



Leszno Local Action Plan

RUnUP Thematic Network

AN URBACT II PROJECT



Connecting cities
Building successes



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Foreword

The Municipality of Leszno is constantly seeking new mechanisms supporting the growth of local economy and its transition to knowledge based economy. One of the crucial instruments necessary to achieve that is cooperation among local authorities, business and science.

Taking advantage of the potential of recently established universities in Leszno has become a great challenge for Leszno. That is why from November 2008 to May 2011, together with eight other European cities, Leszno participated in the The Role of Universities for Economic Development in Urban Poles – RUnUP project, which was mainly (80%) financed by the URBACT II European programme. Besides Leszno, the other medium-sized cities taking part in the project were from the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sweden and Greece. The Municipality of Gateshead took up the leading role.

Participation in the RUnUP project strengthened cooperation within the triple helix structure. The Local Support Group, which was formed as part of the project, met regularly, shared knowledge and experience, participated in study visits and thematic conferences, all of which contributed to better understanding of best practice in many European cities of similar size. The group developed key strategic documents as basis for this Local Action Plan (LAP). The plan consists of a set of actions, which will lead to the desired changes in the city's economy. The major success of the project is its impact on the policy of Leszno. Many actions described in the Local Action Plan are already being implemented with EU funds.

The conclusion of the RUnUP project with the developed Local Action Plan does not mean the end of cooperation within the triple helix structure. A new and more challenging stage begins without the support of the project; the stage of monitoring the progress of works and achieved results. This means that the Local Support Group will continue its hard work bearing in mind that only through the sharing of knowledge and experience as well as constructive discussion can we ensure sustainable economic growth in the city.



Tomasz Malepszy
President of Leszno

Executive Summary

In striving for sustainable economic growth, the Municipality of Leszno faces new challenges posed by global economy. In order to retain its competitive position it must stand up to problems of the local business community and create conditions for further transition of its economy to knowledge based economy.

These main issues have been addressed by the The Role of Universities for Economic Development in Urban Poles– RUnUP project. The project's result is the Local Action Plan developed on the basis of the Development Strategy for Leszno through cooperation within the triple helix structure. During the project the key role was played by the Local Support Group appointed by the President of Leszno.

The Group consisted of representatives of local and regional authorities, universities, business support organizations and the business community. In the course of creating the LAP the Group carried out various activities specified in the project. Joint efforts led to the development of the diagnosis of the status of local economy as basis for strategic documents. Members of the Group familiarised themselves with experience of other European towns aimed at building knowledge based economies by participating in study visits, thematic conferences and internships as well as meetings organized in Leszno.

All the gathered experience and knowledge as well as cooperation of various actors within the triple helix structure led to the development of a coherent and comprehensive Local Action Plan whose delivery will ensure effective transition of local economy to a knowledge based economy and consequently contribute to economic success of the town and its inhabitants.

This document presents the steps taken to formulate the Local Action Plan. The social and economic conditions of the development of Leszno have been analysed with particular emphasis on the role of universities in further economic growth of the town. Project activities underlying the strategic framework of the Plan have been described together with the methodology of forming as well as working principles of Leszno's Local Support Group.

Finally, the document presents a detailed description of all actions and projects included in the Local Action Plan. In the last part the document outlines RUnUP project conclusions for Leszno. Their implementation will ensure the effectiveness of the Local Action Plan's impact on local economy.

Introduction

In the present globalised economy large cities are considered to be the economic growth poles. As science and academic centres with financial institutions and specialist services, big cities create the right conditions for the development of knowledge based economy guaranteeing economic success.

However, economic ties with the cities' region weaken and sometimes even cease to exist. They are replaced with ties with other large cities on a continental or world scale. The role of the region including smaller cities becomes limited to a residential or recreational function for the large city residents.

Medium-sized cities do not want to succumb to their diminishing economic significance; they have their own aspirations and seek ways of competing with large cities for new residents, retaining and developing the existing ones and attracting new businesses.

Changes taking place in world economy seem to be creating new opportunities also for medium-sized cities, which can offer a combination of three especially beneficial conditions for running business i.e. convenient accessibility, attractive living and working conditions and an innovation centre.

The "Role of Universities for Economic Development in Urban Poles – RUnUP" project dealt with methods of utilising the interaction among science, business and the public sector ("triple helix structure") to support entrepreneurship and innovation of economy in medium-sized cities. The goals of the project were:

- Understanding economic transformation and the innovation management process.
- Strengthening the role of universities and local authorities in supporting network ties and raising competences.
- Strengthening cooperation within the triple helix structure in order to improve the flow of knowledge and technology transfer.
- Creating appropriate conditions to stimulate knowledge based economy.

The above aims were achieved thanks to a range of actions stipulated in the project: diagnosis of the status of transformation of local economy, developing the economic development Strategy for Leszno and other strategic documents, sharing information and knowledge among representatives of particular links in the triple helix structure i.e. science, business and the public sector, experiencing best practices from European cities by participating in study visits, conferences, internships and training.

Besides Leszno, eight other European cities participated in the project: Gateshead in the United Kingdom, Potsdam in Germany, Barakaldo in Spain, Agueda in Portugal, Dunkirk in France, Solna in Sweden, Campobasso in Italy and Patras in Greece. All the partners worked on the same goals but in different circumstances.

Sharing experience deriving from project delivery and developing the Local Action Plan constituted extra added value of the project.

All the above actions helped Leszno's Local Support Group to develop the Local Action Plan for Leszno. Its definitive shape is a result of numerous analyses, workshops and discussions conducted by Leszno's Local Support Group and its appointed working teams.

Social and economic factors in the development of Leszno

Leszno is medium-sized city with a population of nearly sixty-five thousand people. The economic potential of the city is considerably limited. However, Leszno's location between two dynamically developing urban poles in western Poland - Poznan (80 km) and Wrocław (100 km) creates opportunities for the city and its businesses to take advantage of the potential of big cities and their markets. Unfortunately, there is a constant threat of losing young educated people, who often decide to settle down in large cities.



Since Poland introduced free market economy in 1989 and entered the European Union in 2004, Polish cities have undergone visible economic transformation. Big cities have experienced considerable deindustrialisation especially in terms of traditional industry. This has led to deindustrialization of medium-sized and small cities especially those that are situated in the vicinity of large urban poles or along important communication routes.

Also in terms of tertiarisation we have observed significant differentiation depending on the size of cities. In big cities we can observe development of higher class services – requiring high qualifications of employees, such as banking, finances, insurance, consultancy, telecommunications, science and technology. Whereas in medium-sized and small cities we have observed development of services of lower class, which do not require high qualifications of employees. These processes have been the main driving force of the development of Leszno in recent years.

Leszno's economy

The economy of the Municipality of Leszno has been characterised on basis of the number and structure of economic entities, structure of employment, business activity income as well as investment expenditure.

Economic entities

At the end of 2010 there were 8 806 economic entities registered in the REGON system. This number has been gradually growing since the 1990s. At that time there were only 132 businesses with foreign capital. In relation to similar cities in Poland, Leszno stands out with its high number of economic entities per number of residents.

The structure of the size of companies is quite typical for Polish cities. At the end of 2010 of the registered companies here, 94.1% were micro-companies employing up to 9 persons. Small companies constituted 4.7% and medium-sized ones 1.0%. Large companies, employing more than 250 people had only 0.2% share in the total number of registered companies in Leszno.

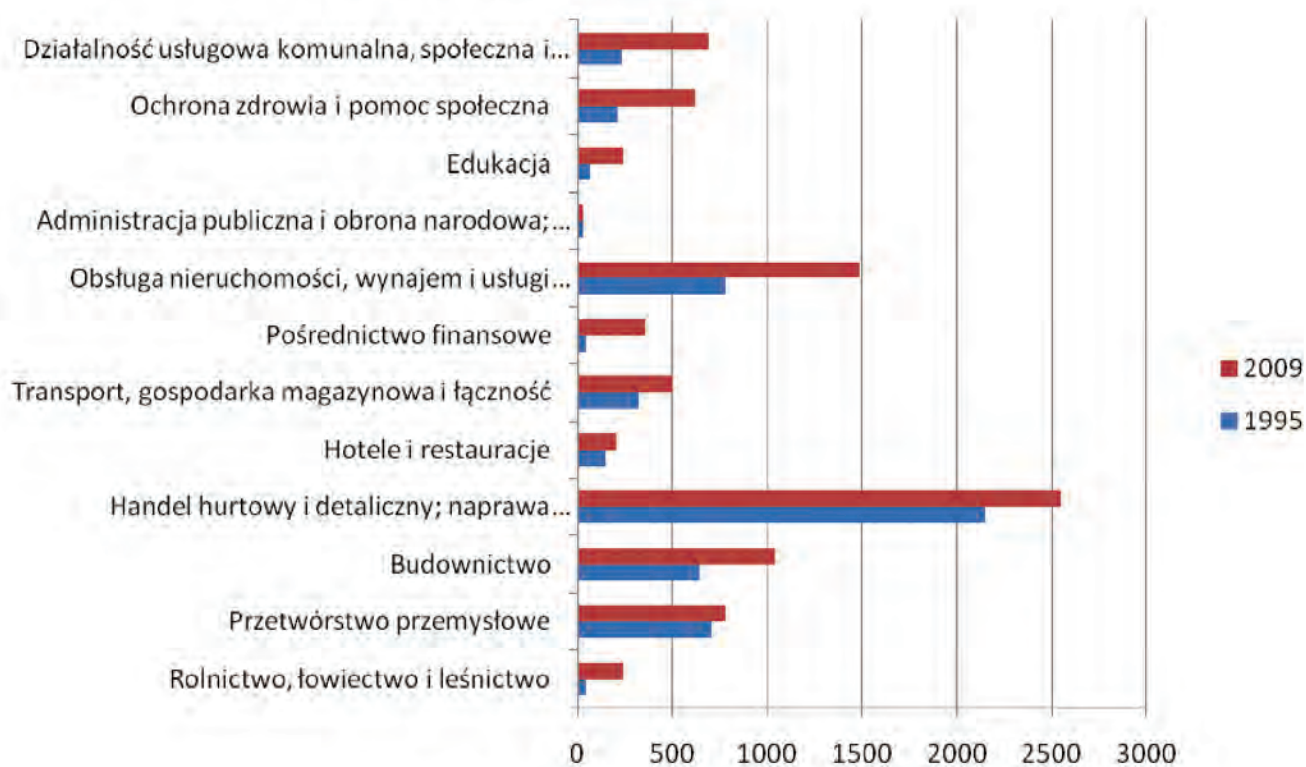
The number of micro-companies in Leszno is gradually rising. Whereas, in the last three years the number of small businesses (by 9%) and medium businesses (by 14%) has decreased, which might indicate their development problems.

In the sector structure of registered economic entities the following dominate: commerce and repairs (29%) and real estate agencies, renting and services connected with running business (17%). Construction (12%) occupies the third position and industry (9%) the fourth. In recent years we have seen the growth of services at the cost of a considerable decrease in commerce and repairs, also in industry and construction but to a lesser extent.

In the structure of Leszno's industry there is a considerable diversification of production branches. Among them, the dominating ones are those that are classified as traditional with low productivity. In December 2009 most industrial businesses were registered in the following sectors: production of finished metal goods, production of furniture, production of food and beverages and production of clothing and fur goods. The other sectors are: publishing, printing and reproduction of data carriers, production of rubber and plastic goods, production of medical, precision and optical instruments, clocks and watches and production of wood and wooden as well as cork products.

The biggest and the most well-known companies in Leszno are in the metal and machinery as well as vehicle sectors. (Metalplast LOB SA, Leszczyńska Fabryka Pomp Sp. z o.o., Spinko Sp. z o.o., SEWS Polska Sp. z o.o.), furniture sector (Zakłady Mechaniczno-Meblowe, "Meblomech" Sp. z o.o., Company with foreign capital Pol-Leim-Holz Sp. z o.o., Euroline Sp. z o.o.) and clothing sector ("Andante" Sp. z o.o., „Lespin"Sp. z o.o., "Leithäuser Polska" Sp. z o.o. Euro-Comfort Sp. z o.o.) as well as food sector ("Akwawit"-BRASCO S.A.).

This confirms that Leszno's industry is mainly based on sectors established in post-war years. The influx of foreign investors, mainly taking advantage of cheap labour, has not influenced any major changes in the structure of industry



In recent years there haven't been significant structural changes in Leszno's industry. There has only been a decrease in the number of businesses dealing with the production of clothing and fur goods as well as wood and wooden goods. A noticeable rise has been observed in the number of businesses dealing with food as well as rubber and plastic goods.

Figure 2. Comparison of the number of economic entities registered in Leszno in the years 1995 and 2009 according to the Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

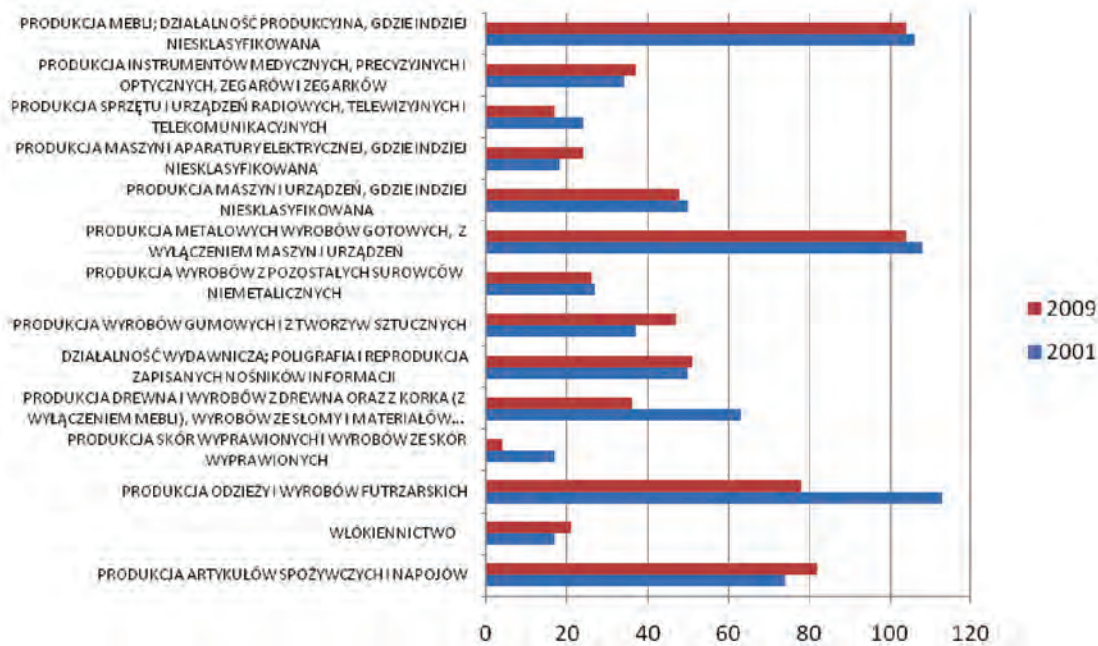


Figure 3. Number of registered companies in Leszno in the industrial sector in terms of important branches in the years 2001 and 2008.

Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

The observed structural changes in Leszno's economy confirm the phenomenon of tertiarisation and moving production industry, which does not require specialised qualifications, to medium-sized cities such as Leszno.

Employment

The number of employed persons was 22 517 at the end of 2009. This data only refers to economic entities employing more than nine persons and public sector employees. There is no data concerning businesses employing fewer than nine persons and they represent the biggest number of economic entities.

Among businesses employing more than nine persons the biggest number constitute production industry (35%) followed by commerce and vehicle equipment repairs (14%) and education (10%). The number of employees in Leszno's production industry was gradually rising in the years 2003–2008 followed by a sudden drop in 2009 and with the announced closing down of the SEWS Polska company in 2011 (laying off approx. 1000 people), further decrease should be expected.

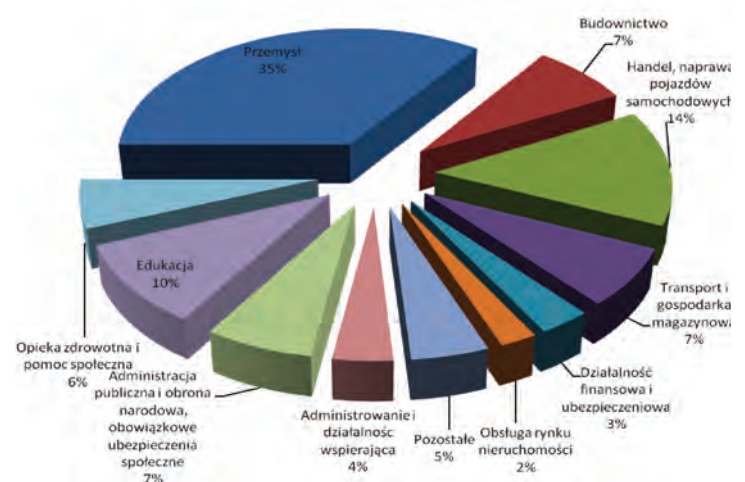


Figure 4. Employment structure in Leszno in 2009 in companies employing more than nine persons and public sector entities according to the actual work place.

Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

Income generated by business

Since there are no data concerning GDP or added value for economic entities located in Leszno, which could illustrate the status of innovation of local economy, the total income of businesses was analysed. In the years 2000–2008 the income was gradually rising. In 2009 there was a noticeable drop by 36.5% in relation to the previous year and the value was lower than in 2004.

In 2008 the total income was dominated by production industry (58%), however, it was lower than in the previous years. The following sectors were wholesale and retail trade (27%) and construction (8%). Comparison of the income structure in the years 2000 and 2008 shows a significant shift towards production industry. In 2008 production industry income was almost twice as much as commercial income. Other sectors remained more or less on the same level.

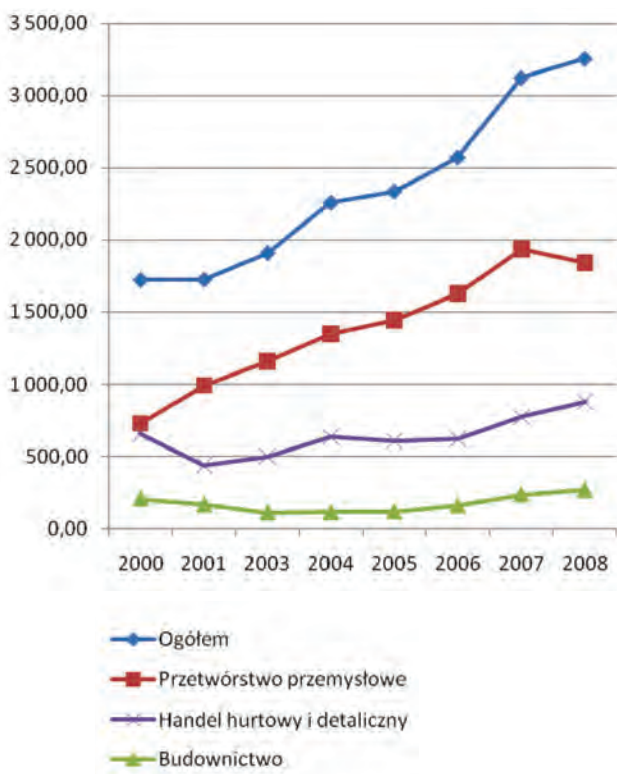


Figure 5. Total income and income of important sectors: industrial processing, wholesale and retail trade and construction in Leszno in million zloty

Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

The rise in significance of production industry in Leszno's economy is also confirmed by analysis of production sold in industry. In the years 2002–2007 we observed an almost double rise in value rate. Unfortunately in the following years there was a sudden fall to the level of 2004–2005. This is a consequence of the global crisis, which is especially felt in the vehicle industry, with which Leszno's production industry is closely connected.

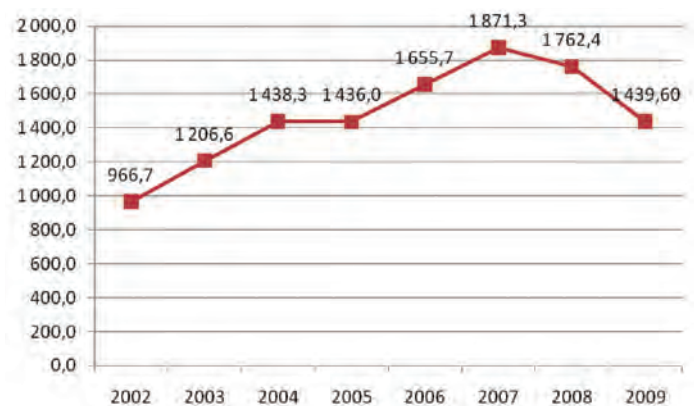


Figure 6. Total sold production in industry in million zloty, Leszno
Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

Investment expenditures

The status of local economy illustrates the level of investment expenditures of Leszno's companies. Between 2001 and 2006 there was a considerable growth in investment. In the next year its value fell slightly to rise in the following year above the level of 2005. This was probably caused by entrepreneurs' anticipation of acquiring European Union funds. In 2007 many calls of proposals for EU funds were announced and the time of projects' delivery commenced in 2008.

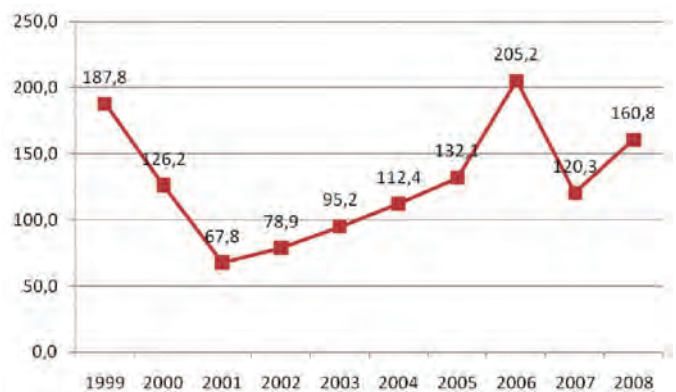


Figure 7. Total investment expenditures in Leszno's companies in million zloty
Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

Sector analysis of investment expenditure indicates the dominating role of production industry and construction. In the peak year for investment – 2006 investment expenditure in production industry and construction constituted 77% of the total investment expenditure in Leszno's enterprises.

The data presented above illustrate the investment situation in companies employing more than nine persons. In 2006 the Town Office of Leszno conducted a survey among randomly selected companies. Out of the 163 companies, 47% constituted businesses employing fewer than nine persons. These results confirmed conclusions deriving from the above statistical data. The biggest investors were small and large companies, which indicated production as their main activity.

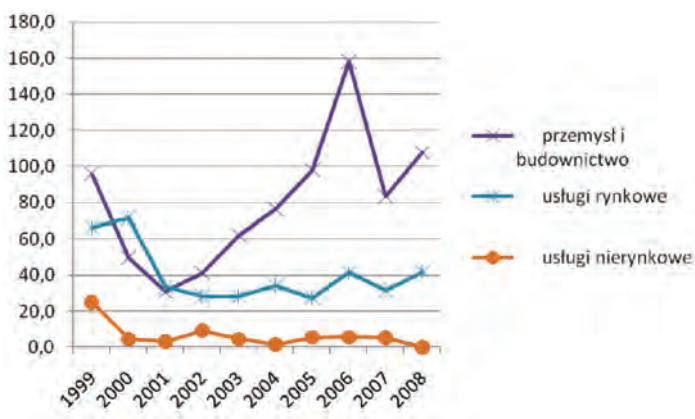


Figure 8. Investment expenditures in Leszno's companies in selected economy sectors in million zloty

Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

Summing up structural changes in Leszno's economy in recent years it is visible that both in terms of number of companies as well as employment the dominating sectors are services and commerce.

The position of production industry in the city's economy is still significant. With a considerably small number of economic entities registered in this sector, they provide 35% of employment in the category of companies ranging from small to large. Moreover, considerable income and value of sold production in industry as well as investment expenditure in production industry undoubtedly constitute the driving force of development in the services and commerce sector of the city.

Elements of knowledge based economy in Leszno's economy

Technology transfer and innovation

On basis of statistical data we can identify the following categories of economic activity: companies of high, medium-high, medium-low and low technology. In Leszno, only 10% of all registered companies fall into any of these categories. Among them, more than half (55%) of the economic entities are classified as companies of low technology. The number of high technology businesses is not only low (9%) but also much lower in comparison to 2005. In the last four years the number of medium-low and medium-high technology businesses slightly increased.

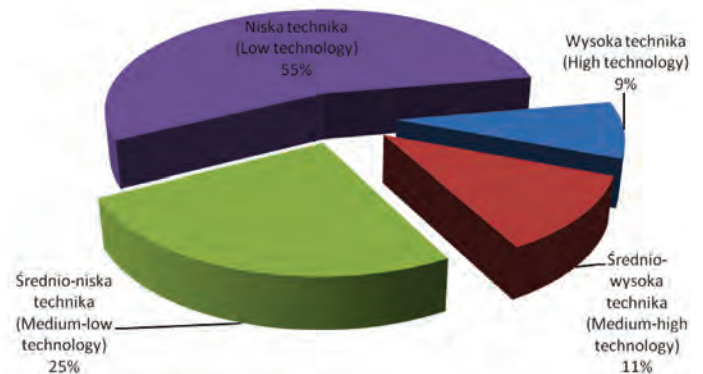


Figure 9. Economic entities according to the content of research and development in Leszno in 2009

Source: Own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data

In Leszno there are three universities and they are the only science and research institutions. A survey conducted in Leszno's business community in 2006 among 163 entrepreneurs representing companies of various size and sectors, showed that only 7% of interviewees had a research and development department.

Available statistical data concerning transfer of New Technologies in industrial companies employing more than 49 people show that in the years 1996-2007 only five licences were bought and only 10 research papers were commissioned.

Positive changes have been noted in the area of automation of production processes. In the years 1996–2007 we observed a rise in the number of computer controlled automated production lines and processing centres, which partially replaced robots and industrial manipulators. There was also a significant increase in the number of computers for controlling and regulating technological processes.

On the basis of the above data, the level of innovation of large and medium industrial companies in Leszno needs to be described as low.

Another aspect of the above mentioned survey was innovation activity of Leszno's enterprises in 2006. On basis of the collected data, it was concluded that almost half of the interviewed companies (48.5%) introduced a new product or service in the last three years. They were mostly (79 companies) production companies and those employing more than nine people. The introduced innovation was most often a novelty on regional (50%) or national (38%) scale. Only eight companies (12%) described their new product or service as a novelty on international scale.

The new products or services were mostly (42%) created outside the company. 29% of companies introduced the product by themselves and the same number did it in cooperation with other enterprises.

Almost 63% of companies declared that they had introduced innovation processes in the previous three months. They were mostly created by the company itself (35%). Only 29% of companies bought a licence and 26% of innovations were created outside the company.

Supporting innovation

An important factor influencing the growth of innovation is the presence of organizational support for this sort of activity. In the years 2004–2007 such a function was played by the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer, whose establishment was part of the Regional Innovation Strategy.

The Centre was formed in 2004 on the initiative of the Municipality of Leszno together with the Vocational State Higher School as a limited liability company. The company was to provide consultancy, promotional and educational services in the area of innovation and technology transfer. Its task was to create a bridge between small and medium companies in Leszno and the region and the research and development sector in the area of disseminating and implementing innovation and new technologies.

The company's activity was to contribute to a better understanding of local economy's innovation needs and improving its competitiveness as well as commercializing scientific solutions of local universities.

In 2004–2006 the Centre provided support to 324 companies in the Leszno subregion, which implemented 137 innovations. Entrepreneurs received 1057 hours of free advice and 28 training sessions, conferences and seminars, which were attended by 730 participants. Two surveys diagnosing innovation needs of companies were carried out and two data bases were created – innovation needs base and R&D centres' offer base.

The survey carried out among the Centre's beneficiaries indicated that there is a need to continue support in the area of new product development and its commercialisation as well as in the area of innovation of processes. Both in consultancy as well as training considerable needs were indicated to improve management skills

At present the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer has significantly limited the range of services due to a number of reasons.

Innovation in Leszno's enterprises described both in terms of available data for industry as well as survey results, continues to show a very low level. The number of companies introducing product and process innovation is still relatively low. Innovations are mostly a novelty on regional scale and the process changes mainly concern computerisation of enterprises.

In spite of certain achievements of the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer, the results are far insufficient and the present restriction of services will obviously not influence the local market in a positive way. Raising innovation in enterprises, not only in Leszno, requires coordinated actions on national and regional level, which in a longer timescale may bring about the expected results.

Comparison of the status of Leszno's economy with Baseline Study

The Baseline Study prepared for the needs of the RUnUP Project by the leading expert, Dr Clive Winters from Coventry University Enterprises, was based on data available in 2007. Then the structure of Leszno's enterprises indicated the dominating role of services and commerce complemented by the construction and production industry sectors.

On the other hand, production industry with fewer economic entities employed a considerable number of Leszno's residents. This share dropped by two percentage points but still employees of production industry, in businesses employing more than nine persons, constitute the biggest group of the employed (35%). It is traditional industry with low level of innovation in the metal and machinery, furniture, clothing and food sectors.

In comparison to 2008 the rate of unemployment has risen. The national rate increased by 3.6 percentage points and the Leszno rate increased by 3.7 percentage points.

In the Baseline Study for Leszno, the basis to formulate key challenges for the town was the low level of productivity of local economy based on traditional industry and lack of sufficient support for business from Leszno's universities.

According to the project expert, the growth of Leszno's economy, especially innovation in Leszno's companies can only happen through modernising the existing industrial base and establishing new enterprises as well as creating new relations between the local government and business support organizations. The role of universities must change; they cannot restrict themselves to education only.

There are other opportunities such as consultancy services, providing best practices, preparing technological or sector foresights and creating new branches of economy by supporting academic entrepreneurship. Assistance in these pursuits can be provided by the Poznan Science and Technology Park.

The Baseline Study indicated lack of real cooperation among Business Support Organizations operating in Leszno. Competing on a small market with very low potential (2-4 employees), they partly duplicate one another's services instead of striving for higher specialization and raising standards of services. The result is lack of real transfer of knowledge and supporting innovation in companies.

This led to the identification of two main challenges, whose realisation would help the city benefit from knowledge based economy:

1. Describing the transformation status of local economy – full identification of local economy's needs would ensure its more effective support in agreement with local partners.
2. Understanding the mechanism of supporting economic transformation by partners based on knowledge. This will help to create deeper and more target-focused relations among local authorities, business support organizations and higher education schools as well as universities and R&D institutions in Wielkopolska.

The above challenges were included in analyses carried out in the preparation phase of the Regional Innovation Strategy – "Innovative Wielkopolska".

Strategic factors

The Municipality of Leszno agreed on its first development Strategy in 1997, as one of the first cities of this size in Poland. Changing circumstances, especially in the transforming Polish economy and membership in European Union made it necessary to adapt the strategy to new challenges and opportunities facing the city.

According to the resolution passed by the City Council of Leszno, the following vision has been adopted for the city:

Leszno is a medium-sized city offering its residents excellent conditions for living and good work places, especially in knowledge based economy and it is also the services centre for the region with a wide offer in the area commerce, finances, science and higher education, education, culture, information, recreation and sport.

In the current development Strategy for Leszno, the following mission has been adopted:

Leszno is a city, whose authorities, economic entities, social organizations and residents continue the Wielkopolska traditions in conditions of rising competitiveness, cooperate with one another and with external organizations in the strive for better use of local resources, opportunities resulting from the size and location of the city in order to raise its attractiveness, standard of living and economic development.

The mission should be accomplished by achieving three goals focusing on local economy, living standards and building the position of Leszno beyond its local significance. These goals are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Goals in the development Strategy for Leszno.

Goal	Content
1	Modernising local economy and attracting innovative investments to build a lasting sustainable economic growth.
2	Improving living standards by improving public services and creating conditions for initiatives aimed at meeting needs of local communities.
3	Building the position of the city with significance beyond the local level as a centre of services for the surrounding sub-region.

Each of these goals has a programme with key projects and actions. Delivery of goal 1 concerned with local economy will be done through three programmes: New investments, Work and Innovative Economy. The first programme focuses on improving the technical infrastructure: building roads to connect investment zones, fitting up these zones and creating beneficial conditions for investors as well as investment promotional offer.

The “Work” programme is to create an attractive job offer for the residents, adapting education content to the needs of local economy, preventing unemployment. The last programme contains elements of support for Leszno’s companies especially in the area of their competitiveness and innovation including incubation of newly established businesses.

The development strategy for Leszno formed basis for RUnUP analyses of specialized strategies, including the economic development strategy, attracting and retaining talents, investors and brand strategy.

Leszno’s strategic aspirations match the development Strategy for Wielkopolska and the new Regional Innovation Strategy.

Diagnosis of the status of economic transformation of Leszno

Within the framework of the project and in accordance with suggestions in the Baseline Study, diagnosis of the status of local economy transformation was carried out.

The working team appointed by the Local Support Group prepared and submitted a document entitled “Diagnosis of the status of economic transformation of Leszno” .

Its aim was to diagnose the status of economy especially in relation to the level of development of knowledge based economy and identify the most promising sectors, which may become the driving force of local economy and trade mark of the city.

The diagnosis was also to answer the question concerning the needs and possibilities of companies in terms of cooperation and support from the municipality, universities, and business support organisations. The following documents were used to prepare the Diagnosis:

- Baseline Study for Leszno prepared by Clive Winters
- Social and economic status of Leszno report – 2006
- Survey of Leszno's enterprises report – 2006
- Available statistical data

Moreover, in order to identify key sectors, the team members carried out a series of extended interviews with management staff of leading local companies. The aim was to identify weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and threats for some sectors in the city selected on basis of statistical data. The interviews constituted the base for analysis of the development potential of these sectors in Leszno's economy.

The evaluation of the status of economic transformation of Leszno confirmed the city's position as a services and industrial centre of the subregion. Industrial production is the pillar of the city's economy – this is indicated by the number of economic entities, income structure and investment expenditure as well as employment. The city's production industry is mostly based on traditional sectors with low added value.

Therefore, it would be desirable and realistic to further modernise this industry, develop innovative products and services in existing companies and establish new enterprises (locally and external investments).

Unfortunately, the diagnosis confirmed that expenditure on R&D or introducing new improved products and processes is very low as is the cooperation between companies and universities both in terms of educating future personnel as well as R&D works. The market of specialist consultancy (connected with technologies or management) of universities for companies practically does not exist.

Many companies – including the small ones – are based on a long lasting tradition of the sector and entrepreneurship in the city. Recent years' indicators of Leszno's economy (growth of the number of enterprises, employment, income) show its general good condition and stable growth. On the other hand, closer analysis reveals the economy's susceptibility to fluctuations in economy cycles and competitiveness posed by countries with cheaper labour. The latter is connected with the ease of duplicating similar production due to the universality of used technologies and offered products.

At the same time, a great need exists to strengthen skills and qualifications of human capital in companies, increase awareness and skills of introducing innovations, cooperation with other companies, universities and smooth out barriers preventing access to financing innovation activity.

In the diagnosis the following needs and problems were identified as the most important:

- Low level of innovative culture of enterprises and the need to raise the skills of managing personnel in enterprises, particularly the small ones, related to various aspects of management: creation and implementation of development strategies, motivation and management of human resources, internal processes, and marketing and sales, etc.
- Insufficient cooperation between enterprises within a given branch of industry. There is a potential for cooperation within the branch, and often such cooperation is spontaneously undertaken by the companies. However, it is done on occasional basis, and the scale of cooperation is too low. There are no economic forums within given branches of industry.
- Little connections between enterprises and universities, self-government and business support organizations. Little research and development works are conducted by universities for the enterprises; the cooperation in the field of education or consultancy services provided by universities to entrepreneurs is non-existent. There is an opportunity to strengthen the cooperation to create permanent networks of connections and to involve partners from universities and business support organizations.

- Problems with the recruitment of properly prepared and educated personnel by entrepreneurs. On the one hand, the existing branches of industry are not reflected in the educational faculties offered by universities and secondary schools, and, on the other hand, many university and secondary school students take up faculties with low potential of future employment. There are no mechanisms of cooperation between schools and enterprises that would help to adapt education to economy's needs. On the other hand, there are no information campaigns for future students and graduates that would enable them to choose a profession or educational faculty providing real opportunities of employment. What is also needed is to raise the practical skills of secondary school and university students in the educational process. Employers complain about gaps in their employees' competences, skills and attitudes.
- Need to develop training and internship programmes in cooperation with schools and enterprises. The current programmes are insufficient in terms of both quantity and quality, and frequently "student in the company = problem" due to insufficient subject-matter preparation and mentoring as well as poor training or internship supervision by both parties (university and enterprise).
- Need for new entrepreneurs. The economy will require the constant establishment of new economic entities, and thus it will be vital to develop entrepreneurial attitudes and business set-up and running skills with students as special investment in the educated human resources of the future and the general public.
- Need to provide infrastructure and conditions for the companies' development, such as communication accessibility, space to run the companies (incubator, economic zones), access to information and consultancy or training services.
- No consolidation and transparency of the offer addressed to enterprises and sufficient cooperation on the part of business support institutions and municipal offices. Such cooperation exists, and the entities providing offer to the entrepreneurs are familiar with one another's activity, but for the recipients the utilisation of these institutions' services is complicated and they often feel confused by the sheer jungle of information.

During workshop discussions members of the Local Support Group agreed that the future Local Action Plan must be based on the existing economy, traditions and strengths of existing companies and, on the other hand, it must create conditions for the city to open up to all kinds of innovations including those of newly established enterprises in new sectors.

In the course of deepened analysis of gathered data, interviews with representatives of various sectors in Leszno and discussions of the Local Support Group, three key sectors were identified for the city. These sectors are characterized by a high share in the economy (employment, number of economic entities, income); they have grounded traditions and position on the market and constitute development potential according to representatives of these sectors. They are the following:

- Metal and machinery sector – it has a long tradition and stable position in the city's economy, it is represented by many small companies (including micro) with a small share of medium companies and a few large companies.
- Construction sector – it faces great opportunities connected with expected road investments, construction and housing construction investments. This sector includes a large number of companies of various specialisations and sizes.
- Food sector – it has a long tradition and development potential. At present they are mainly small enterprises with a small scale of activity, offering their products mainly on the local and regional market. These companies represent different branches of food and beverages production and they are dispersed. At present there are no activities to consolidate the sector or attempts to promote brands beyond the local level.

The role of universities in Leszno

The role of universities in supporting innovation and economic development of Leszno's local economy is the key issue in relation to actions of the RUnUP thematic network. On regional level the scientific potential of Wielkopolska is strong and significant on national scale, however, it is mostly concentrated in Poznan.

In Wielkopolska there are 28 higher education institutions and 19 of them are located in Poznan. Poznan is also the seat of the Polish Academy of Science, which has 24 centres and 27 branches and research institutions.

Their work mainly focuses on agriculture and forestry, wood technology, natural fibre, metal processing, applied chemistry and installation technology. In Wielkopolska there are over 155000 students; this number has doubled since the early 1990s. The academic staff comprises 6700 people and research staff consists of 1500 people.

The rising interest in higher education since the 1990s, has been a stimulus to establish new private schools functioning alongside reputed state universities. In Leszno there are three higher education schools: the Jan Amos Komenski Higher Vocational State School, Stanisław Leszczyński Higher School of Humanities and Higher School of Marketing and Management.

The number of students in the academic year 2009/2010 was 6217. This number has been falling for the last three years due to a decrease in birth rate in the beginning of the 1990s. In comparison to other cities of similar size in Wielkopolska, Leszno boasts the biggest number of students per the number of residents. The vicinity of academic centres in Poznan and Wrocław ensures direct contact with their scientific potential and academic facilities. However, many graduates from big city universities never return to Leszno.

Jan Amos Komenski Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, which was established on 1 July 1999, had the following faculties in the academic year 2010/2011:

1. Electromechanics
2. Mechanics and construction of machines
3. Production and management in agriculture
4. Physical education
5. Pedagogy
6. Music
7. Tourism and recreation
8. Economics

New faculties will be opened soon: computer science, nursing, and physiotherapy.

The university signed a cooperation agreement with Poznan universities: the Poznan Polytechnic, Cieszkowski University of Life Sciences in Poznan and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

The Higher Vocational State School offers full-time studies and part-time studies. Graduates earn a bachelor's or engineering degree, which enables them to start a job career or continue their master's degree studies. In the academic year 2009/2010 the number of students at the university was 3156.

The research profile comprises the following fields: educational studies, physical education, sport, tourism and recreation, agriculture and management in agriculture, electroenergetics, computer science, and diagnostic testing of machines, economics and organization of small and medium companies, English as a foreign language methodology.

Higher School of Marketing and Management in Leszno has functioned since 1993. It was the first non-state university in Leszno. At present it offers bachelor's degree studies in the field of economics and management in six faculties:

1. Marketing and management
2. Managing finances in a company
3. Management in hotels and horse-riding recreation centres
4. Management in administration
5. Logistics management
6. Managing human resources

The university cooperates with universities in Poznan and Wrocław. The academic staff includes practitioners: bank and business managers, accountants, employees of the Tax Control Office, Tax Offices, Treasury Office and consultancy offices.

In the academic year 2009/2010 there were 388 students in total at Higher School of Marketing and Management.

Stanisław Leszczyński Higher School of Humanities in Leszno was established in 2001. It is a university that can offer bachelor's degree studies and master's degree supplementary studies; full-time and part-time. At present there are five faculties:

1. Pedagogy
2. Sociology
3. Social work
4. National security
5. Cosmetology

A new faculty will be opened soon – dietetics. Most of the teaching staff employed in the Higher School of Humanities are academic teachers from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. In the academic year 2009/2010 there were 2441 students at the university.

Out of the three described universities, the Higher Vocational State School has the biggest number of students and its educational offer is best suited to the needs of local economy.

However, there are still too many students in the faculties of pedagogy and physical education, which means that they will not be able to find attractive jobs on the local market.

The Higher School of Humanities occupies the second position in respect of the number of students. This university has a high development potential, however, the number of future teachers studying here exceeds the possibilities of the local job market. It would be much more beneficial for Leszno and the sub-region if the university adapted its educational offer to the needs of local economy, at the same time retaining its profile. The Higher School of Marketing and Management has not been able to compete with the state school i.e. free of charge, since the latter opened its economics faculty. In consequence the number of students dropped drastically and the school changed its profile slightly.

The existing universities in Leszno mainly focus on education. However, the content and skills acquired during the studies are evaluated rather negatively by the local business community as well as students. The latter do not see their studies as a gateway to attractive jobs and necessary work experience.

Research work is carried out in a very restricted form. Due to formal considerations, most of the teaching staff is composed of Poznan university employees. It could be an asset in a sense of facilitating access to knowledge gathered in R&D institutions in Poznan. However, in practice those contacts are not used for the benefits of local economy.

In none of the schools are there any mechanisms which would stimulate establishing cooperation of scientists with entrepreneurs e.g. additional grants, scholarships etc. Students are not offered extra entrepreneurship classes besides the economics faculty. People wanting to set up their own businesses cannot count on any kind of support from the university. This refers both to the students as well as the academic staff.

Actions for development

An important action in the project was marking out strategic actions leading to further transition of the city's economy to knowledge based economy. That is why the Local Support Group appointed the task team, which used the conclusions from the Diagnosis of the status of transformation of local economy and prepared the economic development Strategy for Leszno based on cooperation within the "triple helix structure".

The starting point of strategic considerations was the vision for the city in its general development strategy. On this basis the economic development strategy mission was formulated. In this mission partners accept the vision for the city and want to contribute to its fulfilment through cooperation of local authorities, business support organizations, universities and companies for the development of economy based on knowledge.

In the strategy three groups of operational objectives for the whole economy were identified:

- People – development of human capital for the knowledge based economy;
- Infrastructure – making the conditions favourable for the establishment of new businesses, attraction of new companies to the city and development of the existing companies;
- Cooperation – development of the collaboration between the local authorities, business support organisations, universities and enterprises;

and a group of objectives targeted at key sectors:

- Enhancement of the competitiveness of key sectors for the city economy: machinery and metal industry, construction industry and food industry.

On basis of specific objectives of particular actors participating in the project and possible partnership among them and using the then emerging synergy effect, the Local Support Group, after consultations with the project expert, decided to concentrate its further actions on the following priorities:

	Metal & Machinery	Construction	Food Processing	Entrepreneurship
People	Human Resource Exchange	Educational Programmes		Knowledge and Skills/Promotion and Marketing
Cooperation	Research and Development	Technology Development	Marketing New Product Development/ Cluster Development	
Infrastructure				Incubator

These projects will serve to extend the competitiveness, innovation of the key sectors and entrepreneurship. Their realisation will be a part of the development strategy of Leszno and all groups of operational objectives.

The need to establish new companies in Leszno, especially within innovative sectors, articulated in many strategic documents, was the basis for conducting additional analyses and developing three specialised strategies focusing on:

- Talent attraction and retention strategy
- Triple helix partnership personal and business location strategy
- Creating distinctive 'local brand' strategy

The people who worked on constructing these strategies were representatives of universities, business community, business support organizations and local authorities appointed by the Local Support Group. Out of the actions proposed in the indicated strategies, the Local Support Group selected those that were considered as priority and key for the realisation of the strategies in the Local Action Plan.

Leszno's Local Support Group

Forming the local support group

In order to carry out the RUnUP project the President of Leszno appointed the Local Support Group consisting of representatives of the business community, universities, business support organizations and local authorities. Joint efforts were undertaken by representatives of:

- Leszno's City Council
- Leszno Town Office
- Marshal's Office of the Wielkopolska Voivodship
- Higher Vocational State School in Leszno
- Higher School of Humanities in Leszno
- Poznan Science and Technology Park
- Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer Ltd
- Skanska S.A
- ViaCon Polska Ltd

Leszno's Support Group agreed on the following project objectives:

- Developing a comprehensive programme, that will link actions of universities, the business community and public sector for the economic development of the city.
- Ensuring organized support to start-ups and strategic consultations as well as assistance in business development through partnership cooperation.
- Adapting content and teaching methods in universities to the needs of local business.
- Implementation of project results in the policy and concrete undertakings in the area of local sustainable growth.

During the first meeting of the Local Support Group on 30.01.2009 the chairman was elected - Leszek Kaszuba, representative of SKANSKA, General Construction Branch in Leszno and deputy chairpersons: Tomasz Łasowski, president of the Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce and Dorota Zgainska, president of the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer Ltd.

On 15 May 2009 members of LSG signed the declaration of the triple helix structure cooperation.

Methodology of working in Leszno's Local Support Group

In order to carry out particular actions of the project, members of the Local Support Group met every two months. Until the middle of April 2011 there had been 24 such meetings.

For a more efficient project delivery, the Local Support Group appointed four working teams, which were to achieve project results for the four selected actions. Team information is presented in table 2.

The teams consisted of representatives of institutions represented in the Local Support Group and outside persons e.g. the Leszno Pump Factory Ltd, Frili Properties Polska Ltd, whose knowledge and experience could enrich the teams' work.

Table 2. Thematic teams appointed by LSG for implementing selected actions of the RUnUP project.

Team	Action 1.1 Diagnosis of the status of economic transformation and the needs of economy on local level
Composition	Team Leader - Lech Woźny, Members: Elżbieta Książek, Dorota Zgaińska, Zbigniew Mocek, Alicja Szczepińska
Team	Action 2.1 Triple helix structure partnership for economic development strategy
Composition	Team Leader - Łukasz Borowiak, Members: Elżbieta Książek, Leszek Kaszuba, Dorota Zgaińska, Agata Matusiak, Janusz Poła, Tomasz Łasowski, Izabela Wojciechowska
Team	Action 3.1 Initiating and development of partnership within the triple helix structure
Composition	Team Leader - Zbigniew Mocek, Members: Elżbieta Książek, Leszek Kaszuba, Dorota Zgaińska, Agata Matusiak, Tomasz Łasowski, Grzegorz Rusiecki, Magdalena Sobecka
Team	Action 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 Talent attraction and retention strategy Triple helix partnership personal and business location strategy Creating distinctive 'local brand' strategy
Composition	Team Leader - Alicja Szczepińska, Members: Grzegorz Rusiecki, Kamila Wasielewska, Izabela Mańczak, Anna Szyszkwia-Gorwa, Wojciech Trojnar, Jolanta Jankowiak, Marzena Nawrocka.

Conclusions obtained by the working team were presented to the Local Support Group. After LSG had accepted the results a particular action could be concluded.

In order to develop the Local Action Plan, members of the Local Support Group or their delegated representatives participated in many training undertakings and activities aimed at exchanging experience within the framework of the project:

- Two training sessions especially prepared for LSG concerning incubation of newly established companies and pro-innovation services essential for Leszno's economy.
- Study visits:
 - Tampere, Finland: development of the third largest city in Finland based on innovation in the area of computer science technology.
 - Enschede, the Netherlands: best practices at the Twente University, cooperation among the private sector, university and administration,
 - Coventry, UK: Cooperation of the Municipality of Coventry with the university.
- Thematic conferences:
 - Agueda, Portugal: The triple helix as the driving force of local economy.
 - Potsdam, Germany: Marketing of knowledge based cities.
 - Barakaldo, Spain: Strategies of attracting and retaining talent to strengthen local development.

In the course of work on the Local Action Plan for Leszno, many pilot initiatives were undertaken. Their implementation was possible thanks to European funds. The most important are the following:

- Building the Entrepreneurship Incubator in Leszno
- Training and consultancy as well as investment support for start-ups
- Creating the cooperation network for the food sector
- Creating the cooperation network for the construction sector
- Building technical infrastructure in the I.D.E.A. investment zone

Local Action Plan

The Local Action Plan, developed by the Local Support Group in the course of many meetings, workshops and discussions, includes a set of actions and projects which have been grouped under five subheadings:

- Partnership for economic development
- Supporting entrepreneurship
- Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises
- Infrastructure for business
- Supporting key sectors

The above sets of actions correspond with the accepted strategy for economic development. The first, *Partnership for economic development* fits into the "Cooperation" strand of goals. It consists of actions aimed at building partnerships among various actors on different levels (ranging from decision-making to executive) and in different areas within the triple helix structure. Such an approach should ensure effectiveness of the impact of established cooperation on the development of local economy.

The two following sets: *Supporting entrepreneurship* and *Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises* are an expansion of the goal strand described as "People" in the strategy for economic development. Entrepreneurship has been singled out to underline the inadequacy of hitherto carried out activities in the area of incubation, especially in relation to diagnosed needs of students of local universities and people studying outside Leszno.

Supporting innovation and competitiveness will strengthen the human capital in companies functioning in Leszno, establish closer links between business and science and create conditions for attracting new enterprises bringing with them knowledge and experience.

The next set, *Infrastructure for business* is aimed at making up for many years' backwardness in the area of accessibility to technical infrastructure and adequate facilities essential to run modern and successful business in Leszno. This group constitutes an important component of the "Infrastructure" goal strand. The last set focuses on key sectors.

The sectors specified in the strategy for economic development (metal and machinery, construction and food) have been complemented with tourism and the action to identify new promising sectors which should become the driving force for the development of Leszno.

The Local Support Group also carried out discussions concerning the time frame for the implementation of the Local Action Plan. Taking into account the assumed timescale for the implementation of strategic documents presently binding for the Municipality of Leszno, the year 2016 was ultimately agreed on as the deadline.

Summary of LAP Actions

Action	Start date	Leader	Partners
1. Partnership for economic development			
Leszno's Support Group - sharing experience and knowledge within the triple helix structure	09/2011	Municipality of Leszno	Members of LSG, new members e.g. from the Overtake the Change project
Economic Council	09/2011	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Local entrepreneurs, representatives of local authorities in the subregion
Establishing the team for science and business cooperation	02/2011	Higher Vocational State School in Leszno	Municipality of Leszno, business support organisations, other universities
Forum for entrepreneurship in the Leszno subregion	09/2011	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce and other business support organisations, representatives of local authorities in the subregion
2. Supporting entrepreneurship			
Promoting entrepreneurship	09/2011	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.	Business support organizations, universities, colleges and upper secondary schools
Training, consultancy and financial support for persons setting up businesses	01/2011	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.	Business support organizations in the Leszno subregion, local authorities, universities
3. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises			
Developing and implementing a science and business cooperation model	10/2011	Higher Vocational State School in Leszno	Other universities, Municipality of Leszno, business support organizations
Developing and implementing a comprehensive programme of training and consultancy for business	04/2011	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Wielkopolska Agency for Enterprise Development, Poznan Science and Technology Park, other business support organizations
Attracting new investors within innovative sectors	01/2011	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.	Municipality of Leszno, Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce

3. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises (CONT)

10. Developing and implementing a programme for attracting and retaining highly qualified personnel	01/2011	Municipality of Leszno	Upper secondary schools, entrepreneurs
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4. Infrastructure for business

11. Services for business “under one roof” - Building of the Entrepreneurship Incubator	06/2012	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.	Municipality of Leszno, Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce, other business support organizations
12. Building technical infrastructure in the I.D.E.A. Investment Zone in Leszno	Phase 1- 10/2011	Municipality of Leszno	---

5. Supporting key sectors

13. Establishing and developing the “Leszno Flavours” network	06/2010 - 12.2013	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.	Food sector businesses, Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Agricultural and Building Construction Schools Complex, Municipality of Leszno
14. Establishing and developing the construction sector network	06/2010- 12.2013	Municipality of Leszno	Construction sector businesses, Leszno Business Centre Ltd. , Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, Agricultural and Building Construction Schools Complex
15. Establishing and developing the metal and machinery sector network	11/2011	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Metal and machinery sector businesses, business support organizations, Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, Technical Schools Complex
16. Cooperation for the development of local tourism	8/2008	Tourist Organisation Leszno-Region	Members of the Tourist Organization Leszno - Region
17. Seeking new promising key sectors for Leszno and the subregion	10/2011	Higher Vocational State School in Leszno	Local authorities, business support organizations

Description of LAP actions

This part of the Local Action Plan presents a detailed description of its actions and projects. This has been done on basis of descriptions used in other strategic documents of the Municipality of Leszno, which will make it easier to understand and monitor the actions. The presented actions correspond with diagnosed needs of various target groups and challenges facing Leszno's economy. The Local Support Group based their selection on the idea of maximising the effectiveness of transition of Leszno's economy to knowledge based economy.

Partnership for economic development

Experience gained through cooperation within the triple helix structure has shown that sharing information and knowledge among representatives of business, local authorities and universities is necessary and contributes to the creation of new quality in the development policy of the city. That is why LAP's assumption is to continue this cooperation extending it to the whole subregion. Moreover, there are plans to create specialized partnerships on different decision-making levels and in different areas supporting local economy. Such an approach will ensure better transfer of information and knowledge among involved partners leading to effective economic growth of the town.

Priority	Partnership for economic development
No.1	Leszno's Support Group - sharing experience and knowledge within the triple helix structure
Leader/coordinator:	Municipality of Leszno
Partners:	Members of LSG New members e.g. from the Overtake the Change project Subregion - local authorities, business support organizations, universities etc.
Description:	Partners within Leszno's Support Group, which was formed within the framework of the RUnUP project, agree that the triple helix cooperation results led to the development of interesting and beneficial solutions for the city. That is why the Group will continue to cooperate, invite more members and its main task will be to monitor the implementation of this Local Action Plan. Attempts will also be made to formulate a new project and acquire financing for it from external resources (e.g. Interreg IV programme or others).
Start date:	New agreement: 09/2011
Cost / resources:	Organization of meetings, preparation of materials, renting of rooms, correspondence
Key steps:	Signing the new agreement Regular meetings Monitoring LAP etc. Leszno's LSG participation in international projects
Results (indicators):	New agreement Number of new partners within the new agreement Number of meetings Number of new initiatives jointly undertaken

Priority	Partnership for economic development
No. 2	Economic Council
Leader/coordinator:	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce
Partners:	Local entrepreneurs Representatives of local authorities
Description:	The Economic Council should represent and integrate the Leszno business community. It will consist of business people representing companies of various size and sectors (not only members of the Chamber). The council will support the town authorities in economic matters.
Start date:	09/2011
Cost / resources:	Cost of organizing meetings
Key steps:	Appointing members of the Council Electing the leader Developing a programme of activities Regular meetings Undertaking initiatives serving the economic development of the city and the subregion
Results (indicators):	Number of members of the Economic Council Number of EC meetings Number of undertaken initiatives

Priority	Partnership for economic development
No. 3	Establishing the team for science and business cooperation
Leader/coordinator:	Jan Amos Komenski Higher Vocational State School in Leszno
Partners:	Municipality of Leszno, business support organizations, other universities
Description:	The established team will consist of university employees and representatives of local business and business support organizations and its main task will be to develop a system of informing academic staff and students about possibilities of supporting business. Jointly undertaken initiatives are aimed at creating closer links between the academic and business communities e.g. universities get commission for research from companies.
Start date:	02/2011
Cost / resources:	Cost of organizing meetings for the team
Key steps:	Forming the composition of the team. Identifying the status quo and demand for specific forms of cooperation Developing a programme of activities Delivery of the programme
Results (indicators):	Number of team members Number of organizations participating through team members Number of joint initiatives Number of partners including universities

Priority	Partnership for economic development
No. 4	Forum for entrepreneurship in the Leszno subregion
Leader/coordinator:	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.
Partners:	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce and other business support organizations in the subregion, representatives of local authorities in the Leszno subregion
Description:	Regular working meetings of employees from business support organizations and local authorities responsible for economic development and business support. They will be aimed at exchanging information and undertaking joint initiatives to support entrepreneurship in the subregion.
Start date:	09/2011
Cost / resources:	Cost of organizing meetings
Key steps:	Appointing members of the Forum Regular meetings Sharing information and experience from conducted projects Joint initiatives
Results (indicators):	Number of meetings of Forum members Number of initiatives aimed at supporting entrepreneurship

Supporting entrepreneurship

Studies which were conducted to analyse the extent of support for entrepreneurship in Leszno, indicated lack of concentration and coordination of undertaken activities. They were mostly services provided to the unemployed.

There were no offers for students and employed persons wanting to set up their own businesses. So far none of the business support organizations in Leszno have dealt with incubation of newly established companies. That is why LAP includes two actions aimed at promoting entrepreneurship especially among young people and providing comprehensive support to people intending to set up their own businesses.

Priority	II. Supporting entrepreneurship
No. 5	Promoting entrepreneurship
Leader/coordinator:	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.
Partners:	Business support organizations, universities, colleges and upper secondary schools
Description:	In Leszno there are many upper secondary schools, colleges and universities. By running varied activities, this action will contribute to the positive attitude towards self-employment as an opportunity to fulfil one's own passions, taking advantage of knowledge and skills to build a professional career. This action is also aimed at promoting support offered by the Entrepreneurship Incubator.
Start date:	09/2011
Cost / resources:	Cost of undertaken activities / LBC, external grants
Key steps:	Promotional campaigns in upper secondary schools, colleges and universities Business plan competition Annual Festival of Entrepreneurship in the Incubator
Results (indicators):	Number of promotional campaigns in upper secondary schools, colleges and universities Number of participants in the business plan competition Number of beneficiaries taking part in the Festival of Entrepreneurship

Priority	Training, consultancy and financial support for persons setting up businesses
No. 6	Training, consultancy and financial support for persons setting up businesses
Leader/coordinator:	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.
Partners:	Business support organizations in the Leszno subregion, local authorities, universities
Description:	Coordinated joint activities of various organizations aimed at providing support to people before and in the course of setting up their own businesses. University students will be provided with comprehensive information concerning setting up a business during their studies, they will have an opportunity to undergo training in the area of entrepreneurship ("business summer school"). Wherever possible, partners will make effort to acquire EU funds to conduct projects on training and consultancy as well as investment and bridging support for people setting up their own businesses. The Entrepreneurship Incubator will be a place where comprehensive information will be provided on how to set up a business, start business activity, acquire financing, develop a newly established company. General and specialized training will be provided as well as mentoring.
Start date:	01/2011

Priority	Training, consultancy and financial support for persons setting up businesses
Cost/resources:	Cost of project delivery - EU funds Training - participant fees
Key steps:	Preparing a joint pack by business support organizations for people intending to set up their own businesses. Business training for students - specifying and selecting the training format - summer business schools, classes as integral part of studies, optional classes. Preparation, acquisition of resources and delivery of projects offering knowledge and financial support to people setting up their businesses e.g. "Spread Your Wings in Business" Specialized training and mentoring (experienced managers as mentors to beginning business people) in the Entrepreneurship Incubator.
Results (indicators):	Number of participants in the summer business schools Number of people (companies) who have received training and advice Number of people (companies) benefiting from financial support Value of awarded financial support

Supporting innovation in enterprises

Low innovation in Leszno’s enterprises, their weak links with science and modern technologies are an obstacle in the development of local economy. The most reliable way of generating considerable added value by enterprises is investing in human capital

and intensifying cooperation with universities as well as research and development institutions. The small economy of Leszno needs special development stimuli by attracting new investors within innovation sectors and ensuring qualified personnel.

Priority	III. Supporting innovation in enterprises
No. 7	Developing and implementing a science and business cooperation model
Leader/coordinator:	Jan Amos Komenski Higher Vocational State School in Leszno
Partners:	Other universities, Municipality of Leszno, business support organizations
Description:	<p>The RUnUP project has shown that it is necessary to adapt universities' educational offer to the needs of local economy and establish closer links with local business. In order to achieve that universities will appoint curriculum boards consisting of, among others, representatives of the business community. They will influence teaching content and voice needs of the business community for research that could be carried out by the university. It is also planned to standardise apprenticeships in enterprises to ensure their higher quality and level and to promote their importance among students. The idea of dual studies will be promoted to emphasize the benefits of study and work programmes.</p>
Start date:	10/2011
Priority	III. Supporting innovation in enterprises
Cost/resources:	Cost of organizing meetings, preparing apprenticeship and studies programmes etc. / budgets of Higher Vocational State School in Leszno and the Municipality of Leszno
Key steps:	<p>Curriculum boards in universities/institutes – faculties, content, skills, diploma papers, research – university research offer available on a website, Apprenticeships and internships in companies: promoting benefits among students, standards in companies, Dual studies – study and work programmes, Support of research concerned with local economy – research grants in universities and doctoral scholarships (ML)</p>
Results (indicators):	<p>Number of established curriculum boards Number of research works conducted for local business Number of dual studies students Number of grants awarded for research concerned with local economy</p>

Priority	III. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises
No. 8	Developing and implementing a comprehensive programme of training and consultancy for business
Leader/coordinator:	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce
Partners:	Wielkopolska Agency for Enterprise Development, Poznan Science and Technology Park, other business support organizations
Description:	Training and consultancy supporting innovation and competitiveness of local companies adapted to current needs of entrepreneurs e.g. in the area of changes in regulations, design, new technologies, internationalisation etc. In case of highly specialised training and consultancy – establishing cooperation with business support organizations on regional level.
Start date:	4/2011
Cost / resources:	Cost to be met by participants of training
Key steps:	Continuous analysis of specific training and consultancy needs in the business community. Preparing training programmes adapted to the needs. Establishing cooperation with business support organizations in the region. Promotion and delivery of training offer in the business community.
Results (indicators):	Number of conducted training sessions Number of participants in the training sessions

Priority	III. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises
No. 9	Attracting new investors within innovative sectors
Leader/coordinator:	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.
Partners:	Municipality of Leszno, Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce
Description:	The Municipality of Leszno is open to new investors, who can take advantage of the following assets: convenient location, good infrastructure and access to well-qualified staff. Leszno is especially interested in investment within innovation sectors. The town offers land covering nearly 40 hectares, with complete infrastructure, situated in the I.D.E.A. Investment Zone. Attracting new investors requires a unique, coordinated and effective promotion, which will be delivered through activities included in the strategy for attracting investors. One of the activities is to conduct a promotional campaign targeted at potential investors and to improve services provided to them.

Priority		III. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises
Start date:	01/2011	
Cost / resources:	Municipality of Leszno budget	
Key steps:	Preparation and execution of the pro-investor campaign Services provided to potential investors – assistance during investment process and their continuous improvement Updating Leszno's investment offer Guidebook for investors	
Results (indicators):	Number of established contacts as a result of the promotional campaign Number of investors provided with assistance Number of new investors Surface area of sold land	

Priority		III. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises
No. 10	Developing and implementing a programme for attracting and retaining highly qualified personnel	
Leader/coordinator:	Municipality of Leszno	
Partners:	Upper secondary schools Entrepreneurs	
Description:	One of the conditions necessary for the growth of innovation and competitiveness of enterprises is attracting highly qualified personnel. That is why it is essential to undertake activities encouraging university graduates to take up jobs in Leszno. Moreover, there are plans to start informational activities directed to secondary school students and parents to help them in choosing a future career on basis of local economy's needs and one's own predispositions.	

Priority		III. Supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises
Start date:	01/2011	
Cost/resources:	Municipality of Leszno and local authorities	
Key steps:	Activities promoting jobs needed in local economy among the youth and their parents Establishing and maintaining email contacts with secondary school graduates in Leszno Assistance in "settling down" in Leszno – special website for new residents of Leszno Support provided for those who return to Leszno after their studies Running a promotional campaign aimed at attracting and retaining graduates in Leszno	
Results (indicators):	Number of events concerned with promotion of needed jobs Number of email contacts Website and number of visitors	

Infrastructure for business

Considerable dispersion of business support organizations functioning in Leszno is to a large extent caused by a lack of suitable building which would meet the requirements of modern business infrastructure. The building of the Entrepreneurship

Incubator in Leszno in the I.D.E.A. investment zone will improve the situation in that respect. Also providing the necessary technical infrastructure in the zone will attract investors important for the growth of the town's economy.

IV. Infrastructure for business

No. 11	Services for business "under one roof" - Building of the Entrepreneurship Incubator
Leader/coordinator:	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.
Partners:	Municipality of Leszno, Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce, other business support organizations
Description:	In Leszno there are many business support organizations which offer services in a fragmentary and dispersed way. The Entrepreneurship Incubator will cluster all of them in one place for the benefit of recipients of this type of services. This will ensure better coordination of services, more specialization and better use of their potential
Start date:	06/2012
Cost/resources:	Municipality of Leszno - 60% of qualified costs, Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme - 40% of qualified costs
Key steps:	Building and furnishing the Incubator: 25.10.2010 - 29.06.2012 Training Incubator employees: 02.04.2012 - 29.06.2012 Attracting Business Support Organizations to locate their offices in the Incubator Providing integrated services
Results (indicators):	Number of services provided to the business community in the Incubator Number of business support organizations providing services "under one roof"

Priority	IV. Infrastructure for business
No. 12	Building technical infrastructure in the I.D.E.A. Investment Zone in Leszno
Leader/coordinator:	Municipality of Leszno
Partners:	The Leszno Powiat
Description:	<p>The goal of this action is to comprehensively prepare investment land located in the I.D.E.A. Investment Zone in Leszno, situated in the south-eastern part of the town in the vicinity of national road No. 5 and provincial road No. 323.</p> <p>In the first stage 20.62 hectares of the I.D.E.A. investment land will be fitted with technical infrastructure i.e. roads, water and sewage system, street lighting. Within this action the Geodetów street will be built. It will link the zone with national road No. 5. Additionally, the surface of Usługowa street up to Okrężna street will be improved. In the following years the remaining I.D.E.A. zone land will be fitted with infrastructure.</p>
Start date:	Stage 1 - 10/2011
Cost/resources:	Stage 1: Municipality of Leszno: 1.25 million zloty, Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme: 2.32 million zloty
Key steps:	<p>Construction of Geodetów street</p> <p>Providing technical infrastructure in the I.D.E.A. Zone - stage 1,</p> <p>Improving the surface on Usługowa street up to Okrężna street</p> <p>Providing technical infrastructure in the I.D.E.A. Zone - next stages</p>
Results (indicators):	<p>Surface area fitted with infrastructure: 20.62 hectares</p> <p>Number and surface area of sold land</p> <p>Number of new investors</p>

Supporting key sectors

The Strategy for economic development of Leszno, which was developed in the course of the project, identifies the following key sectors crucial for the development of the town: metal and machinery, food and construction. These are sectors of considerable low innovation potential. By creating networks for better knowledge transfer their competitiveness should improve.

The strategy stipulates continuous search for new sectors which could become the driving force for the town's economy development in future. That is why the LAP also includes such an action. Moreover, the Local Support Group proposed the tourist sector as important for local economy bearing in mind unquestionable tourist assets of the city and the region and dynamics in the development of this sector in Poland.

Priority	V. Supporting key sectors
No. 13	Establishing and developing the “Leszno Flavours” network
Leader/coordinator:	Leszno Business Centre Ltd.
Partners:	Food sector businesses, Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Agricultural and Building Construction Schools Complex, Municipality of Leszno
Description:	The project delivery will involve the creation and development of the “Leszno Flavours” network by engaging companies from the food sector, business support organizations, schools and the Municipality of Leszno. The goal is to increase innovation in food sector companies.
Start date:	6/2010 - 12/2013
Cost/resources:	Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme - 85%, Municipality of Leszno - 15 %, ultimately enterprises
Key steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Running the network office Network working meetings Study visit Research and expert evaluations and consultancy services for the needs of the network Developing the promotional strategy for the “Leszno Flavours” brand Promotional activities of the network Participation in fairs and promotional events Thematic conferences for knowledge sharing
Results (indicators):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiently functioning network Number of enterprises involved in cooperation Number of promotional events carried out through cooperation links Value of consultancy services

Priority	V. Supporting key sectors
No. 14	Establishing and developing the construction sector network
Leader/coordinator:	Municipality of Leszno
Partners:	Construction sector businesses, Leszno Business Centre Ltd., Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, Agricultural and Building Construction Schools Complex
Description:	The main aim of this project is to raise innovation in enterprises in south-western Wielkopolska through cooperation of the construction sector with business support organizations, research and development centres, universities, local authorities and other business people. With the help of external professional consultancy, participants of the network will develop a promotional strategy and brand strategy forming basis for a promotional campaign. In order to support the process of knowledge sharing, six conferences will be organized to focus on themes adapted to current needs of the network.
Start date:	06/2010 - 12/2013
Cost/resources:	Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme - 85%, Municipality of Leszno - 15%; ultimately enterprises
Key steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Running the network office Monthly working meetings Study visit to model cluster Research and expert evaluations for the network Developing promotional strategies Consultancy services corresponding to the needs of the network Promotional campaign, participation in fairs and promotional events Conferences aimed at knowledge sharing (once in six months)
Results (indicators):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiently operating network Number of involved enterprises in the construction sector Number of promotional events Value of consultancy services

Priority	V. Supporting key sectors
No. 15	Establishing and developing the metal and machinery sector network
Leader/coordinator:	Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce
Partners:	Metal and machinery sector businesses, business support organizations, Higher Vocational State School in Leszno, Technical Schools Complex
Description:	Establishing a network in a sector identified as one of the key sectors for the development of Leszno and the subregion. The goal of the network is increasing competitiveness and innovation of companies in this sector through cooperation including universities, vocational schools and business support organizations.
Start date:	11/2011
Cost/resources:	As far as possible, external financing, ultimately enterprises
Key steps:	Setting up the initiative group Presenting the idea of the Network (benefits deriving from cooperation within the Network) Developing a strategy of actions Acquisition of EU programme funds to achieve planned goals
Results (indicators):	Number of enterprises joining the Network Number of undertaken initiatives
Priority	V. Supporting key sectors
No. 16	Cooperation for the development of Local Tourism
Leader/coordinator:	Tourist Organization Leszno-Region
Partners:	Members of the Tourist Organization Leszno - Region
Description:	Leszno and the region have a great potential for the development of tourism. Local authorities and tourist enterprises working within the Tourist Organization Leszno-Region are engaged in a range of activities aimed at promoting and developing tourism in the region. These activities have a considerable impact on local economy.
Start date:	11/2008
Cost/resources:	Membership fees, local authorities' budgets, external resources: Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme, Marshal's Office grants etc.
Key steps:	Events promoting local tourist products Image campaigns Running of the Tourist Information Centre Providing tourist trail signs Promotion during fairs Market research
Results (indicators):	Number of partners in the Organization Number of tourist sector enterprises Number of undertaken initiatives

Priority	V. Supporting key sectors
No. 17	Seeking new promising key sectors for Leszno and the subregion
Leader/coordinator:	Jan Amos Komenski Higher Vocational State School in Leszno
Partners:	Local authorities, business support organizations
Description:	The diagnosed key sectors in Leszno can be characterized as traditional with a low level of innovation. It is crucial for the development of the town to increase the level of knowledge based economy by identifying and supporting new innovative sectors, which will become the driving force of economy in the future. In order to do that the Higher Vocational State School will use its potential and attempt to achieve this goal through its own research and cooperation with other academic centres.
Start date:	10/2011
Cost/resources:	Cost of research and analyses Cost of support
Key steps:	Establishing cooperation with other centres conducting similar research Conducting research and analyses Identifying new sectors Identifying support tools
Results (indicators):	Number of conducted research and analyses Number of identified branches Number of identified support tools.

Conclusion

The RUnUP project in Leszno opened a new chapter in actions aimed at stimulating economic development of the city.

The setting up of the Local Support Group representing the local and regional governments, universities, business support organizations and the business community introduced a new quality in the work on the Local Action Plan, which will greatly contribute to the economic development of Leszno.

Regular meetings of LSG ensured smooth running of the project as well as systematic exchange of information about undertaken activities by particular organizations represented in the Group. Presence of representatives of the triple helix contributed to a better diagnosis of local economy's needs, especially in the context of knowledge based economy. On this basis, preparation of strategic documents gained a different dimension in relation to joint challenges facing the business community, science and administration.

The strategic objectives led to the new ideas of projects which have already been awarded financing from the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund of PLN 11.6 million PLN i.e. 2.9 million EUR. Some projects are already in progress. They are aimed at providing infrastructure for business and support entrepreneurship and innovation in key sectors, which are important pillars of transition of Leszno's economy to knowledge based economy. These activities support current and future benefits deriving from exchange of best practices and knowledge among business, science and administration.

Experience gained in the course of the project helped to build potential, which will be used in further activities of the Local Support Group. The first task will be to monitor the realisation of the Local Action Plan. In order to do that, the Group will meet regularly analysing progress and undertaking actions to eliminate threats and proposing new initiatives to take advantage of arising opportunities.

Plans have been made to extend the Local Support Group by inviting representatives of the triple helix structure in the whole Leszno subregion.

Creating a network of cooperation among towns situated in this part of Wielkopolska region will enable Leszno to use experience gained in the project and strengthen the competitive position of the subregion's economy.

URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

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