TRAINING COVERAGE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES' EMPLOYEES
LIFELONG LEARNING IN POLAND AS PART OF ACTIONS
CO-FINANCED FROM THE EU FUNDS IN 2007-2013

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Abstract

The article deals with local authorities' employees lifelong learning as part of actions co-financed from the EU European Social Fund of the Operational Programme Human Capital in 2007-2013.

The paper's primary objective is to present the local authorities' employees lifelong learning in terms of personnel competence and local authorities potential enhancement, considering the institutional and personnel dysfunctions of the Polish local authorities.

The introduction shows the necessity of lifelong learning in today's IT society, including the needs triggered by the implementation of common e-administration solutions. The possibilities were offered by 2007-2013 operational programmes co-financed from the EU funds.

Further, considering the results of the Polish administration socio-economic diagnosis, institutional and HR problems in local authorities are enumerated. The Human Capital Operational Programme documents analysis points to the implementation of training support opportunities available to local authorities from the European Union funds.

Additionally, the article demonstrates a training coverage for competitions regularly announced by the Ministry of Administration and Digitization in Poland. At the same time an analysis of the funds acquired by Polish local authorities for employee implementations and training as part of the dedicated competitions is performed.

Finally, benefits reported by Polish local authorities thanks to implementations and dedicated trainings in 2007-2013 are discussed and the effects of the support system for residents and entrepreneurs served by local authorities are indicated.

Keywords: lifelong learning, local authorities’ employee, local authority, trainings, the European Union funds, Operational Programme Human Capital.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the knowledge-based society human capital and lifelong learning (LLL) play the key role in society development. That fact is a great challenge for many nations and it is appreciated by their governments [1, 2, 3, 4]. The importance of human capital development and lifelong learning is strongly stressed by the institutions of the European Union which co-finances many measures of the so-called adult education from the European Social Fund [5]. In the Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusion it is clearly stated that “People are Europe’s main asset and should be the focal point of the Union’s Policies” (from the Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusion) [6].

In today's IT society lifelong learning is both a need and a necessity. Plenty of statements in European Union regulation acts stress the importance of lifelong learning in societies' development [7, 8, 9]. Lisbon Strategy pointed out that lifelong adult learning is one of the objectives of the knowledge society proposed [10]. In the European Report on Quality Indicators of Lifelong Learning one can find such an affirmation: "Lifelong learning is an overarching strategy of European co-operation in education and training policies and for the individual. The lifelong learning approach is an essential policy strategy for the development of citizenship, social cohesion, employment and for individual fulfillment" [7]. The EU has declared LLL as one of its most important projects [11].

In the knowledge-based economy and lifelong learning ICT skills are of great importance, which is underlined by many authors [12, 13, 14]. According to Pinto et al. [15] “To engage fully in day-to-day demands of work and life events, many of which already integrate ICT, citizens need specific set of competences and skills such as information processing, literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology rich environments”. 
In the ICT society, lifelong learning and acquisition of ICT skills is a necessity not only for ordinary citizens (the adults and the youth) as well as for the central and local authorities' administration employees. The group includes many people aged 50+ who have not had or had little contact with IT at school and when being a student. Popularizing e-administration solutions and ongoing ICT applications development provide a considerable challenge for administration employees who must enhance their IT tools operation qualifications continuously. The problem, to much extent, concerns the local authorities' employees. Obviously ICT skills are not the only qualifications which must be developed by administration personnel who are required to enhance their qualifications in terms of specialist and general trainings.

The problem of further education of the public administration personnel, to much extent, refers to post-communist European countries, including Poland. Upon Poland joining the European Union in 2004, a potential of personnel learning and qualifications enhancement, including local authorities' administration, has increased essentially thanks to EU funds. The possibilities for improving the quality of administrative workers were created by 2007-2013 operational programmes; the Operational Program Human Capital.

The primary objective of the paper has been to present the local authorities' employees lifelong learning in terms of personnel competence and local authorities potential enhancement considering the institutional and personnel dysfunctions of the Polish local authorities diagnosed.

The article presents the results of the Polish administration socio-economic diagnosis which point to institutional and Human Resources problems in local authorities, a training coverage for competitions regularly announced by the Ministry of Administration and Digitization in Poland, and the results of the analysis of the funds acquired by Polish local authorities for employee implementations and training as part of the dedicated competitions.

Finally, benefits reported by Polish local authorities due to implementations and dedicated trainings in 2007-2013 are discussed. Similarly, the effects of the support system for residents and entrepreneurs served by local authorities are indicated.

2 PROBLEMS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES' ADMINISTRATION AND EU SUPPORT POSSIBILITIES

In Poland (just like in other European countries) an essential number of administration tasks, of no national importance, are performed by local authorities. Since 1 January 1999 in Poland there has been operating a three-level local authorities' administration and the following have been operating as part of it:

- 16 local authorities of provinces (represented by marshal offices),
- 380 local authorities of counties (represented by county offices),
- 2478 local authorities of communes (represented by commune offices).

A special attention, in terms of building the administration potential, must be given to local authorities of communes and counties. Their location, possibly closest to the citizen and entrepreneur, justifies investments in enhancing the quality of the key services rendered by local authorities. Introducing quality standards by the authorities, to become customer-oriented, is of key importance for the enhancement of Polish local authorities administration effectiveness. Due to the fact that there is no such comprehensive analysis of the condition of local authorities, a thorough situation diagnosis should be a springboard for the supporting actions. In general, one can show that the administration potential of local authorities depends on the rank of the institution, interrelations with a higher-level institution, stability of the tasks and an involvement of the local authority in building its own administration potential. Bigger authorities enjoy a better administration potential; qualified personnel and financial potential for personnel qualifications and development enhancement. The most favourable situation is reported for local authorities of the province and the poorest – for the local authorities of communes/ municipalities, especially communes.

In the everyday practice of Polish administration, modern management methods are rarely applied. There is used no concept of process organization showing that the operation of the authorities should be designed "bottom up", namely starting from a specific customer's need, through the service process organization to satisfy the customer's needs as soon as possible, which translates into a high quality of the services rendered. However, today's procedures inside the authority show a high level of
complexity, long procedure paths due to the current “top down” designing procedures, including delegating decision-making and executive competencies to local authorities.

At the same time preparing the public servants in local authorities for an effective execution of the key policies in terms of Lisbon purposes requires a development of the right training offer. As for the HR management in administration, it is frequently the case that management is limited to “HR administration”. Such tools as competency profile development, regular studies of the training needs, qualifications enhancement programs, or incentive systems are sporadically applied. Thus building an efficient and competent administration ensuring reliable execution of the state tasks requires financial inputs facilitating public servants' professional qualifications and skills enhancement [15].

A chance for developing an efficient and effective public administration at all levels is seen in the funds of the Operational Programme Human Capital, one of the ten priority axes of which Priority V Good Governance, Measure 5.2, is dedicated to local authorities' administration. Detailed information for Measure 5.2 is provided in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Operational programme</th>
<th>Operational Programme Human Capital</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Priority V Good Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fund</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Managing Authority</td>
<td>Ministry of Regional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intermediate Body</td>
<td>Ministry of Administration and Digitalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Measure name and no</td>
<td>5.2. Strengthening potential of local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Measure objective</td>
<td>Enhanced quality of public services rendered by local authorities and enhanced quality of regional and local policies and programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7    | Type of possible operations | 1. projects focused on citizen service enhancement and local authorities administration management modernization including, e.g.:
- enhancing the quality, increasing the availability of public services by local authorities' administration (a)
- implementing the managerial entitlements in public administration at the level of the entire organization in that scope of quality management (e.g. ISO standard) or the authorities operation and development level evaluation (e.g. Common Assessment Framework CAF) and in selected aspects of its operation, internal communication, document flow, risk management, strategic planning (b))
2. projects focused on personnel competences enhancement, e.g. by:
- strengthening the HR and training departments as HR management centres of local authorities, e.g. by providing training in terms of the HR management model and tools, co-financing postgraduate studies for local authorities HR management to cover: job recruitment and implementation, regular employee evaluation, job-related and incentive remuneration system development (a),
- promoting and implementing the principles, mechanisms and procedures enhancing the transparency of administration and the level of ethical culture of local authorities' personnel (b),
- general and specialist training (on-site and off-site) for local authorities administration personnel (c),
- promoting the principles and mechanisms and procedures enhancing the transparency in local authorities, especially in a form of networks of sharing experience, informational and promotional campaigns, seminars, conferences and competitions (d)
3. projects to cover strengthening regulating and analytical capacities, including e.g.:
- strengthening the capacity of local authorities in terms of creating local acts of law and administrative acts (a),
- strengthening the capacity of local authorities in terms of developing, implementing...
and evaluating the regional and local policies and strategies (b),
- strengthening authority units responsible for monitoring and evaluation of regional and local policies and strategies (c)
4. supporting the local authorities in terms of public e-services rendering standards implementation and ePUAP correspondence exchange, electronization, e.g., implementation of domain-specific IT systems, enhancing the local authorities’ employees qualifications in terms of ICT technologies, information measures to increase the use of e-services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund allocation to a measure</th>
<th>EUR 199,609,967</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU funds contribution</td>
<td>EUR 169,668,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic public funds contribution</td>
<td>EUR 29,941,495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors’ own study on the basis of [16]

As part of Measure 5.2, the detailed description of OP HC provides various support forms focused on local and regional administration operation effectiveness enhancement. The objective will be accomplished by modernising the local authorities’ administration management processes, including the implementation of managerial local administration improvements, both for the entire authority and improvements in specific areas of the authority’s operation. Such improvements which will result in enhanced customer service provided by the authority having a tangible effect as a priority, e.g. introducing customer service standards, simplifying internal authority procedures or shortening the case processing time. As part of the measure, one expects support focused on facilitating the process of creating the local law and administrative acts by local authorities.

Support will be provided to local authorities’ administration since their competencies determine the quality and effects of the solutions implemented. In that aspect one expects a development of competence standards for local authorities’ employees, personnel competence enhancement as well as developing and strengthening ethical attitudes [17].

As part of the measure, a number of indicators monitoring the employee training have been planned, namely:

- the number of local authorities’ employees who have completed their regulating skills enhancement training participation: 23,000 people,
- the number of local authorities whose employees have completed their public e-services training participation: 800 authorities,
- the number of local authorities whose employees have completed their provincial public policies monitoring training participation: 8 authorities,
- the number of local authorities whose employees completed their participation in trainings which covered:
  o customer satisfaction management: 562 authorities,
  o quality management: 843 authorities,
  o HR management: 1124 authorities,
  o public administration accessibility enhancement: 562 authorities.

3 OBJECTIVE SCOPE OF THE COMPETITIONS ANNOUNCED FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES’ ADMINISTRATION

Drawing on the diagnosis in the Operational Programme Human Capital and the allocation and types of possible operations determined in the Detailed Description of Priority Axes OP HC, annually the Intermediary Authority approves action plans for programming years for Priority V and regularly announces competitions under Sub-measure 5.2.1 Modernization of management in administration
dedicated to local authorities. The types of possible operations as part of Action Plans are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Action plans for 2007-2013 for Priority V Good Governance, Measure 5.2, Sub-measure 5.2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Action plan</th>
<th>Types of possible operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Action plan for the years 2007-2008 | 1. Managerial improvements implementation in public administration for the entire organization, including quality management (e.g. ISO) or evaluation of the level of the authorities operation and development (e.g. Common Assessment Framework CAF), and selected aspects of its operation  
2. General and specialist trainings (on-site and off-site) for local authorities’ personnel  
3. Enhancing the capacity of local authorities in terms of creating local acts of law and administrative acts |
| 2    | Action plan for 2009 | 1. Enhancing the quality, availability of public services rendered by local authorities’ administration  
2. Implementing managerial improvements in local authorities’ administration for the entire organization, including the evaluation of the authority quality management or the operation level development, as well as selected aspects of its operation  
3. Strengthening the HR and training departments as HR management centres in local authorities  
4. Promoting and implementing transparency enhancing principles, mechanisms and procedures in administration and enhancing the local authorities' administration ethical culture  
5. General and specialist trainings (on-site and off-site) for the local authorities’ administration personnel  
6. Promoting the principles, mechanisms, procedures enhancing the transparency in local authorities, especially in a form of experience sharing networks, informational and promotional campaigns, seminar, conferences and competitions  
7. Strengthening the local authorities' local law and administrative acts creation capacity  
8. Strengthening the local authorities' capacity in terms of development, implementation and evaluation of regional and local policies and strategies  
9. Strengthening the authorities' units responsible for monitoring and evaluation of regional and local policies and strategies |
| 3    | Action plan for 2010 | Types of operations, see Action plan for 2009 |
| 4    | Action plan for 2011 | Types of operations, see Action plan for 2009 |
| 5    | Action plan for 2012 | Supporting local authorities in implementing ePUAP public e-services and correspondence exchange electronization, e.g. by:  
a) implementation of domain-specific IT systems,  
b) enhancing the qualifications of local authorities’ employees in terms of ICT technology application,  
d) informational actions enhancing the e-services application level. |
| 6    | Action plan for 2013 | Local authorities of the provinces implementing the system of public policies monitoring, especially by enhancing the analytical, organizational and technical potential |

Source: authors' own study on the basis of Action plans for the years 2007-2013

In response, local authorities develop applications for co-financing in which they plan and budget the training and implementation actions addressed to their institutions and employees of local authorities. Table 3 provides a concept of 3 projects completed, addressed to 7 local authorities and local authorities’ employees in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province in the years 2007-2013.
### Table 3. Sample applications for co-financing under Measure 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities covered by the project</td>
<td>Barcin Commune, Gąsawa Commune, Janowiec Wielkopolski Commune, Labiszyn Commune, Rogowo Commune, Żnin Commune, Żnin County</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project topic</td>
<td>European Competencies of the Public Servant</td>
<td>Professional Personnel – Efficient Authorities of the Żnin County</td>
<td>Żnin County Authorities – ready to render public e-services to residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition no</td>
<td>1/POKL/5.2.1/2008</td>
<td>2/POKL/5.2.1/2009</td>
<td>2/POKL/5.2.1/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project execution period</td>
<td>01.07.2008 – 30.06.2010</td>
<td>01.07.2010 – 30.06.2012</td>
<td>01.01.2014 – 30.06.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project value (EUR*)</td>
<td>210,480.65</td>
<td>290,917.32</td>
<td>451,955.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons trained</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project value per person (EUR*)</td>
<td>5,800.24</td>
<td>8,072.38</td>
<td>6,497.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key problem</td>
<td>Insufficient efficiency of operation of local authorities’ administration at commune and county level due to low public servants’ competencies</td>
<td>Low efficiency of the operation of authorities of communes and municipalities-communes in terms of public services rendered and insufficient competencies of the public servants</td>
<td>Low e-services standard and insufficient electronization level, including correspondence exchange via ePUAP platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key objective</td>
<td>Increased efficiency of the operation of local authorities’ operation at the commune and county level by enhancing public servants’ competencies through training</td>
<td>Increasing the efficiency of the operation of local authorities in terms of public services rendered and enhancing the public servants’ competencies</td>
<td>Enhancing the e-services standard and electronization level, including the exchange of correspondence via ePUAP platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-wise tasks in the project</td>
<td>1. Project promotion, including the organization of 2 conferences 2. Performing dedicated training for managers representing 7 local authorities 3. Performing dedicated training for public servants representing 7 local authorities 4. Performing computer training for public servants representing 7 local authorities</td>
<td>1. Implementing the monitoring system for the level of customer satisfaction with the public services quality in 7 local authorities 2. Implementation of the personnel competence system in 7 local authorities based on a study of competency gaps and training needs of public servants drawing on the updated job descriptions 3. Development and implementation of the procedure of updating the description of services rendered by 7 local authorities 4. Postgraduate studies and language training for 43 public servants representing 7 local authorities according to the job needs 5. General and specialist training for 42 public servants representing 7 local authorities according to the</td>
<td>1. Performing informational actions in 7 local authorities to enhance the level of using e-services in the Żnin County 2. Training of 268 local authorities’ employees of 7 local authorities to cover using ICT technologies 3. Providing new e-services rendered by 7 local authorities on ePUAP platform 4. 7 local authorities launching the Confidential Profile approval centres in the Żnin County 5. Modernizing the electronic document management system in 7 local authorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 CONCLUSIONS

The execution of Measure 5.2 OP HC has helped modernising Polish local authorities' administration in 2007-2013 considerably. The support, within 400 various projects, was given to more than 50% of local authorities, namely about 1400 local authorities in Poland. The training and implementation projects resulted in the most important effects and improvements [18]:

- Personnel competence system in 680 local authorities (24%) in which competence-oriented job descriptions were developed, employee competence was measured, training needs were determined, which facilitated matching the training policy to the local authorities' employees needs diagnosed.
- Customer satisfaction monitoring system in 615 local authorities (22%); specimens of hard-copy and electronic surveys to study customer satisfaction and the procedure of monitoring and enhancing the quality of the services rendered by local authorities, which had a positive effect on services quality management and the image of the authorities.
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in 464 local authorities (17%); self-evaluation reports and self-improvement reports in local authorities, which enhanced the operation of local authorities and facilitated the internal communication flow among the employees.
- ISO management standard (9001) in 328 local authorities (12%), which helped preparing the local authorities to the system implementation and performing the certification audit, which enhanced authorities' services quality management, including the image of the authorities.
- Launching new e-services in 162 local authorities (6%), namely a possibility of settling official matters on the Internet thanks to their availability on ePUAP platform and the residents receiving “confidential profiles”; free-of-charge e-signatures which can be used while communicating online with the authority.

Next to the above implementations, training support was provided to more than 120 thousand local authorities' employees by enhancing their professional knowledge and qualifications. The training scope included enhancing general qualifications (soft training) focused on developing individual features of the participants (interpersonal communication, assertiveness, motivation, stress management, time management, group conflict solving) and specialist job-specific (hard) training.

Such actions strengthened the Polish local authorities' administration potential leading to enhanced services quality and provided a strong impulse towards changing the authorities; organization structure to become customer-friendly and quality-minded for customers and entrepreneurs.

REFERENCES


