	Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and in the forestry sector	-	X	X
	125	Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry	X	X	X
Quality of agricultural production and products	126	Restoring agricultural production potential after natural disasters and introducing preventive measures	X	-	-
	131	Meeting standards based on Community legislation	-	-	-
	132	Participation of farmers in food quality schemes	X	-	X
	133	Information and promotion activities	X	-	X
	141	Semi-subsistence farming	-	-	-
Transitional measures	142	Producer groups	X	X	-
	143	Providing farm advisory and extension services	-	-	-
	144	Holdings undergoing restructuring due to a reform of a common market organization	-	-	-

AXIS 2 Improving the environment and the countryside						
Sustainable use of agricultural land	211	Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas	X	X	X	X
	212	Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas (LFA)	X	X	X	X
	213	Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC	-	X	X	X
	214	Agri-environment payments	X	X	X	X
	215	Animal welfare payments	-	-	-	X
	216	Non-productive investments	-	-	-	-
	221	First afforestation of agricultural land	X	X	X	X
Sustainable use of forestry land	222	First establishment of agro-forestry systems on agricultural land	-	-	-	-
	223	First afforestation of non-agricultural land	X	-	-	-
	224	Natura 2000 payments	-	X	X	X
	225	Forest-environment payments	-	X	X	X
	226	Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions	X	X	X	X
	227	Non-productive investments	-	X	X	-
AXIS 3 The quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy						
Diversifying the rural economy	311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	X	X	X	X
	312	Support for business creation and development	X	X	X	X
	313	Encouragement of tourism activities	X	X	X	X
	321	Basic services for the economy and rural population	X	X	X	X
	322	Village renewal and development	X	X	X	X
	323	Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage	X	X	X	X
	331	Training and information	-	X	X	X
341	Skills-acquisition and animation measure with a view to preparing and implementing a local development strategy	-	X	X	X	

Table 7. cont.

		AXIS 4 LEADER				
Implementing local development strategies	411	Competitiveness		-	X	X
	412	Environment/land management		-	X	X
	413	Implementing local development strategies		X	X	X
	421	Implementing cooperation projects		X	X	X
	431	Running the local action group, skills acquisition, animation		X	X	X

(X) – measure is implemented in the given country

(-) – measure is not implemented in the given country

Source: authors' study based on Przegląd polityki... 2013, Evaluierungsbericht 2010, Wsparcie rolnictwa... 2013, Průběžné hodnocení programu... 2010.

In the studied countries, the highest number of measures is implemented within the framework of axis 1, and the lowest, in axis 4 (the LEADER axis). The analysis has shown that the countries implement 19 measures in common. The highest number of common measures is found in axis 3, namely, 6 in total.

In the Czech Republic and Austria – the countries with a more favourable structure of rural areas – the number of common measures increases, amounting to as many as 28.

6. Conclusion

European Union is heavily diversified, as it brings together very different countries. A comparison of the same RDP 2007–2013 measures, implemented in different European states, demonstrates that the practical realisation of similar rural development issues is effected at the discretion of particular member states. General conditions and limits have been defined in the EU regulations, therefore they cannot differ between Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria. What differs, however, is the projects and investment tasks implemented within particular measures (for instance, environmental packages). Poland as a country, which has been benefiting from EU assistance for a relatively short time, received a large amount of financing – although, when calculated per inhabitant of rural area, the level of financial support is comparable to that in Austria, and when calculated per square kilometre, it is half of the Austrian figures. Among the analysed countries, the Czech Republic received the lowest amount of support, however, that country enjoys the best territorial structure. The states with better indices “portraying” the agricultural areas implement mostly axis 2 measures, while Poland implements mostly axis 1 measures, linked to the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sector.

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