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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

SPOŁECZNA ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚĆ BIZNESU A ZRÓWNOWAŻONY ROZWÓJ OBSZARÓW WIEJSKICH

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Abstract. This study focuses on presenting the investment in the renewable energy installations and the legal form of beneficiaries aided by the EU funds to show the effects of undertakings consistent with the sustainable development as reflected in Corporate Social Responsibility implemented in rural areas of the Podlaskie Voivodeship. CSR is closely linked to the sustainable development because of its overriding goal that such development satisfies needs of this generation without jeopardizing the possibility of satisfying needs of future generations. Most projects related to renewable energy installations were realised by beneficiaries qualified as partnerships and natural persons conducting business activity (54 entities). In the Podlaskie Voivodeship, solar energy installations were most commonly funded (84) through the end of 2015. In the years 2007-2013, a total of PLN 356 853 658 was allocated to the issues connected with renewable energy development, including 45% for solar energy. The level of EU subsidy totalled PLN 174 575 220, including 55% spent on solar energy use projects.

Introduction

Based on the ISO 26000 norm, the main feature of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is "a readiness of organisations to take into account, while taking decisions and actions, social and environmental issues, as well as being held accountable for the effect the decisions and actions had on the society and the environment" [ISO 2010]. Thus, actions ought to be both transparent and ethical, contributing to sustainable growth, compliant with the law in force, as well as in line with international standards of conduct. The definition of CSR provided by the European Commission includes the notion of enterprises willingly deciding to take up activities aimed at improving the society and the environment [http://ec.europa.eu]. The World Bank defines CSR as "a commitment to contribute to sustainable development by working with the employed, their families, the local community and the society at large, in order to increase the quality of life in a way that is good both for business and the development in general" [Szpringer 2009, p. 16]. Ideas of co-operation with the local community and taking care of the environment also comprise the actions of the Association of Employers of the Republic of Poland. The latter devised the Code of Responsible Business, which includes the principles of an entrepreneur's responsibility in relation to their impact on the society and the environment, characterised by ethical conduct and transparency. In these actions, the enterprise takes account of the stakeholders' opinions, it acts according to the law and international norms, it strives to assure a sustainable development of the societies.

CSR is directly linked to sustainable development, as its "main goal is to contribute to sustainable development, i.e. such development that satisfies the needs of the current generation, not endangering the opportunities for satisfying the needs of future generations" [ISO 2010]. The Polish legal framework provides a definition of sustainable development. The definition is included in the Environmental Protection Act [Dz.U. 2001, nr. 62, poz. 627], according to which sustainable development is: "a social and economic development which allows for integrating political, economic and social actions, maintaining natural balance and the continuity of basic natural processes, in order to guar-

antee the satisfying of basic needs of respective communities or citizens of both the contemporary generation as well as future generations". The principle of sustainable development concerns many aspects of management, including the management of energy, especially as a response to climate change [Garrett et al. 2015]. It is one of the most important aims of the energy and environmental policies of the European Union (EU) and Poland. Sustainable management of energy is linked to an increased use of renewable energy sources, which contributes, among others, to an increase in energy safety, and the diversification of the energy supply, with simultaneous positive impact on the improvement of the environment quality and the life of local communities [Pultowicz 2009].

The idea of sustainable development is to be found in a number of political and legal documents impacting the economy. The information in those documents indicates what the understanding of sustainable development as well as the diversity of levels of its realisation are, including aspects of energy and renewable energy source use. In the Kyoto Protocol (the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change) [Dz.U.05.203.1684], "commitment to a quantity limitation as well as the reduction of emissions, with the purpose of supporting sustainable development, implementing or developing the directions of policy and means appropriate for state conditions, among others: research, support, development, as well as an increase in the use of new and renewable energy sources, a technology of carbon dioxide absorption, as well as environmentally friendly technologies which are advanced and innovative".

The principle of sustainable development has also been included in the Constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland as of April 2, 1997 [Dz.U.1997.78.483] concludes that "the Republic of Poland protects the independence and inviolability of its territory, assures the freedoms and rights of man and citizen as well as the safety of citizens, protects the national heritage and ensures environmental protection, guided by the principle of sustainable development". The principle contained in the Constitution is included in lower-level legal acts. The Energy Law Act as of April 10, 1997 [Dz.U.1997.54.348 as amended] concludes that "the purpose of the act is to create conditions for sustainable development of a country, assuring energy safety, frugal and rational use of fuel and energy (the authors' emphasis), the development of competition, counteracting the negative consequences of natural monopolies, taking account of environmental protection requirements, commitments resulting from international agreements and the safeguarding of the recipients' interests as well as the minimising of cost". Moreover, in article 15.1 of the Energy Law Act [Dz.U.54.348 as amended, including amendments as of 2016, item 266, 925, 1052 and 1165], it has been indicated that "the energy policy of a state is devised in line with the principle of sustainable development of a state"

The principle of sustainable development is an element of CSR. Moreover, sustainable development has been consequently mentioned alongside the necessity of satisfying the needs of the current and future generations, as well as respect for the natural environment. These aspects are of the focus of this study and the interaction with specific stakeholder groups is omitted.The extension of the existing system of creating energy by means of renewable resources is an element which realises the broadly expressed preferences of legislators. Due to the diversity of renewable energy sources (wind, solar, biogaz), the required investment funds and the requirements related to the location of such installations (e.g. the necessary resources or areas), the compilation presents the realisation of CSR elements within the framework of sustainable development of rural areas on the example of the renewable energy sources sector in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, a relatively non-urbanised region, thus being one of the least developed EU regions. It is well worth noting that in recent years, a substantial increase in energy production in the renewable energy source sector has been observed throughout the country, especially concerning the use of wind energy [GUS 2014].

CSR vs. rural area development

Rural areas in Poland comprise over 90% of the country area. Around 40% of the country population is to be found there [GUS 2015]. Moreover, they consist of 1571 rural communities and 602 rural parts of the municipal-rural communities, of the total surface constituting 93.1% of the country area [Rakowska 2013]. Due to their specific features, rural areas provide very important

social services. They are responsible for: food security, protection of water, protection of genetic biodiversity, as well as species and ecosystem biodiversity, protection of soil against erosion, protection of the cultural landscape of rural areas, creating conditions for recreation and res. A strategic document [MRiRW 2012] specifying the aims of the rural area and farming development strategy for the years 2012-2020 indicates[1] that rural areas should be perceived against the background of their natural, landscape-related, economic, social and cultural potential. What is more, rural areas should be treated as suppliers of public goods, and they should therefore be publicly subsidised.

The development of rural areas is gaining more and more momentum, not only in terms of the agricultural policy, but also in terms of regional domestic policy concepts, and the phenomenon is reflected in the EU policy. Rural communities are prone to social and economic marginalisation. In the National Strategy for Regional Development for the years 2010-2020 [MRR 2010], they have been highlighted as the areas of strategic state intervention. The striving for more and more cohesion in economic, social and territorial aspects was conducive to the European Community and became the purpose of the EU regional policy [Pietrzyk 2001]. A two-pillar character of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU [Grosse, Hardt 2001] comprises the income support of farmers through direct payment and market intervention (the first pillar), and is directed at the rural area development (the second pillar, where the source of financing is the European Agricultural Fund for the Development of Rural Areas. Rural areas which belong to European regions, including the Podlaskie Voivodeship, also take advantage of the European Fund for Regional Development and the European Social Fund financing [EC 2012]. Financial means from those funds co-fund the communal investment, among others, within the scope of technical infrastructure, e.g. water and sewage system, sewage plants. The goals of the rural area development policy are to proceed from the sector approach towards the territorial approach. Such a perception of rural areas strenghtens the sustainable approach attitude, and therefore, creates a chance for CSR to play a more and more significant role in rural area development. "Comprehensiveness, a multi-level and spatial character of problems related to rural area development, manifesting itself also in village-city relations, as well as poor results of the heretofore realised policies, sectoral in their character, encourage us to draw a conclusion that there is a necessity of including the rural area development policy into the scope of the region/cohesion policies" [Drygas 2006, p. 78].

Poland receives financial means within the framework of the EU cohesion policy. Their amount for the years 2007-2013 was calculated as around EUR 67 billion [http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy]. However, for the years 2014-2020, EU designated EUR 82.5 billion [https://www.funduszeeuropejskie.gov.pl], out of which most means were allocated within the framework of the Infrastructure and Environment Programme (EUR 27.4 bln). The latter amount shall be spent mainly on the low carbon economy, environmental protection, state technical infrastructure development, as well as energy safety. Moreover, apart from state programmes, European funds are allocated to 16 regional programmes, including the development of the Podlaskie Voivodeship (EUR 1.21 bn). The low-carbon economy as well as the energy security goals comprise undertakings within the scope of renewable energy source use.

Using European funds orients the Polish development in its economic, social and eco-friendly aspects, simultaneously ensuring a high quality of life in clean environment for current and future generations. European funds for the years 2014-2020 will be used within 11 thematic goals. Four of them seem to be especially important from the perspective of sustainable development, as they are related to the broadly understood environmental sector and investment in 'hard' infrastructure (projects exceeding PLN 50 mln). The sixth goal is the most important one for the report, concerning the protection of the natural environment and supporting the efficiency of resource use. In the new financial perspective, a larger role shall be assigned to regions, as on the level of the Voivodeship government, there will be more means allocated to projects within the European Fund for Regional Development.

[1] Objective 1. "Increase the quality of human capital, social, employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas"; objective 2. "Improvement of living conditions in rural areas and improving their spatial distribution"; objective 3. "Food security; objective"; 4. "Increase productivity and competitiveness of agri-food sector"; objective 5. "Environmental protection and adaptation to climate change in rural areas".

Moreover, other thematic goals might serve the environment and sustainable development, a confirmation of which might be found in the ecoinvestment funded within the first thematic goal (research and development), or projects developing "green" workplaces in sectors related to environmental protection within the eighth thematic goal (employment) [CEE Bankwatch Network 2013].

The purpose, scope and methodology of research

The main goal of the report is to present the level of renewable resource investment realised by respective legal forms of beneficiaries taking advantage of EU funds, as an effect of sustainable development – related actions involving the CSR idea in rural areas. A descriptive method has been used. The source of data is quantitative and qualitative secondary data of the IT Monitoring and Control System of the Ministry of Development and Infrastructure as of 31.12.2015 (i.e. thev actual deadline of realising the operational programme for the period of 2007-2013). The data comprises, among others, the subject of priority – the kind of renewable energy and legal form of the respective beneficiaries. Moreover, secondary data comprises the scope of general values of the realised projects and the levels of European co-funding according to each operational programme. A group of beneficiaries consists of 122 subjects from the Podlaskie Voivodeship, i.e. 122 renewable energy installations, which were realised from 24.11.2011 to 30.11.2015 (121 projects were realised within the Regional Operational Programme of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, one of the projects was realised within the Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme in the years 2007-2013). The results of the research were presented in a descriptive form.

Results

The world market of renewable energy sources has been developing very dynamically. The risk of energy sources running out will lead to the necessity of finding their substitutes. Renewable energy sources are sources we can extract energy from, simultaneously taking care of the environment [EC BREC 2003].

Renewable energy types

Out of a few types of renewable energy, the most popular are the ones that are relatively easily accessible on a given territory. Based on the IT Monitoring and Control System of the Ministry of Development and Infrastructure data, the types of renewable energy sources ought to be divided into 4 groups: wind, solar, biomass and hydroelectric, as well as geothermal jointly with other sources.

Wind energy is one of the oldest types of renewable energy sources used by mankind. The temperature difference of air masses allows for its creation, and the said difference is caused by unequal heating on the Earth's surface [http://www.mae.com.pl/odnawialne-zrodla-energii-energia-wiatru.html]. Poland is in the area of average wind conditions. The best wind conditions in Poland are along the Baltic coast, in the area of Suwałki, and in Podkarpacie. The average wind speed is 2.8 m/s in the summer season and 3.8 m/s in the winter [Niedziółka 2014]. The energy is widely used in Poland, although in many regions, the construction of wind installations triggered protest [Klepacka et al. 2016]. Conditions to use wind energy in the prevailing area of the Podlaskie Voivodeship are worse than in other regions of the country, although there may be local conditions which allow for the use of wind energy.

Solar energy is the most common and the most broadly available kind of renewable energy [Lynn 2010]. It may be used in many spheres of life, as it does not lead to any side effects, harmful emissions or the depletion of natural resources [Dec, Krupa 2014]. In the central and Eastern part of Europe, Poland is a country which has one of the best conditions to use solar energy. The intensity of the solar irradiance differs in respective parts of the country and ranges from 900 kWh/m^2 to 1200 kWh/m^2 [Mejro, Troszkiewicz 1980]. In the Podlaskie Voivodeship, the level of insolation differs between northern and southern areas, creating possibilities of using such energy, especially through microinstallations in rural households. The latter have the areas necessary to

install solar panels, and due to low population density, they might be interested in increasing their own energy security, especially in lowering the risk of electricity supply interruptions.

Biomass, according to the definition adopted by the EU, are biodegradable product fractions, waste and agricultural industry remains (together with plant and animal substances), the forestry industry, and the industries related to it, as well as biodegradable industrial waste and municipal fractions [2001/77/WE Directive]. In Poland, biomass is used mainly to produce heat. It is usually co-burnt together with coal in heating plants as well as combined heat and power plants [http://www.biomasa.org]. The main sources of biomass may differ depending on the natural conditions (e.g. the presence of forests) as well as the character of the regional economy (e.g. industrial waste). In the Podlaskie Voivodeship, there are conditions especially conducive to extracting biomass from farming and forestry.

The energy of flowing water is the first form of energy mankind has started using for their own needs [Bednarska 2003]. Hydroelectric power plants aim to regulate rivers, as well as improve the efficiency of navigation and anti-flooding protection. Among hydroelectric plants demonstrating the highest capacity, the Żarnowiec power station (716 MW) ought to be indicated (the Pomeranian Voivodeship) and the Porąbka-Żar (500 MW) power plant (the Silesian Voivodeship) [http://www.pgeeo.pl, Bajkowski, Górniakowska 2013]. Nonetheless, the use of water energy increases alongside the emergence of small power plants on locally important rivers, especially in northern Poland (e.g. the West Pomeranian Voivodeship and the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship). This kind of energy may be used only on a local scale in the Podlaskie Voivodeship. The aforementioned low scale of installation may constitute too big a risk for private investors.

Geothermal energy refers to thermal energy of rocks located inside the Earth. Poland has very good geothermal conditions, of both low and medium-sized enthalpy, although it is located outside of volcanic areas and tectonic divisions. Geothermal resources are to be found in over 80% of the country area [Luchter 2000]. Their use is limited by the need for significant investment resources.

Legal forms of beneficiaries

The implementation of the idea of sustainable development depends on the decisions of respective subjects, which differ in their legal form. Based on the IT Monitoring and Control System, the legal forms of respective beneficiaries have been divided into three groups. The first group comprises limited liability companies (26 entities), civil partnerships (8 entities), unlimited companies (7 entities), joint stock companies (2 entities), as well as natural persons conducting business activity (11 entities), which have functioned as micro-, medium-sized and large enterprises. The second group includes territorial self-government units – a self-government unit of municipality (gmina) (49 entities), as well as 1 entity each in case of a self-government unit of a county (powiat) and a municipal self-government organisational unit. The third group includes different entities, including state-owned organisational units (5 entities), universities (2 entities), as well as the Catholic Church (1 entity). Among the analysed groups, the research findings related to the renewable energy source installations have been completed with information concerning their location (rural or urban areas).

Within the first group, 5 subgroups have been named: natural persons conducting business activity (small enterprises), a joint-stock company (a small enterprise), a civil partnership conducting business activity based on an agreement concluded in accordance with the Civil Code (a small enterprise), an unlimited company (a small enterprise), as well as a limited liability company (a large enterprise). Wind installations have been noted in case of natural persons conducting business activity and in case of limited liability companies (2 wind installations respectively), as well as one installation managed by a civil partnership (all of the above located in rural areas, one realised within the Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme, the rest within the Regional Operational Programme of the Podlaskie Voivodeship). There are 34 solar panel installations within the group, in all legal forms of beneficiaries. The majority – 16 – are managed by limited liability companies (out of which 3 are located in rural areas), the least by a joint stock company (2 installations – out of which 1 in a rural area). Installations using biomass (6 in total) have been noted in case of a limited liability company (out of which 3 are located in rural areas). When it

comes to a hydroelectric and a geothermal installation joint with the remaining sources (9 have been registered), 3 out of them have been managed by civil partnerships, and 2 installations by the remaining legal forms, with the exception of a joint stock company. A total of 54 renewable energy source installations have been registered in the group, including 24 located in rural areas.

In the second group, three legal forms have been distinguished: a self-government unit of municipality (gmina), a self-government unit of a county (powiat), as well as a municipality self-territorial organisational unit. Among the beneficiaries, the majority of installations which have been registered are solar (40), out of which 39 have been managed by a a self-government unit of municipality (gmina) (30 installations located in rural areas), as well as 1 installation managed by a municipality self-territorial organisational unit. Moreover, in case of a self-government unit of municipality (gmina), 1 installation using biomass as well as 9 installations from the group of hydroelectric and geothermal joint with the remaining sources, have been named (3 out of which are located in rural areas). What is more, in case of a self-government unit of a county (powiat), one installation from the group of hydroelectric and one from other sources has been named. In total, 52 renewable energy source installations have been registered, out of which 36 are located in rural areas.

The third group consisted of entities in four legal groups: state-owned organisational units, public healthcare units, universities and the Catholic Church. In the group, there have been the least renewable energy sources (16 in total), out of which 10 solar installations (4 – realised by state organisational units, 5 – by public healthcare units, and 1 – by a university) (2 installations located in rural areas). Two public healthcare units and one university took advantage of installations using biomass. When it comes to hydroelectric and geothermal installations joint with other sources, there have been registered 1 legal form each, with the exception of a university.

Within three separate groups, the highest number of realisations were investments related to using solar energy – 84 in total, however the lowest number of investments – 5, have been registered in case of wind energy. As it has been mentioned, in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, the conditions to use such renewable energy exist only locally, as the area of the region is characterised by less favourable conditions than other regions of the country. Nevertheless, the Podlaskie Voivodeship has seen an investment also in this type of a renewable energy source. Renewable energy source installations were located mainly in rural areas (52%). Based on the report – a sector of renewable energy sources in Eastern Poland (the Polish Agency of Information and Foreign Investment, a joint stock company), the renewable energy sector in the Podlaskie Voivodeship is directed at wind energy, solid biomass and biogas. The respective Voivodeships contributes little to the production of renewable energy in Poland. Taking account of the contribution of Eastern Poland Voivodeships into the production of specific renewable energy sources, in case of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, the percentage of the national wind production is significant despite relatively unfavourable natural conditions, and it amounts to 6.1% [the Polish Agency of Information and Foreign Investment, a limited liability company], and in case of biogas – 3.2%, and 0.08% in case of water [Urząd Statystyczny w Gdańsku 2010]. In the first quarter of 2013, 47 projects out of 159 in total were realised from funds allocated to renewable energy source grants in the Podlaskie Voivodeship (to compare, in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, there were 28, and in the Pomeranian Voivodeship – 19), among which 11 subsidies comprised projects related strictly to wind energy on the state level [Wind companies invest in Poland 2013].

Spatial realisation of renewable energy source installations

In the Podlaskie Voivodeship, we distinguish 3 towns holding the righs of a district (townships) and 14 territorial administrative districts. Within 7 counties (taking into account the number of municipalities in a county), in at least half of the municipalities, renewable energy source investments have been realised (Grajewo municipality, 75% of municipalities within a county, and 67% in Suwałki county, 60% in Mońki county, 56% in Augustów county, 50% in Bielsk Podlaski and Hajnówka counties, respectively). Kolno county has seen the least interest in using European funds in the area of renewable energy source investment activity (14% of counties in a municipality) as well as Sejny and Zambrów counties (20% respectively).

From the point of view of the largest number of installations, wind energy projects were the dominant ones in Suwałki county, the latter demonstrating favourable conditions (80% of all wind installations). The greatest number of solar installations using biomass was registered in Białystok county (20% and 25% respectively), and the installations included in the fourth renewable energy source group, i.e. hydroelectric and geothermal ones, as well as other sources, were located in Wysokie Mazowieckie county (20% of hydroelectric and geothermal installations as well as other sources).

Total investment

In the years 2007-2013, within the framework of the Regional Operational Programme for the Podlaskie Voivodeship (89% of the means in total) as well the Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme (11%), the amount of PLN 356 853 658 was allocated to sustainable energy source development. The total expenditure on installations according to the renewable energy source amounted to, respectively: 21% of means were spent on investment involving the use of wind energy (PLN 73 979 989), solar energy – 45% (PLN 161 259 406), biomass – 28% (PLN 101 101 855), as well as hydroelectric, geothermal and other sources – 6% of funds (PLN 20 512 407). The EU scheme co-funding totalled PLN 174 575 220, including 11% on wind energy investment (PLN 19 887 445), solar energy investment – 55% (96 266 085), biomass – 25% (PLN 43 375 851), as well as hydroelectric, geothermal and other sources – 9% (PLN 43 375 851). Most means were spent on installations using solar energy, which were installed mainly in households, where due to the required area of installations, rural households had more favourable conditions than city dwellers. The realisation of investment in using renewable energy sources allowed not only to increase the energy safety of rural area inhabitants, but also to decrease the risk of energy supply interruptions as well as the risk of environmental pollution, thus contributing to the realisation of the sustainable development demands, reflected in CSR and sanctioned by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

Conclusions

A stimulation of the renewable energy source development is conducive to the realisation of the sustainable development idea. Choosing between maintaining as well as improving the quality of environment and using technology harmful to the environment will not be necessary thanks to further sustainable source development. Investing in renewable source installations contributes to the development of municipalities and improves the understanding of CSR through the improvement of the quality of life of rural area inhabitants. Moreover, the renewable source development is one of the guarantees of energy safety, the increase in the efficiency of energy use and market competitiveness. Evolution and an increase in the level of social awareness in terms of eco-friendly education should take place both within local communities and on the level of legislative and executive branches. Social activities are related to, among others, creating an eco-friendly image of the region, with a special emphasis placed on the activities in the sustainable development area, among which, in the future, the idea of CSR will possibly be developed also in rural areas. Based on secondary data from the IT Monitoring and Control System of the Ministry of Development and Infrastructure, the following conclusions come to mind:

1. Most projects related to renewable energy source installations were realised by beneficiaries who were qualified as partnerships and natural persons conducting business activity (54 entities). At the same time, a very similar result was returned by a self-governing community – a municipality and a county, as well as a municipal local government unit (52 entities). It attests to the development of entrepreneurship in the researched area as well as a well-developed information system related to the possibility of obtaining EU funds. Renewable energy source installations were mostly (52%) located in rural areas.
2. In the Podlaskie Voivodeship, until the end of 2015, within operational programmes for the years 2007-2013, most solar installations were realised (84) – despite the potential of rene-

wable energy economics directed at wind energy or biomass, which were registered in fewest numbers (5 and 10 installations). Grajewo county (75% of municipalities used a subsidy for the realisation of renewable energy source investment) turned out to be the most active county (a percentage share in a county) related to the renewable energy source investment, and Kolno county witnessed the least interest in using European funds (14% of municipalities in a county). From the perspective of the largest number of installations in each group of energy sources, wind energy installations in Suwałki county (80% of all wind installations), solar and biomass installations were dominant in Białystok county (20 and 25%, respectively), whereas hydroelectric and geothermal installations as well as the remaining sources were dominant in Wysokie Mazowieckie county (20% of installations in the group).

3. In the years 2007-2013, the amount of PLN 356 853 658 was allocated to energy source development, including wind energy – 21%, solar energy – 45%, biomass 28% as well as hydroelectric, geothermal and the remaining sources – 6%. The level of EU subsidy totalled PLN 174 575 220, including 11% on wind energy investment, solar energy – 55%, biomass – 25%, as well as hydroelectric, geothermal and the remaining sources – 9%.

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Streszczenie

Podjęto próbę prezentacji poziomu zrealizowanych inwestycji OZE przez poszczególne formy prawne beneficjentów korzystających z funduszy UE jako efekt działań zrównoważonego rozwoju uwzględniających ideę wdrożenia CSR na obszarach wiejskich na przykładzie województwa podlaskiego. CSR jest ściśle związana ze zrównoważonym rozwojem, gdyż jej nadrzędnym celem jest wkład w taki rozwój, który zaspokaja potrzeby obecnego pokolenia, nie zagrażając możliwościom zaspokojenia potrzeb przyszłych pokoleń. Większość projektów dotycząca OZE zrealizowana została przez beneficjentów w układzie partnerskim i przez przedsiębiorców (54 projekty). W województwie podlaskim najczęściej finansowano projekty z zakresu energii słonecznej (84) do końca 2015 roku. W latach 2007-2013 przeznaczono ogółem 356 853 658 zł na cele rozwoju OZE, w tym 45% na energię słoneczną. Wielkość dotacji ze środków UE wyniosła 174 575 220 zł, w tym 55% na projekty użytkujące energię słoneczną.

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