



European Congress of Rural Municipalities, Warsaw, 19-20 October 2011 – an overview.

European Congress of Rural Municipalities is the biggest gathering of Polish local governments in 2011 during Polish Presidency in the European Union, inscribed in its official agenda. The key partner of the Congress is the Committee of the Regions of the European Union – COTER Commission (Sustainable Development). Co-operating Institutions contributing to Congress organisation: Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mazovia Region Marshal Office, Wielkopolska Region Marshall Office. The Congress will be held under patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland (his appearance t.b.c.) and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. This year apart from mayors, presidents of municipal councils and other representatives of municipalities (so far their number amounted to 800-1200 participants), we expect representatives of the Committee of the Regions as well as other European local government associations (about 200 participants). Taking into consideration the scope of the Congress discussion, we assume participation of delegates from all 16 Marshall Offices and a substantial part of counties (Association of Polish Regions of the Republic of Poland supported our initiative). This additional group may reach even 500 participants. Concluding, we estimate that about 500-600 representatives may participate in the first day and up to 1,500 during the second day of the event.

The first day of the Congress (venue: Conference Centre of the 'Gromada' hotel) will be devoted to actions undertaken and problems solving in rural municipalities from the Polish perspective. The debate will be held during three parallel conferences:

- Program of Rural Areas Development – experiences and prospects (in co-operation with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)
- financing rural municipalities (co-operation with *Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego*) as well as implementation of investment project in rural areas (initial proposal of co-operation at organisation of this part of conference with British Embassy, British-Polish Commerce Chamber, State Agency for Foreign Investment PAIZ, Tesco)

- Actions supporting new directions in development of rural areas - barriers and opportunities (human resources development, tele-IT infrastructure, renewable energy (possible co-operation with Mazovia Region Marshal Office). The first day of the Congress will end with an evening reception, an excellent opportunity for the participant to continue their discussion in a more informal environment. The key effect of the Conference will be conclusions related to cohesion policy, presented during the second day of the Congress, while the remaining elements will be further elaborated by the Union of Rural Communes of the Republic of Poland.

During the first day of the Congress, parallel to the two events, a session of COTER Commission of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union is envisaged (organisation in co-operation with Mazovia Region Marshal Office)

All events of the first day will be held in the Conference Centre of the 'Gromada' hotel. Number of participants - about 500-600 delegates including 120 representatives of the Committee of the Regions – COTER Commission.

The main event of the second day of the Congress (*Sala Kongresowa*, Palace of Culture and Science) will be seminar '*Which cohesion Policy for rural areas after 2013?*' (co-organised with COTER Commission of the Committee of the Regions). Three sessions are scheduled:

Session I - Development challenges of the European Union and a cohesion policy towards rural areas after 2013

Session II - Which developmental approach is most favourable for real and sustainable development of rural areas?

Session III - Experience of member states in using cohesion policy instruments for rural areas.

The Seminar will end with adoption of „Warsaw declaration” concerning the role of cohesion policy in the development of rural areas. During the second day we envisage participation of about 1200 - 1500 representatives, including some 200 delegates of the Committee of the Regions, European Commission, European Parliament and other representatives from local government institutions and associations of local authorities from European Union countries.