Culture and Tourism

Mini Case Study PODLASKIE: Centre for Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany

Work Package 9

Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF)
Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (CF) – Work Package nine: Culture and Tourism

Work Package 9: Culture and Tourism – Podlaskie Regional Case Study (Poland)

Mini Case Study: Centre for Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany

Contract: 2014CE16BAT034
Work Package 9: Culture and Tourism – Podlaskie Regional Case Study (Poland)

Mini Case Study: Centre for Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany

This report is part of the Podlaskie Regional Case Study Centre for Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany, carried out within the Ex-post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF).

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Date: October 15th 2015
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The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) is undertaking an ex-post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) during the period 2007-2013 in the regions covered by the Convergence, Regional Competitiveness & Employment and European Territorial Cooperation objectives in the 28 member states.

The Consortium IRS-CSIL-CISET-BOP was selected to undertake the ex post evaluation on ‘Culture and Tourism’ (Work Package 9). An important element within the evaluation is a series of case study analyses of NUTS2 regions covering interventions co-financed by ERDF during the 2007-2013 programming period.

In addition to the full regional case studies (which look at the overall programme across the whole regions), the evaluation also includes two mini case studies (focused on individual projects) for each regional case study. As with the regional programme case studies, the mini case studies are based on desk-based research and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the main participants involved in the chosen projects.

This report presents the results of the mini case study: **Centre for Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany.** The report begins with a brief synthesis of the project before moving on to a fuller description and the presentation of the results of the analysis undertaken. The report ends with a review of the main conclusions of the study, together with a series of lessons learnt for future policymaking.

The interviewees for the mini case study were identified as part of the wider ROP evaluation exercise of which the mini case studies are part, and were selected as key actors in the design and delivery of the project. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the person</th>
<th>Institution, position and role in the project</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sylwia Sapkowska</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Synthesis

The province of Podlaskie has a multicultural character, unique in Poland. One of the expressions of this multicultural character is the Tartar culture, concentrated mainly in and around the village of Kruszyniany. This area, because of its specific character, is visited by a growing number of individual tourists and organised excursions. The area is exceptional and holds significant potential, both culturally and for tourists, but the current level of development is modest.

The project “Centre for Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany” was realised under the Priority Axis III Tourism and culture development, Measure 3.1 “Development of tourist attractiveness of the region”. It was selected based on a competitive procedure (closed competition).

The scope of the project included:

- A Centre for Education and Muslim Culture in Kruszyniany (where it will be possible to see historical collections, listen to and see a presentation on the history of the Tatars on Polish territories, and understand Muslim rites and customs).
- A didactic shelter (for liturgic and tourist purposes).
- Tourist and recreational infrastructure (including accommodation, an outbuilding for bike storage, and two stalls for horses).
- Modern tourist information.
- A professional website.

The target groups for the project consist of the Polish Muslim community, as well as foreign and domestic tourists more generally (especially families, those in retirement, active tourists, school children, and students).

The direct beneficiary of the project is the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany. The indirect beneficiaries are local tourism industry operators; bike renting outlets; agro-tourist farms; producers of souvenirs; as well as construction, repair and joinery services from the municipality of Krynki, where the project is carried out.

Sources of financing of the project are:

- ERDF funds: EUR 0.85 million (equivalent to 67.1% of the eligible costs).
- Other domestic public funds – subsidy from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage: EUR 0.061 million (equivalent to 4.8% of the eligible costs).
- Private finance: EUR 0.35 million (equivalent to 28% of the eligible costs).

The primary achievement of the project is the modification and modernisation of the tourism offer around Kruszyniany. Through this, the project will contribute to the increased competitiveness and attractiveness of the tourist sector in Podlaskie.

The project was significantly delayed, a result of a lack of secured private finance.

The project is being implemented by a small association, which is most probably too small to cope with the organisation and financial requirements of the project (especially the contribution of its own capital). In the opinion of the beneficiary, the main problem in the realisation of the project was the unhelpful attitude of the central
and local authorities regarding the securing of the required own contribution.

Table 1.1. Background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Poland NUTS1-PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Podlaskie Voivodeship 2.3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full project title</td>
<td>Centre of Education and Muslim Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of project</td>
<td>From 02.08.2010 to 22.09.2015. The beneficiary asked for an extension to the realisation of the project until September 22nd, 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total budget:</td>
<td>EUR 1.3 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF contribution:</td>
<td>EUR 0.85 million. (Equivalent to 67.2% of the eligible costs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National budget:</td>
<td>EUR 0.061 million. (Subsidy from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, equivalent to 4.8% of eligible costs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional budget:</td>
<td>No contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private contribution:</td>
<td>EUR 0.35 million. (Equivalent to 28% of the eligible costs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Objective:</td>
<td>X Convergence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Territorial cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* exchange rate as of 11.06.2015: 1 EUR = 4.1297 PLN

The motivation for the selection of the project was the unique character of the Tartar culture in terms of both Poland as well as Europe more generally (the Tatar population is very limited, with an estimated 70,000 Tatars living in Europe in 2002); and the high potential for the development of tourism in the region, in terms of attracting tourists to the region (because of its distinct culture and cuisine), extending tourists’ length of stay, and extending the tourist season from the “summer” season to the “year-round” season.
2. Project description

The project addresses one of the main objectives of the regional strategy in tourism: the development of tourism in the region based on the valorisation of national and cultural heritage.

The primary rationales for the project are the:

- Preservation of cultural heritage.
- Support for an ethnic and religious minority.
- Access to the tourist attractions the year-round.
- Creation of a recreation and leisure base.
- Development of ethnic and cultural tourism.

Scope of the project

The project included the construction and development of the new Centre, near Kruszniany (county of Sokółka, municipality of Krynki) on two plots, which are the property of the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszniany. The Centre included: the Centre for Muslim Education and Culture, the didactic (liturgical) wind shelter, a tourist and recreation facility, a tourist information stand, fencing, as well as a professional website (as set out in Figure 3.1 and 3.2, or in Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Area m²/m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Centre for Muslim Education and Culture</td>
<td>Museum, historical, educational and workshop hall -educational purpose</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The didactic (liturgical) wind shelter</td>
<td>For tourist and liturgical purpose of the Tatar society</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tourist and recreation facility in the building of the former stable</td>
<td>Accommodation, outbuilding for bike storage, two stalls for horses</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tourist information stand</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional website</td>
<td>Promotion/Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author based on data from Marshal Office

The project targets customers from different groups, including the Tatar society in Poland, other visitors, children, students, and others (see table 2.2).
Table 2.2. Targeted customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted customers</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Period of the year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tatar society in Poland</td>
<td>Liturgical, events organizing</td>
<td>Whole year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors (mainly: families with children, retirement, active tourist)</td>
<td>Ethnic and cultural tourism</td>
<td>Prolong seasonality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Green schools&quot;-children</td>
<td>School classes in nature and/or definite socio-cultural environment</td>
<td>Seasonality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Students internship, intercultural workshops, exercises</td>
<td>Whole year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities (the Institute of History of the University in Białystok, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw)</td>
<td>Science study</td>
<td>Whole year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences participants</td>
<td>Conferences (result of studies will be presented)</td>
<td>Whole year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International tourist</td>
<td>Ethnic and cultural tourism</td>
<td>Prolong seasonality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The Mosque in Kruszyniany attracts 15,000-16,000 tourists annually (2009, Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany). The number of tickets sold in 2009 amounted to approx. 11,000. Estimated number of tourists visiting Kruszyniany after the completion of the project should increase by approximately 2,000 initially, and in the following years by an additional 1,000 annually.

The project has not been finished yet. It is still in progress.

The building work is in two stages:

- Stage I: Construction of facilities.
- Stage II: Finishing work.

Table 2.3. Construction works planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Expected results</th>
<th>Resources EUR mil.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>02/09/2013-30/04/2015</td>
<td>Attracting tourists from outside the region, including foreign tourists</td>
<td>Internet site, Construction of buildings</td>
<td>Building ready for installation work</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prolonging the stay of tourists in the region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31/04/2015-22/09/2015</td>
<td>Extending the tourist season, from summer to year-round through modern presentation of the tourism product</td>
<td>Media connection, Room equipment</td>
<td>Building ready for operation</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total EUR 1.31 million. ERDF contribution: EUR 0.85 million.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author based on information from Marshal Office
The direct beneficiary of the project is the investor – the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany and in Poland (around 5,000 people). The indirect beneficiaries are the inhabitants of the locality of Kruszyniany and of the entire municipality of Krynki, especially tourism-related services (catering, accommodation, bike renting, agro-tourist farms, souvenir producers); businesses involved in the retail grocery trade; companies producing construction materials; and construction companies. The self-governmental authority of the municipality of Krynki is also an indirect beneficiary of the project.

The project has still to be completed.

For the beneficiary, the primary objective of the project is to protect the local Tartar community from dispersion and loss of identity. Those in the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany treat the project in highly emotive terms, and its completion on time is an issue of prestige.

The expected main results from the project are to:

- Increase the attractiveness to tourists of Kruszyniany, of the municipality of Krynki, and of the entire region, through offering the improved tourist product “Kruszyniany – the history of Polish Tatars”. This consists of the mosque and the “misar” (Muslim cemetery), as well as the historical collections (in the museum), listening to and watching the presentation on the history of Tatars on Polish territories, acknowledging the Muslim habits and customs, etc.
- Increase the number of tourists visiting Kruszyniany and the region.
- Prolong the visit of an average tourist in Kruszyniany from a single day to several days.
Lengthen the tourist season through participation in holidays and rites, distributed over the entire year.

Create new jobs in Kruszyniany and in the municipality of Krynki.

Ensure conditions for tourists to recognise historical assets, including those collected by the community, belonging to the Muslim Religious Community and those exhibited in the museums of the region.

Ensure the provision of tourist information and the possibility of booking guide services related to the Centre, through the development of an active and modern website.

Development by the Centre of at least one new tourist product in each consecutive year, along with the updating of the existing products.

**Figure 2.2. The information table**

![Information Table Image](image)

Source: photo by the author
3. Political and strategic context

Kruszyniany is a small village in Poland inhabited by 160 people (2006), including several Tatar families. It is located in the province of Podlaskie (Figure 4.1), in the county of Sokółka, municipality of Krynki, close to the boundary with Belarus. The distance from Kruszyniany to Warsaw is 251 km, and from Kruszyniany to Białystok 59 km.

The municipality of Krynki is a small administrative unit, having a low population density. In 2013 it was inhabited by 3,300 people (20 persons per sq. km). Long-term emigration has changed the demographic structure. There are more than 300 registered unemployed, with an unemployment rate of over 15%. This rate is notably higher than the average in the region. The residents of the municipality also have a low standard of living. Nearly 16% of the population receive government social support. The main employers are public administration and services, as well as a couple of private tanneries.

Given that the province of Podlaskie is among the poorest regions in the European Union, it is imperative and necessary to accelerate the development of the economy in this province, including the direct and indirect creation of jobs.

In this context, investment in cultural tourism is an opportunity which would capitalise on the unique qualities of the municipality, especially its cultural diversity, including the cultivated traditions of Polish Tatars, and the monuments associated with these traditions.

The Tatars have been an important part of the area for centuries. In 1679 Polish king Jan III Sobieski granted the Tatars several villages in the area, including Kryszyniany. The Lipki Tatars settled here, and fought on the Polish side during the wars with Turkey. For many years, the village constituted an important Muslim centre. By the end of the 20th century however, the village was inhabited by less than 300 people, of whom only some 10% were Muslims. There is a wooden mosque from the end of the 17th century in the village (Figure 4.2). Behind the mosque, the Muslim cemetery is located ("misar"), with the oldest tombstones dating from the end of the 18th century. Around 37km from Kruszyniany, there is a second Mosque in Bohoniki.

The Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany is represented by 120 members and around 1,000 supporters. They are not currently an important employer. They have a well-recognised tourist product, which may significantly increase the revenue from tourism in the municipality of Krynki (for example, through ensuring a package of accompanying services for visitors, including catering, accommodation, parking places, etc.). The tourist attractions in the neighbourhood include: a) the ecumenical tourist route around the reservoir of Ozieryan; b) the nature reserve Nietupa; c) numerous vantage points, like, e.g. Kosmata Góra.

In order to ensure the high quality of the services offered, the Religious Community introduced a system of certification (referencing) for facilities offering hospitality services, tourist products, souvenirs, etc. within the framework of the project.
Figure 3.1. Kruszyniany location

Source: http://bi.gazeta.pl/im/0/2452/m2452980.jpg

Figure 3.2. Kruszyniany wooden Mosque

Source: Photo by the author
4. Implementation

4.1 The process of project design and planning

The project can be broken down into six phases: 1) Preparation of the prerequisites for the project and the feasibility study for the purposes of the application to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); 2) Filing of the required documentation for evaluation; 3) Signing of the contract for the financing of the project; 4) Realisation of the project, together with final financial clearing; 5) Finalisation of the project, along with filing of the final payment application; 6) project persistence phase.

The project was initiated by the applicant – the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany. The investment was proposed as a response to a market-generated need. A growing tourist traffic is observed in Kruszyniany, related to the existing, and functioning, mosque and Muslim cemetery. The Centre was proposed to capitalise on this demand.

The project was also a response to the particular context in the region, including, in particular: a) limited tourist infrastructure, b) poor state of the existing infrastructure, c) weakly developed technical and social infrastructure within the rural areas of the region.

The decision to realise the project was taken as the possibility of taking advantage of the European funds arose. The conceptual work on the project was started alongside the announcement of the Regional Operational Program for the Province of Podlaskie for the years 2007-2013 (including the measure 3.1 “Development of tourist attractiveness of the region”, into which the idea of the Centre in Kruszyniany fitted well).

Selection process

The choice of the project for realisation was through a competitive procedure (Table 4.1). The calls were announced by the Government of the Region of Podlaskie for the particular Measurement of the Regional Operational Program 2007-2013. The Project was selected through the competition procedure “closed competition” (applications could be filed within a strictly defined period of time and within a well-defined amount of money). Applications, which were formally correct, passed over to the substantive evaluation stage, carried out by the Committee for Project Evaluation. Resulting from the work of this Committee was a list of projects recommended for financing. The decision on the choice of the projects was then taken by the Government of the Region in a special motion. Potential beneficiaries who were unsuccessful could file an appeal, if required.
Table 4.1 The application evaluation process for financial support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation stage</th>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Nature of the evaluation</th>
<th>Evaluating body</th>
<th>Entitlement of the applicant during the evaluation process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Administrative compliance</td>
<td>Yes/no/not applicable</td>
<td>Employees of the Managing Authority (MA)</td>
<td>Possibility to improve and complete the application to call MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance with rules of action/competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive</td>
<td>Technical general allowing</td>
<td>Grading points</td>
<td>Project evaluation committee (PEC)</td>
<td>Possibility to provide explanations to the call of PEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical special allowing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical detailed (differentiating criteria)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The evaluation of the application concerned, in particular, the following issues:

- Assessment of the importance of the project: i.e. the scope of impact of the project.
- Assessment of demand: i.e. the correctness and likelihood of the results from the analyses of the current and (first of all) future demand for service offered by the institution in question.
- Assessment of the economic and financial analysis: i.e. the demonstration in quantitative terms (with the use of indicators of economic analysis), as well as in qualitative terms, of the benefits and costs of a socio-economic character, generated by the project. The indicators of economic analysis, provided by the beneficiary, showed the values that constituted the evidence for the positive impact of the project from a socio-economic standpoint.
- Assessment of the option analysis: i.e. the options of realisation of the project, which were analysed in the document, including the abandonment option, the “minimum” option, and two alternative investment options. The beneficiary demonstrated that the project was the best among in terms of feasible solutions.
- Assessment of sustainability of the project: i.e. functioning of the project after termination.
- Assessment of the owners’ experience and skills for the realisation of the project.

The project would not have been established without the support from the EU.

4.2 Management, monitoring and evaluation system of the project

The project is managed by the Chairman of the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany. All important decisions are made by the Board of the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany. The standard of the construction works is controlled by the construction supervision inspector. The Steering Committee is organised by the Board of the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany, composed of five persons. During the implementation of the project, systematic meetings are being organised every week.

The Steering Committee of the project will be functioning over the period of the project and for five years after the project is complete.

The construction was facilitated by the present Head of the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany, who had worked before as the Chairman of a large Housing Cooperative in Białystok, and so had similar expertise in construction.
management.

The management of the project, including the financial control and its supervision, is carried out with full observation of the stipulations contained in the signed contract on financing and the “Instruction on the eligibility of the expenses in the framework of the Regional Operational Program of the Province of Podlaskie for the years 2007-2013”.

For the duration of the construction works during which construction supervision inspectors are employed, systematic meetings are held, at which current decisions are being taken and which are meant to ensure the effective course of the project realisation.

Monitoring

The project is monitored at various levels, including by the Marshal’s Office in the form of accounting and finance in payment applications, the Superintendent of Investor in the range of material and financial scope and by the Board of Community in the form of construction site - the material scope.

Evaluation

The progress of work has been monitored by representatives of the Board of the Muslim community on a weekly basis. The approved schedule, expenditures and work quality are also analysed.

After the completion of the project, the indicators of project results will be monitored on a quarterly basis. The direction and the effects of this monitoring will be presented in the reports on the realisation of the project. The project will be evaluated from the point of view of the fulfilment of its functions. Tourist traffic will be observed, as well as the appearance of the new products.

Relevant targets were set during the document preparation for the project acceptance.

Funds

The total budget of the project amount is EUR 1.3 million, with an ERDF contribution of EUR 0.85 million (67%), a national budget contribution of EUR 0.061 million from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (4.8%), and private contributions of EUR 0.35 million (28%).

4.3 Governance arrangements of the project

No partners are involved in the project. The beneficiary is responsible for the correct realisation of the project, from the stage of applying for the ERDF grant, to the realisation of the project, to its financial clearing and auditing, as well as in the phase of securing the sustainability of the project outcomes.

4.4 Innovative elements and novel approaches to implementation

The means for realisation of this project were sought outside of Poland. A subsidy was sought in the Arab countries, and some funding was obtained from the government of Kuwait.
4.5 Key implementation obstacles and problem-solving practices

The project started with a significant delay against the dates of realisation set out in the contract for financing support. The beneficiary could not start delivery on time, as they had not secured their own financial contribution for the project. The beneficiary therefore asked for an extension to the realisation of the project until September 22nd, 2015. The Managing Institution of the Regional Operational Programme for the Province of Podlaskie acknowledged the explanations provided by the beneficiary, and consented to this extension. After significant effort, the first tranche of external support from the Government of Kuwait was obtained.

In the opinion of the beneficiary, the main problem in the realisation of the project was the unhelpful attitude of the central authorities regarding the securing of the required national contribution. Competitions were organised by the Ministry of Culture, meant to select projects for supporting this contribution. The Muslim Community in Kruszyniany has lost three times in these competitions, mainly to the advantage of large projects from other, wealthier parts of the country. It was necessary to score 70 points (out of a total of 100) in order to gain the support. In one of the attempts of obtaining this financial support, the Muslim Community obtained 69.8 points.

In addition, as of today, the Government of Kuwait has not yet transferred the entire amount of the financial contribution, which they are under obligation to provide. The beneficiary remains in constant contact with the Embassy of Kuwait in Warsaw, and cultural differences are believed to be obscuring the correct way to proceed, and different cultural emphasis placed on deadlines.
5. Key results

The following indicators will be achieved in the project:

**Table 5.1. Targets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Measure number/year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product indicator</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of constructed tourist and recreation facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result indicator</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of people using the tourist products</td>
<td>14,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of foreign tourists visiting the region</td>
<td>993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of created/developed tourist products</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of jobs created (FTE)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data from Regional Operational Program, Managing Institution

The planned system for booking guide services (including foreign language guides) via the established active website of the Centre for Muslim Education and Culture of Polish Tatars in Kruszyniany has been established. This system, through the verified sales of tickets, along with guide reservations, will allow for precise assessment of the tourist traffic in Kruszyniany, with classification into domestic and foreign tourists. The number and make up of tourists participating in cultural events associated with religious feasts or other traditional occasions, will however only be possible to be estimated, as the Centre does not intend to introduce tickets for this kind of events.

The primary success of the project is the modification and significant modernisation of the tourist offer in the locality of Kruszyniany. Thereby, the project will contribute to an increase in competitiveness and attractiveness of the tourist sector in the province of Podlaskie as a whole.

Since the project is still being realised it cannot yet be stated whether it was cost-effective.
6. Sustainability and transferability

6.1 Sustainability

Without the contribution of means from the ERDF and other public means, the project would not have been realised. It may have been realised or extended with support from means provided by alternative or additional source – for instance from Muslim countries, in the form of subsidies or donations.

The Center will be a non-profit institution, and the means to guarantee the financial stability of the project from the start of its functioning, shall be secured by the Muslim Religious Community in Kruszyniany itself.

6.2 Transferability

The potential of the project is clearly high, and the assessment of this project, based on a number of highly differentiated criteria, is very positive. The costs of its realisation are relatively low, and the project ought to obtain sufficient financial and personnel support at the regional, or even national level.

However, leaving the implementation of a complex project to a small group of people inexperienced in this domain, acting alone, may give rise to significant difficulties in the realisation of the project and discourage others from undertaking new initiatives.

In order to secure a high quality of the services, a system of certification (referencing) for facilities offering hospitality services, tourist products, souvenirs has been created, which represents an appropriate and innovative initiative.

Endowing the facilities with a multi-functional character is likely to ensure their economic sustainability, as it enables full use of the facility over the entire year.

Attention ought also to be paid to the possibility of a broadening of the target groups (tourists, scientists, students, children – “the green schools”, faithful of definite religious denominations) to capitalise on this use.
7. Lessons learnt

The project is being implemented by a small association, which is probably too small to cope with the required levels of organisation and financial requirements (e.g. contribution of their own capital). This is the key source of problems resulting in delays, even though the project has not given rise to controversies.
In the future, in similar situations, the Managing Institution (in this case – the Province Marshall’s Office) should be able to predict the problems with the fulfilment of the schedule, and act so as to prevent such failures. An effective mechanism of support for such initiatives, functioning on the national level, was lacking. In spite of the relatively small overall costs, there have been persistent problems with the beneficiary’s own contribution. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage granted the tranches of support annually, so funds would not be available after December 31st, and the beneficiary would have to reapply. There was no support from the province, which was the consequence of tight financial constraints (more so than in other regions of Poland).

In effect, the beneficiary’s own contribution is covered by foreign sources. Before support from Kuwait was obtained, one of the potential forms of support from the Middle East was put to question by the Polish Foreign Office.

The project has a unique character, linking religious elements with economic aspects. At the same time, it is a difficult project, because it is being implemented authentically by the local ethnic-religious community, which has limited financial and staff capacities.

The key lesson associated with this project is therefore a need for greater flexibility around the contribution of project beneficiaries, in order to allow for bottom-up/grass roots projects such as this to be able to benefit from the fund. Projects, which aim at the protection of local cultural heritage, and whose beneficiaries are small local associations and communities, of a non-profit character, should not be treated in this respect in the same manner as larger entities, especially commercial ones (e.g. hotel owners). The high value of the own contribution which is required significantly reduces the chances of being able to secure ERDF funding for such smaller non-profit entities. In the opinion of the beneficiary, the condition for the success of similar projects in the future is, alternatively:

- To decrease the required own contribution, or
- To establish a special financial support mechanism at the national level.
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