



**OSS aims at improving policies for SMEs competitiveness by enhancing advisory support services for first time entrepreneurs. One Stop Shop project wants to build a complete ecosystem for an entrepreneur starting a new business.**

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## **Action Plan**

**OSS – One Stop Shop towards competitive SMEs, focusing on the ecosystem for the first line service system**

**PP6 – Rzeszow Regional Development Agency (Poland)**

## Part I – General information

**Project:** OSS

**Partner organisation:** Rzeszow Regional Development Agency

**Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):** n/a

**Country:** Poland

**NUTS2 region:** podkarpackie

**Contact person:** Marek Duda

email address: [mduda@rarr.rzeszow.pl](mailto:mduda@rarr.rzeszow.pl)

phone number: +48 17 86 76 215

## About the Project

According to statistical data, Europe has a lower percentage of start-ups comparing to other parts of the world). This circumstance highly emphasizes the need to create and offer attractive jobs and living places for young people. Real conditions mean that many young people are leaving our regions with the hope for creation of a better life conditions. With this project, we want to create an attractive, tailor-made ecosystem for start-ups. Its aim is to improve SME development, entrepreneur skills and overcome specific barriers. Project partners defined that commitment and willingness to invest in long-term policy are important to increasing the number and quality of start-ups in their region.

The main goal of OSS: One Stop Shop for Competitive SMEs, ecosystem focus for frontline service system design, is to improve existing SME competitiveness policies by enhancing advisory support services for new entrepreneurs. As a result, OSS aims to build a complete ecosystem for entrepreneurs starting a new business.

To achieve this goals each partner will contribute with their knowledge and best practices from the First Line of Service System (FLS). The end result of the OSS initiative is the development of a toolkit of experience and knowledge. The consortium will also strengthen the advisory support service tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs. Having a strong understanding of national policies and engaging stakeholders from different spheres of competence to support efforts to influence policy related to the main objective

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of the project, the OSS partnership has the ambition to change advisory services in different European regions.

## Part II – Policy context

**The Action Plan aims to impact:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
<input type="checkbox"/>	European Territorial Cooperation programme
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other regional development policy instrument

**Name of the policy instrument addressed:** Regional Operational Programme of Podkarpackie Voivodeship for 2014-2020, Priority Axis I: Competitive and Innovative economy.

The objective is to strengthen research, cooperation between business, science and technological development, innovation and also strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs and startups. The priority is aimed at creation of a business environment conducive to research and innovation. Key elements include strengthening the activities of research and innovation and improving knowledge transfer between public and private sectors, supporting SMEs and new startups. Investments will focus on its efforts to implement the results of R&D, innovation, higher added value and productivity as well to expand and internationalization.

Podkarpackie Region is one of regions with the lowest level of economic development. It is caused by limited access to external sources of financing for those who want to start a business. Additionally Podkarpackie Region border directly with Ukraine and in this region there are many migrants from this country (especially from the war territories: Donbass region, Luhansk and so on). The development of financial instruments, possibilities and motivation for starting a business by people especially endangered with social exclusion (including migrants) will have a positive impact on the level of entrepreneurship in the region.

On the basis of a Regional Strategy for Podkarpackie Region 2014-2020 the following needs were defined to be improved:

- the need to enhance regional innovation economy
- support low level of entrepreneurship (measured in the number of companies in relation to the number

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of inhabitants), including SMEs and for new startups

- increase the level of cooperation between relevant stakeholders such as regional development agencies, regional and local authorities, enterprises, R&D centers, universities and technology and business incubators, manifested by a small number of joint innovative projects
- insufficient cooperation of institutions dealing with supporting for the development of a smart, inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship at local-regional level
- the need to create tailor-made ecosystem for startups
- lack of knowledge, know-how, skills, technical knowledge, procedures, methods in the field of technology transfer in research institutions and universities
- weak Podkarpackie's ecosystems for supporting new businesses.

### Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

#### **ACTION 1 – Creation of the new instrument in the regional policy**

This action is the result of the project Interreg Europe OSS - One Stop Shop towards competitive SMEs, focusing on the ecosystem for the first line service system. The project is financed under the priority axis which aims to increase the competitiveness of SMEs. The OSS project aims to support public policies by promoting Good Practices in the field of training, financing, affiliation and running a startup. The project is implemented by 6 Partners from European regions: Poland, Bulgaria, Norway, Great Britain, Slovenia, Spain. The project implementation is additionally supported by an Advisory Partner from Belgium.

Poland has a low GDP per capita, according to the European Innovation Scoreboard of 2017, Poland has 17 000 in GDP, versus EU which on average has 25 400 in GDP. In addition to this, we have low spending on innovative activities, and are far behind the average in the EU area. When it comes to micro enterprises Poland is above target, with a total of 20,3 % being micro enterprises, 35,5 % being SMEs and the rest being large enterprise. The downside for the large enterprise is that the majority are foreign controlled enterprises. Therefore: The micro enterprises are of great importance to increase the GDP in Poland. We also see that the commitment towards innovation in SMEs is low and descending, with a average of - 22,8 %. Based on this it is important to adress the policy towards the FLS system, to change the mentality of running a business.

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RRDA, in cooperation with the Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Region and local authorities, participated in the development and consultation of many important strategic documents at regional and trans-regional level in the framework of the new EU perspective 2014-2020, i.e. in the creation of the final version of operational programs and regional strategies. RRDA directly assists and supports activities of the Marshal Office, and participates in the implementation of the Regional Operational Programme and Policy instruments in Priority VII and I (from the phases of definition and creation of the guidelines and indicators, to the selection of the projects, support for potential applicants with preparation of the proposals, develop elaborations, information and promotion activities, participation in steering committee, which is responsible for the changes, improvements of the Regional Operational Programme and analysis of its progress implementation).

The scope of the Regional Operational Program of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship for 2014-2020 is a response to the challenges defined for the region in the main strategic documents and takes into account those areas of intervention, the implementation of which will bring the greatest effects. The program formulates an intervention framework for carrying out activities in line with the three priorities set out in the main guidance document for the cohesion policy, which is the Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth Europe 2020. The objectives and scope of support for the Podkarpackie ROP 2014-2020 are a response to the development challenges outlined in the Partnership Agreement. The basis for the selection of thematic objectives implemented under the Podkarpackie ROP 2014-2020, taking into account both the conclusions from the diagnosis of the socio-economic situation of the Podkarpackie Region (Voivodeship), as well as broad European and national conditions, are primarily the provisions of the Regional Development Strategy - Podkarpackie 2020, in which the areas of concentration were defined development potentials and barriers of the region against the background of strategic development directions. Therefore, the main objective of the Podkarpackie ROP 2014-2020 is to strengthen and effectively use the economic and social potential of the region for the sustainable and intelligent development of the region.

The Regional Operational Program of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (RPO WP) for 2014-2020 is the most important instrument of the region's development policy for the current financial perspective. The program is a response to the diagnosed regional needs, resulting from the analysis of the barriers and

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potentials of the Podkarpackie Region, taking into account the desired directions of intervention, specified in EU, national and regional strategic documents. The main objective of this is to strengthen and effectively use the economic and social potential of the region for the sustainable and intelligent development in the area. This goal is achieved through activities aimed at, inter alia, strengthening the accessibility of the region, increasing its competitiveness, supporting innovation, improving the condition of the natural and cultural environment, increasing spatial and social cohesion, as well as preventing unemployment and social exclusion, social integration and raising the level of education.

As mentioned in the earlier part of the action plan, the Rzeszow Regional Development Agency actively cooperates with the Marshal's Office and other stakeholders on the preparation and updating of the The Regional Operational Program of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The main problem that we identified when starting the project is the lack of accurate support for startups from our region. At the meetings of the stakeholders of the OSS project and presentations of good practices from the first meeting of the international OSS project in Norway, the need to create a place where enterprises and start-ups can develop, cooperate and can count on comprehensive support was identified and indicated

We have hereby designated that a good solution will be to implement a new instrument that will allow the construction of the Business Park. As the unit responsible for the preparation and announcement of the Regional Operational Program, the Marshal's Office will be involved in the instrument implementation process throughout the entire process. Each decision regarding this implementation will be consulted with them. This activity has now been completed. In the Operational Program priority axis I Competitive and innovative economy; Measure 1.3. Promotion of entrepreneurship, a new type of activity has emerged - business parks.

## **ACTION 2 – RRDA Project - Podkarpacki Business Park**

During the Kick-off conference in Norway, the OSS Project Partners visited the Maritime Competence Center, which became a model for the Podkarpackie Business Park. The event was held at the Norwegian Maritime Competence Center, in the “Blue Innovation Arena” - a work and conference space created to accommodate innovative and entrepreneurial activities. The competence center is also the main location of the leading maritime cluster in Norway.

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The idea of establishing the Norwegian Maritime Competence Center emerged in April 2008. On May 5, 2008, the Norwegian Maritime Competence Center was formally established, and a year later Rolls-Royce confirmed that they had selected Ålesund and NMCC for its European Technology Training Center. After an extensive public trial, the constructor was finally able to start building the NMCC on April 14, 2010.

Now, the Norwegian Maritime Competence Center is a part of the Campus Aalesund and now is one of Norway's most important meeting places for innovation, competence and development. Campus Aalesund is the regional center for education, research and business development. In addition, the NMCC works closely with various organizations. This interaction enables development and economic growth in Sunnmøre. Some of the NMCC partners include the Kongsberg Maritime Technology and Training Center, which develops new technologies from the seabed to space. ÅKP AS is one of Sunnmøre's leading providers for entrepreneurship, innovation and networking services. They promote one of the most complete incubator systems in the country, cluster programs such as GCE Blue Maritime Cluster, NCE Blue Legasea, and other national and international projects.

Hereby, after visiting this Center, we have considered building a similar unit in our region. On January 17, 2020, the Rzeszow Regional Development Agency submitted an application under the recruitment RPPK.01.03.00-IZ.00-18-010 / 19, which was announced under the Regional Operational Program of the Podkarpackie Region (Voivodeship), and the newly created instrument.

The aim of the project is to create a new offer with new services in the vicinity of the already operating complex of the Technology Incubator PPNT "Aeropolis" in order to facilitate starting business activity by micro and small (SME) entrepreneurs, with particular emphasis on enterprises introducing products / services that fit into the Regional Innovation Strategy of the Podkarpackie Region 2014-2020 influencing the development of the Podkarpackie Region. The Business Park will especially support entities operating in the following industries: automotive, quality of life, information and telecommunications (ICT). The indicated industries constitute three of the four main sectors important for the development of the Podkarpackie Region, referred to as the so-called smart specialization of the region - based on the document Regional Innovation Strategy of the Podkarpackie Region 2014-2020 for smart specialization. The activities of the future Business Park, as a place facilitating the start and operation of companies in line with the above trend, are aimed at achieving the status of the region of the highest quality of life by Podkarpacie and a leader in creating eco-innovation. The location of the Business Park in the rural commune of Trzebownisko (village called Jasionka), very close to Rzeszow, is also in line with the model of

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supporting regional smart specializations desired by the European Commission, which will ultimately affect the creation of jobs based on knowledge and development, not only in leading research and innovation centers, but also in rural and less developed regions.

The most important goal and task of the Business Park will be to create conditions for the development of a dozen new business entities that are part of the RIS and to implement an extended portfolio of services and their active sale to entrepreneurs. In order to achieve this goal, a four-storey building will be built, with office and service spaces for rent in line with the potential and possibilities of SMEs. Therefore, for young companies in the area of smart regional specializations, offices with a small area of approx. 10 m<sup>2</sup> to 30 m<sup>2</sup> were prepared for rent. For more developed and demanding entrepreneurs, including mainly service providers providing spaces with a larger area for independent development. A new architectural facility will be built - the building of the Podkarpackie Business Park with an area of total 2,693.84 m<sup>2</sup> - four-storey with office spaces prepared for running a business, for at least 10 new entities from the area of SMEs representing industries in accordance with the RIS - in the area of smart specialization (automotive, quality of life, IC / ICT) with additional external infrastructure (access roads, parking lots, squares and pavements). It is planned to rent the remaining office and service space in the PPB building for other business entities in the area of business-related and non-business services. The building will be equipped with the necessary IT equipment: multimedia, supervision, and server room equipment that will be used; facility manager and PPB beneficiaries / entrepreneurs. In addition, furniture will be purchased for the facility manager for the office, concierge, technical rooms, a storage / utility warehouse and a conference room.

The value of this project was estimated at EUR 3,004,691.09 (13,620,865.67 PLN), of which:

- EUR 2,306,292.21 (PLN 10,447,503.72) - eligible expenditure;
- EUR 694,177.27 (PLN 3 173 361.95) - non-eligible expenditure. The amount of co-financing, EU contribution and own contribution are equal to EUR 1,153,757.37 (PLN 5,223,751.86).

The implementation period of this project is planned for the period of 2 years:

- in the period of the third quarter of 2020 - the fourth quarter of 2021: the Podkarpackie Business Park will be built. The task will be commissioned by Rzeszow Regional Development Agency. The facility is an office and service building designed in a reinforced concrete structure with brick walls. The facility will be

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placed on a plot of land in the nearby village of Jasionka, where the Podkarpackie Science and Technology Park "AEROPOLIS" is also located.

- in the first quarter of 2022, the equipment of the building will be prepared - server room equipment, multimedia connection, monitoring and equipping the building with the necessary furniture and equipment.

### **ACTION 3 - Creation of business network for companies**

The network approach, as a new concept of cooperation between economic entities, was created at the end of the 1970s as a result of technological changes taking place on the enterprise market (Business-to-Business, B2B) and increased international competition. It emphasizes the importance of the entirety of the company's contacts with the environment, creating multi-entity, complex relationships, relationships and an extensive network of connections. Success in business does not always depend solely on your own resources and skills. In running a company, it is also very important to build a network of permanent contacts with partners and business partners, i.e. networking. Many entrepreneurs from around the world have found that networking opens up many new opportunities for the company. The most important advantages of networking include:

- A clearer indication of the presence of business on the market. A company recommended by employees has a better chance of finding new orders and establishing long-term fruitful cooperation with other companies.
- Save time and money on looking for clients and partners. Networking is also one of the least expensive ways to promote your business, and the recommendation of a trusted person is worth more than many advertisements.
- Increasing the company's credibility in the eyes of customers. Cooperation with many entities inspires greater trust among potential customers.
- Greater business flexibility. By maintaining various contacts, the chance that the company will not be dependent on other business (e.g. supplier) increases.

In creating this activity, we were guided by the Slovenian Good Practice titled CEED, which was presented during the last physical meeting of our partnership in Bulgaria. CEED Grow is a program where all its mentors are successful entrepreneurs with companies employing several employees, active both on the domestic and international market. These mentors can share their first-hand experiences not only on how to start a business, but also how to grow, guide employees and reach global markets. There are hardly any lectures or workshops in the CEED Grow program. The main goal of the program is to develop a

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community that helps each other share sessions, support activities and provide inspiration to overcome challenges and for future learning and development.

Without networking, there are no business relationships, and without business relationships, you don't develop and achieve your goals. Only peer partners can be a valuable source of business information. Networking is just as important as an investment in growing your business. Networking is an opportunity to expand the target customer group, sales area and increase the number of suppliers. Therefore, every entrepreneur at various stages of business development should invest in networking, but above all, those who are intensely fighting for a position on the market or who are the owner of a local company.

Our activity will be aimed at creating a similar network as part of the Aeropolis Academy project, which is run in the Podkarpackie Science and Technology Park in Jasionka near Rzeszów, which is a unit managed by RRDA. As part of this activity, we want to organize a series of meetings for beginner and advanced entrepreneurs who will be able to create each other's business networks, which will certainly benefit them. During the meetings, experienced people will be able to share the most important information they have learned in the course of their activities, and newcomers will be able to learn from each other and make numerous contacts.

Business contact networks will be built between the tenants of the Business Park and Podkarpackie Science and Technology Park AERPOLIS. Stakeholders who are directly involved in the implementation of activities as part of our project will be involved in this action. Networking requires planned action. When looking for a network of contacts, first of all, we need to know our purpose. This is a necessary condition, according to the principle "if you don't know what you want, you'll never get it". Achieving the goal should be treated as a personal marketing campaign that consists of setting a goal, analyzing the available and potential network of contacts, defining a strategy and an action plan. Our networking strategy is about looking for people to help us reach the right people or on whom our goals directly depend. There is no doubt that all kinds of events and corporate events are one of the best forms of investing in the development of the company. Such events provide an opportunity to promote a given brand and build an industry reputation. If a given enterprise becomes the organizer of an event thematically related to its activity, it increases its recognition in the industry. This can bring tangible benefits to the company, both in building its own reputation on the market and acquiring new customers or creating a network of business contacts.

The planned implementation period for this action is planned for the turn of 2021/2022, depending on the pandemic situation in our country and region. Due to the restrictions in force, we are unable to organize physical meetings at the moment. Meetings of this series will be held every month and we assume that nearly 50 people will participate in each of them. Each meeting will be of a specific nature. In some of them there will be entrepreneurs with the same level of experience, while in others, both those on their initial career path and those already advanced will be invited to participate.

#### **ACTION 4 - Crowdfunding system support for enterprises**

In our region, crowdfunding is a form of fundraising that is just developing. Many residents / potential entrepreneurs are not entirely convinced of its effectiveness. As part of the next action, we want to build a support system for entrepreneurs that will be based on crowdfunding. This action was presented as a Pilot Action within our project.

The idea for this action was born after an online meeting organized by PP5 - bsc Business Support Center, Kranj, where the idea of crowdfunding and a successful Kickstarter campaign were presented. This showed us that it can be a good solution supporting the development of entrepreneurship in our region. During this meeting, several financing options for startups and SMEs were presented. During the presentations, we noticed the potential that we can use to support the development of the social economy in our region.

A number of meetings organized as part of the OSS Project, due to the pandemic, have been postponed to a later date, or their format has been changed to online. This was also the case with the meeting, which was organized by a Partner from Slovenia and concerned the issue of financing startups. In terms of crowdfunding at that time, our attention was most drawn to the presentation of a young entrepreneur who, thanks to this form of financing, founded his own company, which is developing at an amazing pace. The second presentation that touched on this topic was the presentation of the Belgian stakeholder - Ms Nathale de Schepper - who introduced us to the crowdfunding theory and presented its advantages and disadvantages.

Hereby, as part of another measure, we want to create a support system for entrepreneurs. Employees of the Rzeszow Regional Development Agency will be trained by an expert in the crowdfunding diet, and then we expect that this action will be permanently included in the operation of our Agency. We hope

that RRDA employees will support entrepreneurs at every stage of creating and running crowdfunding campaigns.

The implementation period of this activity is planned for the 2nd and 3rd semester of phase 2 of our project implementation. We hope that we will be able to obtain funds for the implementation of this action as part of a specific Pilot Action. The total estimated cost of our operation is EUR 46,000. These costs are to be allocated to educating employees on crowdfunding and carrying out the aforementioned activity.

RRDA wants to encourage social enterprises to raise funds for their own business using crowdfunding. This will allow us to introduce such services permanently in RRDA and in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, which will be a success for both our Agency and social entrepreneurs, as we hope that it will increase their impact on the region and support to a greater extent people disadvantaged in the labor market.

This Action will consist of components such as:

- 1) **Preparatory phase**, which will be consisted of activities such as:
  - a) development of a methodology of the pilot action (steps to be taken, responsible bodies, milestones, timeline),
  - b) preparation of the procedures in line with the internal regulations - public procurement related to the external experts experienced in the crowdfunding issues,
  - c) preparation of the regional authorities – the Agency and ROPS Rzeszów staff will be trained by the good practice owners - partners from Belgium and Slovenia (Artesis Plantijn University of Antwerp, and bsc, Business Support Centre from Kranj) as well as external experts experienced in the crowdfunding issues. On the basis of the gained new knowledge and skills, the Agency and ROPS Rzeszów will elaborate a call for social entrepreneurs and newcomers
- 2) **The call for entrepreneurs and newcomers** (organised also in cooperation with partners from BE, SI, with the external experts' support): development of the application pack, including terms of reference, application form, advisory services offered by the Agency and ROPS Rzeszów, information campaign on the call in the region (also in cooperation with Marshal Office from Podkarpackie region and other relevant bodies).

Within the call we would like to choose 5 social economy entities – including below steps:

- a) Development of regulations, forms, idea evaluation cards, etc.

- b) Information on call for support by a crowdfunding campaign
  - c) Receipt of applications
  - d) Verification of applications - formal and content-related criteria
  - e) Selection of the most prospective ideas according to the developed procedure
  - f) Conducting crowdfunding campaigns for selected 5 social enterprises.
- 3) **Preparation of a report that will summarize** the actions, with conclusion and further steps to be taken in the region. The report will be submitted and discussed with the MA of the ROP 201-2027 (Marshal Office from Podkarpackie region).

Conducting of this action in the planned form will contribute to the development of a better support model, what will be offered by RRDA and Regional Social Policy Center in Rzeszow in the subject of finding financial support for social entrepreneurs.

This Action will be addressed to improve two regional policies:

- 1) European Funds for Podkarpacie 2021-2027 is a successor of the 'Regional Operational Programme for Podkarpackie region 2014-2020'. The new regional operational programme will be a two-fund programme, co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund +. Similarly as it was in the previous period (2014-2020), the Marshal Office of Podkarpackie region acts as a Managing Authority 2021-2027. Regional Center for Social Policy (as a part of the Managing Authority) and Regional Development Agency (as a body cooperating with and supervised by the Marshal Office) are involved in the programming process. Both institutions take part in the different stakeholders' meetings, provide an input (dedicated to the social economy) and consult the respective elements of the programme etc.

The process of the preparation of the new programme is pending. At the moment work is concentrated on the strategic aspects (e.g. needs analysis). It has already been agreed that the new programme will consist of 8 priority axes. The priority axis no. 6 is to be entitled 'Human capital ready for change'. One of its goals is to stimulate and support the development of the social economy sector in the region.

The priority no. 6 embraces, inter alia, services for social entities, such as individual advisory services for the interested in establishing a social entity (improvement of skills and capacity),

advisory services and trainings for the social sector staff, provision of animation, incubation and business services etc. The thematic coverage of the priority no 6 is also a subject of consultation with the social economy entities, conducted by Regional Center for Social Policy. In case of success of this Action, the new advisory services/trainings etc. on crowdfunding could be implemented under the priority no. 6, through e.g. specific projects (as in the ROP 2014-2020, where three projects [ERDF committed: ~10 million EUR] devoted to the development and coordination of the social economy sector have been implemented by Regional Center for Social Policy and Regional Development Agency, however, crowdfunding is not mentioned in any of them). Generation of projects is expected after 2022, so the pilot's results could be addressed then (the pilot will be terminated in November 2022). Thus, we could ensure their durability and/or generalization.

- 2) **The Social Development Plan for Podkarpackie 2021-2027** is a successor of the “social Economy Development Plan 2014-2020). As a body shaping the regional social policy, Regional Center for Social Policy is elaborating the Plan. Regional Development Agency is involved as well.

Preparation of the Plan is conducted simultaneously with the preparation of the European Funds for Podkarpackie 2021-2027 and both documents will be consistent and complementary. The Plan will refer to the following social economy issues: coherent support system, improvement of skills and increased capacity, growth of employment, promotion and popularization of the sector in the region etc.

The implementation of this Plan will be partially financed from the European Funds for Podkarpackie 2021-2027 budget. The estimated amount of the ERDF/ERDF+ funds will be indicated in the Plan (in previous plan it was above 26 million EUR from the ROP 2014-2020).

In case of success of this Action, the new advisory services/training etc. on crowdfunding could be included in the Plan.

**Date:**

2021-08-31

**Signature:**

Mariusz Bednarz  
President of the Board

  
PREZES ZARZADU  
Mariusz Bednarz

Krystian Kapinos  
Vice-President of the Board

  
WICEPREZES ZARZADU  
Krystian Kapinos

**Stamp of the organisation (if available):**

RZESZOWSKA AGENCJA  
ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO S.A.  
35-959 Rzeszów, ul. Szopena 51  
tel. Zarząd 17-85-20-610, cent. 17-85-20-600  
Skr. poczt. 74, fax 17-85-20-611  
NIP 813-00-10-538

DYREKTOR  
Działu Projektów i Programów  
Krajowych i Międzynarodowych

  
Marek Duda

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