OUR EUROPEAN 1/2024 COUNTRYSIDE











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Krzysztof GrabowskiDeputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region

Dear Sir or Madam,

In January 2024, I had the pleasure of signing 30 framework agreements with representatives of Wielkopolska's local action groups for the new programming period. This is a very important moment for the rural communities in our region. Under the concluded agreements, we provide as much as EUR 128.5 million for the further development of rural areas. They are funds that come from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus. We are one of ten Regions that have decided to implement community-led local development in a multi-fund formula. This is a big challenge, but also an opportunity for further sustainable development of rural areas in Wielkopolska.

In May this year, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of Poland's membership in the European Union. On this occasion, we have prepared materials summarizing the implementation of both Rural Development Program 2014-2020 and Rural Development Program 2007-2013 in our Region.

In the Our European Countryside bulletin, we publish reports on culinary events, the Grune Woche fair in Berlin and the competition "Grating Horseradish in Chrzan - Wielkopolska Easter Traditions". The final gala of the 23rd edition of the Wielkopolska Farmer of the Year competition took place in March 2024. You are encouraged to read the list of winners and nominees in the competition. We also celebrate Village Head's Day in March. On this occasion, I had the honour to co-organize another pilgrimage of village heads to the Sanctuary of St. Joseph in Kalisz. The event was accompanied by a meeting in Stawiszyn, results of the provincial stage of the "Sołectwo Fund - the best initiative" competition were announced there.

Until Mai 31, 2024, you can submit entries to the 5th edition of the "RDP through the lens" photo competition. In this issue of the newsletter you will find one of the photos awarded in the previous edition.

I wish you pleasant reading.

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LEADER

EUR 128.5 million for the development of the Wielkopolska countryside

In January 2024, Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, signed framework agreements with representatives of 30 local action groups (LAG). The agreements concern the implementation of multi-fund community-led local development strategies in 2023-2027.



In the photo from the left: Deputy Marshal Krzysztof Grabowski, director of the Rural Development Department of the Marshal Office Izabela Mroczek, president of the Okno Południowej Wielkopolski Association Franciszek Marszalek and the secretary of the association, Joanna Ptak.

Local action groups operate as associations covering three sectors: public, private and non-governmental. They have the character of territorial partnerships. In 2023, each LAG developed a community-led local development strategy for the years 2023-2027. A total of 212 communes were covered by local development strategies in the Wielkopolska Region. The strategies were positively assessed by a group of experts appointed by the Board of the Wielkopolska Region. What do the strategies involve? In short, community-led local development, also known as LEADER. This is one of the interventions

included in the Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy for 2023-2027. It is aimed at building local identity based on social activation and using local resources. Importantly, it is implemented in a way that best meets the needs of rural communities, including through the use of knowledge, innovation and digital solutions.

- It was local communities that decided on the shape of the strategy and the needs to be met with the support of the EU funds. Pursuant to a decision of the Board of the Wielkopolska Region,



In the presence of the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, Czesław Cieślak, the director of the Rural Development Program of the Marshal Office, Izabela Mroczek, and the president of the Wielkopolska Network of LAGs, Małgorzata Blok, the Deputy Marshal of the Region, Krzysztof Grabowski, signed agreements with representatives of LAGs: Association "Solna Dolina" and Association "Wielkopolska Wschodnia"

LEADER



EUR 5.5 million went to the "Local Action Group Gościnna Wielkopolska" Association in Pepowo. The signing of the contract was attended by the region councillor Zofia Szalczyk, director of the Rural Development Department Izabela Mroczek at the Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region, Kościan staroste Henryk Bartoszewski and the LAG treasurer Jerzy Ptak.

in the new financial perspective we have European funds at our disposal from three sources: the agricultural fund, the regional development fund and the social fund. Thanks to it, we are donating as much as EUR 128.5 million for the further sustainable development of the Wielkopolska countryside – emphasizes Deputy Marshal Krzysztof Grabowski.

EUR 105,205,000 is a pool of funds that will be allocated strictly to co-financing projects submitted by applicants from rural areas covered by the strategies. EUR 23,219,016.50 are funds intended for the management of local development strategies, mainly the costs of maintaining LAG offices, but also for the animation of local communities, including the organization of a number of outdoor events. Most, as much as 61% of the funds come from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, 23% from the European Social Fund Plus and 16% from the European Regional Development Fund.

- Wielkopolska is one of ten regions that will implement multi-fund community-led local development strategies. Only four regions

decided to involve as many as three funds. It is worth emphasizing that the area covered by the strategies covers almost the entire Region – says Izabela Mroczek, Director of the Department of Rural Development Programs of the Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region in Poznan.

Framework agreements with local action groups were signed in the presence of local communities, which emphasizes the grass-roots nature of local development strategies and the active participation of residents in the creation of them.

- Local action groups are well prepared to implement new strategies. Multi-funding is a big challenge, but also a huge opportunity to undertake a number of activities aimed at the development of rural areas in our region. I am convinced that the funds allocated will be well spent — sums up Małgorzata Blok, president of the Association of Associations, Wielkopolska LAG Network.



The Local Action Group "Trakt Piastów" based in Łubowo received more than EUR 7.5 million for the implementation of the community-led local development strategy.

Source: LAG "Trakt Piastów".

RDP IMPLEMENTATION

What did the Wielkopolska countryside gain from Poland's membership in the European Union?

RDP beneficiaries in the Wielkopolska Region received more than PLN 2 billion. The scope of support granted is very wide and includes, among others: construction or modernization of local roads, water and sewage management, investments in facilities performing cultural functions, investments in marketplaces, shaping public space, non-commercial tourist, cultural and sports infrastructure and entrepreneurship in rural areas.



Garden gazebo in Janiszew in the Poniec commune in the Gostyń district.

- When assessing the advantages and disadvantages of Poland's membership in the European Union, it is worth making the effort to compare Polish countryside 20 years ago and today. Basic differences appear at almost every step, as the Wielkopolska is long and wide. They are differences that prove the benefits of implementing the Common Agricultural Policy in our region – emphasizes Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Region.

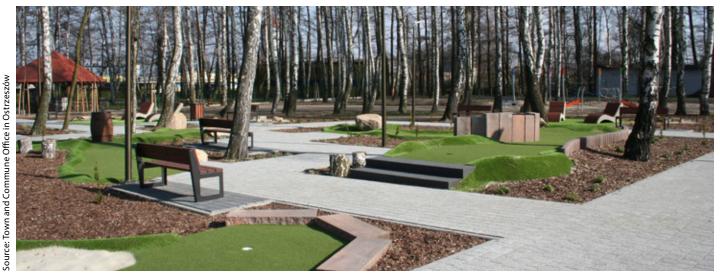
Taking into account statistical data published by Statistics Poland, in the years 2003-2022 the number of people living in rural areas who used the sewage network increased by 65%. This means that more than 700,000 more people now have access to this type of infrastructure than 20 years ago. The funds allocated from the Rural Development Program for 2007-2013 and the Rural Development Program for 2014-2020 are



Skatepark in Rychtal.

Source: Rychtal Commune Office

REALIZACJA PROW



A mini-golf course at the Kąpielova sports and recreation complex in Ostrzeszów.

of great importance in this context. A total amount of nearly PLN 870 million was allocated to support tasks in the field of water and sewage management in the Wielkopolska Region. It enabled the construction or reconstruction of 1,840 km of the above-mentioned sewage networks, which is approximately the length of the road from Poznan to Rome. It is worth adding information about more than 900 kilometres of new or modernized water supply network, they give us a section longer than the distance from Madrid to Poznan.

Thanks to the Rural Development Program 2014-2020, modern local roads were built in the Wielkopolska Region. We are talking about a total of almost 400 km of sections of municipal and district roads. Support in the amount of more than PLN 250 million was allocated for the purpose.

Funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development contributed to the budgets of municipalities that decided to improve trade in local food products by building or modernizing market squares. A total of 33 such facilities were built in our region.

The Common Agricultural Policy puts emphasis on ensuring that rural people have access to a rich cultural offer. For this reason, financial support was directed to co-financing rural community centres and rural community centres. Almost every commune in Wielkopolska can be proud of having obtained funds for this purpose, and the modernized and newly constructed buildings serve local communities, as we could see for example during forums of Rural Housewives Associations organized in each district of the Region (we wrote about the meetings in the January issue of this year's Monitor Wielkopolski).

When discussing the benefits of Poland's accession to the European Union, it is impossible to ignore the LEADER instru-

ment, which, thanks to local action groups operating throughout Europe, distributes the EU funds to meet the needs reported by local communities. Among the tangible effects of implementing the LEADER initiative in the Wielkopolska Region, it is worth mentioning hundreds, if not thousands, of playgrounds and outdoor gyms, multi-purpose sports fields, squares and skate parks. However, LEADER is largely about supporting entrepreneurship. The Funds under the Rural Development Program 2014-2020 were directed to support newly established companies, but also to the development of existing ones. The range of industries in which the inhabitants of our Region decided to invest the acquired capital is very wide: from the construction industry, through vulcanization plants, processing, educational, medical and veterinary activities, to artistic services. Nearly 1,600 companies in the Wielkopolska Region benefited from financial aid.



A traffic facility in Władysławów in the Turek Poviat.

EVENTS

Sower statuettes handed in

On March 10, 2024, the final gala of the Wielkopolska Farmer of the Year 2023 competition took place. We met 21 nominees and 10 winners of the plebiscite for the best agricultural farms in the Wielkopolska Region. The event was co-financed by the National Rural Network under the Rural Development Program 2014-2020.

Competition winners					
	First name and last name	Production direction	Town	Municipality	
1.	Kamila and Karol Janas	plant and/or animal production	Brudzew	Blizanów	
2.	Sandra and Jacek Wójciccy	plant and/or animal production	Kaliszkowice Kaliskie	Mikstat	
3.	Honorata and Maciej Frąckowiak	plant and/or animal production	Pęckowo	Obrzycko	
4.	Dorota and Konrad Zawada	Other areas of agricultural activity	Łuszczewo	Skulsk	
5.	Renata and Marek Olejniczak	plant and/or animal production	Czechel	Gołuchów	
6.	Jakub Napierała	plant and/or animal production	Szczepankowo	Ostroróg	
7.	Kamila and Dariusz Pawlakowie	plant and/or animal production	Brudzewo	Strzałkowo	
8.	Paulina and Mirosław Mieszała	plant and/or animal production	Kuźnica Bobrowska	Grabów nad Prosną	
9.	Dominika and Michał Gulczyńscy	horticultural production	Młynek	Sompolno	
10.	Danuta and Marek Pytlarz and Stanisław Pytlarz	horticultural production	Złotniki Wielkie	Żelazków	
		Nominees			
1.	Anna and Adam Wróblewicz	plant and/or animal production	Piątek Wielki	Stawiszyn	
2.	Barbara and Jerzy Kokocińscy	plant and/or animal production	Snowidowo	Grodzisk Wielkopolski	
3.	Elżbieta and Łucjan Pawlak and Aneta and Damian Pawlak	plant and/or animal production	Wilkonice	Pępowo	
4.	Justyna and Arkadiusz Kamińscy	plant and/or animal production	Opatów	Łęka Opatowska	
5.	Krystyna and Zygmunt Niewia- domscy	plant and/or animal production	Lądek	Lądek	
5.	Elżbieta and Roman Świtek	plant and/or animal production	Pałczyn	Miłosław	
7.	Izabela i Klaudiusz Bartkowiak	plant and/or animal production	Promienko	Pobiedziska	
8.	Ewa and Grzegorz Zaworscy	plant and/or animal production	Szczonów	Żerków	
9.	Maria and Józef Skąpscy	plant and/or animal production	Raków	Łęka Opatowska	
10.	Magdalena and Jacek Kalak	plant and/or animal production	Gorzupia	Krotoszyn	
11.	Anna and Mateusz Pluta and Beata and Wojciech Pluta	horticultural production	Łobżenica	Łobżenica	



The competition jury has decided to nominate 21 farmers.

In accordance with a long-standing tradition, in March the Wielkopolska Regional Government organizes the final gala in the Earth Hall of the Poznan International Fair, which is a summary of the Wielkopolska Farmer of the Year competition. This year, too, the hall was filled to capacity. 63 farms were registered for the 23rd edition, of which the competition jury selected 21 nominees and 10 winners.

- The "Wielkopolska Farmer of the Year" competition has been gathering elite farmers from our region for many years, they, thanks to their work, ingenuity and courage, are determinants of development, care for tradition, and producers of healthy and highest quality food and food products. The gathered farmers are proof that despite many challenges and hardships currently affecting the agricultural industry, development plans can be implemented and modern technologies can be implemented. It is worth emphasizing that the Wielkopolska Regional Government supports rural areas – said Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, during the final gala of the Competition.

- The jury of the "Wielkopolska Farmer of the Year" competition evaluates farms not only in terms of their acreage and production potential. During field visits, attention is paid to aesthetic aspects of the farmstead, to cultural heritage, and the traditions passed down and cultivated on farms, they are an important element of the heritage of rural areas and hosts – added Prof. Grzegorz Skrzypczak, chairman of the competition jury.

During the gala, a film summarizing the 20th anniversary of the Wielkopolska countryside in the European Union was shown. Its implementation was possible thanks to the funds of the National Rural Areas Network. In addition to the awards ceremony, the gala participants could take advantage of an interesting musical offer. The artistic part of the finale began with the performance of Zbigniew Zaranek, the winner of the fourth edition of the "Voice Senior". The main star of the event was Urszula.



The ten of Wielkopolska Farmers of the Year 2023.

EVENTS

Village heads made pilgrimages to Kalisz and Stawiszyn

Over 700 leaders of rural communities from all over Wielkopolska came to the Sanctuary of St. Joseph in Kalisz as part of the 8th Pilgrimage of Village Heads. The event took place on March 16, 2024. After church celebrations, participants took part in the artistic part, it was organized at the Sports and Entertainment Hall at the Primary School in Stawiszyn. During the meeting, the provincial stage of the "Community Fund - the best initiative" competition was resolved and Honorary Badges "For services to the Wielkopolska Region" were awarded.



More than 700 village heads gathered at the Sanctuary of St. Joseph in Kalisz.

Presided over the Holy Mass during the 8th Pilgrimage of Village Heads to the National Sanctuary of St. Joseph in Kalisz. The pilgrimage refers to the Village Head's Day, celebrated on March 11, it draws society's attention to the important and crucial role that village heads play in the life of local communities. In his homily, Bishop Buzun emphasized that the village head has a servant role towards the local community. They must be open to the affairs of others, sometimes abandoning established patterns and their own needs.

- For the eighth time, we can meet during the pilgrimage of village heads who want to thank for another year of their work, but also entrust Saint Joseph with their difficult social mission said the co-organizer of the project, Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Region, thanking the village heads for participating in the event.
- Today, village heads face various challenges and problems, they must be animators of social and cultural life. They must be able to plan the future of the entire community - reminded the De-

puty Voivode of the Wielkopolska Region and president of the Association of Village Heads of the Wielkopolska Region Jarosław Maciejewski, he also served as the village head of the village of Rudna in the Złotów commune for 17 years.

The pilgrimage ended at the monument of St. John Paul II, where Barka was sung and bouquets of flowers were laid.

Participants moved to the Sports and Entertainment Hall at the Primary School in Stawiszyn.

- I am glad that Stawiszyn is once again hosting village heads from all over Wielkopolska. This unique celebration highlights the important role they play in local communities. Funds from the Sołectwo Fund are becoming an increasingly important source of financing for initiatives in rural areas, said the mayor of Stawiszyn, Grzegorz Kaczmarek.

On the day, the results of the provincial stage of the "Solectwo Fund - the best initiative" competition were announced. The

WYDARZENIA



A total of 74 village heads from the entire region received the badges.

winner was the village of Brenno, from the Wijewo commune, in the Leszno district, and its project "Development of public space at the Breńskie Lake through rebuilding the communication route into a section of a roller track with elements of small architecture" (prize PLN 7,000), it was advanced to the national stage of the competition. The second place was taken by the village of Łuszkowo, from the Krzywiń commune, in the Kościan district, for the implementation of the project entitled "Intergenerational gazebo for meetings of Łuszków residents" (prize PLN 5,000). The third place went to the Szalonka commune, from the Łeka Opatowska commune, in the Kepno district, for the implementation of the project entitled "Renovation and modernization of the Volunteer Fire Department Hall in Szalonka with kitchen facilities" (prize PLN 3,000). The level of the submitted competition projects was very high, which is why 14 distinctions were awarded. On behalf of the organizers, prizes were presented by Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, Jarosław Maciejewski, President of the Association of Village Leaders of the Wielkopolska Region, Robert Galęba, President of the Association of Village Leaders, and Szymon Wdowczyk, Director of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

-The village head pilgrimage was also an opportunity to award the Badge of Honor "For Merits to the Wielkopolska Region" to 74 village headmen who support the functioning of their towns and their inhabitants through active and outstanding civic activity and the implementation of tasks for the social, cultural and economic development of the Wielkopolska Region. On behalf of the Wielkopolska Regional Government,

they were presented by Krzysztof Grabowski and Andrzej Pichet, Councillor of the Wielkopolska Region Assembly.

Local bands: "Stawiszynianki", the children's vocal group "Talisman" from the Cultural Centre in Zbiersk and the "Swojski Kwartet" band from Stawiszyn were responsible for the artistic part of the meeting.



The Deputy Marshal of the Region, Krzysztof Grabowski, and the Region Councillor, Andrzej Pichet, presented the Badges of Honour "For services to the Wielkopolska Region"

EVENTS

Wielkopolska delicacies in Berlin

Another edition of the Grüne Woche fair took place on January 19 - 28, 2024. The event was attended by a delegation from the Wielkopolska Region, led by the Deputy Marshal, Krzysztof Grabowski and member of the Region Board, Jacek Bogusławski. Exhibitors - producers of healthy and regional culinary products from the Wielkopolska Region - had the opportunity to present their offers



Wielkopolska stand at the Grüne Woche fair in Berlin.

The International Fair of Food, Agriculture and Horticulture Internationale Grüne Woche (IGW) is an international exhibition whose traditions date back to 1926. Manufacturers from all over the world present food (especially organic and regional products), supplies for agriculture, forestry and horticulture, animals, kitchen equipment, garden equipment. The offer related to the development of rural areas also plays an important role at the exhibition. The Berlin fair is also an important meeting place: the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) takes place there, with the participation of several dozen ministers of economy, environment, agriculture and development from around the world. The Wielkopolska Region (except for the period marked by the Covid-19 pandemic) has been participating in the fair continuously for over 20 years.

This year, the Wielkopolska Region also allowed exhibitors from our region to participate in the event to promote regional and traditional food products and healthy, high-quality food.

The Wielkopolska stand was represented by the Familijna restaurant, Tłusty INDYK from Żerków in the Jarocin district, the Naturini company from Kościan, Pierogarnia Pierożak by Piotr Pomes from Poznan, Vineyard Lipka Wielka from the Lwówek commune in the Nowy Tomyśl district, the District Dairy Cooperative in Koło, Marek Grądzki and his wife Dobromiła Tenerowicz-Grądzka from the town of Linie in the Lwówek commune and Tradycyjne Jadło near Pobiedziska in the Poznan district.

On January 20, 2024, due to the invitation by Axel Vogel, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Climate Protection of the State of Brandenburg, a meeting of the Polish partner regions of Brandenburg was held. The Wielkopolska Region delegation was led by Jacek Bogusławski, Member of the Board of the Wielkopolska Region. The main issues of the meeting were the EU's common agricultural policy, regional cooperation for the revitalization of the Oder River and the challenges of partnership cooperation. Parties also discussed the problems faced by agriculture on both the Polish and German sides.

Deputy Marshal, Krzysztof Grabowski, together with the Directorate of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, participated in a dedicated, bilateral meeting with Minister Axel Vogel on Sunday, January 21. During the meeting, Deputy Marshal Grabowski became interested in the situation of German farmers and the ongoing farmers' strike in Germany. Joint activities related to agriculture of both regions were also discussed and preliminary arrangements were made for the visit of the Minister of Brandenburg planned to Wielkopolska in April this year. During his visit to the Fair, Deputy Marshal, Grabowski also held meetings with representatives from partner regions of the Wielkopolska Region, including: with long-term partners from Hesse.

Grating horseradish in Chrzan - Wielkopolska Easter Traditions

On March 24, 2024, the final of the competition "Grating horseradish in Chrzan - Wielkopolska Easter Traditions" took place in Chrzan. The competition was organized by the Wielkopolska Regional Government together with the Żerków Commune. In addition to the competition for a dish with horseradish or made from horseradish, in which the winning dish for dumplings with venison in horseradish sauce was presented by Rural Housewives Associations in Augustynów, there was also a horseradish grating competition. In this competition, the undisputed leader was Rural Housewives Associations Orzechowianki, they grated as much as 625 g of horseradish within the statutory three minutes



More than 100 Rural Housewives Associations took part in the competition in Chrzan, in the Żerków commune, in the Jarocin district, and prepared Easter dishes especially for this occasion as part of the competition for the best dish with horseradish. There were also other Easter specialties, drawing on local heritage and traditions, and present on tables during the holidays. Visitors to the event could visit Easter stands and taste delicacies prepared by Rural Housewives Associations from all over Wielkopolska.

- The final of the "Grating horseradish in Chrzan - Wielkopolska Easter Traditions" competition in Żerków is an extraordinary form of promoting the culinary heritage of Wielkopolska. Particular attention is drawn to the huge turnout of visitors to the event and Rural Housewives Associations. By organizing the competition, the Board of the Wielkopolska Region wants to inspire the inhabitants of our region to reach for local products and use old recipes for Easter dishes. The event in Chrzan, in addition to the best dishes, gathered participants in a horseradish grating competition. The best participants were able to grind over half a kilogram of it in three minutes! – Krzysztof Grabowski says, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region.

The winners of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places in both dish categories received financial prizes of PLN 1,500 - 1st place, PLN 1,300 - 2nd place, PLN 1,000 - 3rd place, and the competition

committee awarded 40 distinctions along with financial prizes of PLN 500 each. The awards were co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Prizes for the winning dishes and the largest amount of grated horseradish were handed in by: Krzysztof Grabowski, Michał Surma - mayor of the city and commune of Żerków and Jan Grzesiek - Region councillor. The event was also honoured by performances of such bands as "Chrzanianki", "EK" and the star of the event, Andrzej Cierniewski.



Michał Surma - mayor of Żerków, Andrzej Cierniewski - artist, Krzysztof Grabowski - Deputy Marshal of the Region and Jan Grzesiek - Region councillor tried their hand at the horseradish grating competition.

CULINARY CORNER

Dumplings with venison in horseradish sauce

On Sunday, March 24, Chrzan became the capital of tradition and flavours related to horseradish in Wielkopolska. More than 100 Rural Housewives Associations took part in the finals of the "Grating horseradish in Chrzan - Wielkopolska Easter Traditions" competition organized by the Wielkopolska Local Government and the Żerków Commune. The winning dish was prepared by the Rural Housewives Association in Augustynów based on a recipe from hunter Ewa. Dumplings with venison in horseradish sauce are an original combination of traditional flavours.



Pour the sauce over the cooked dumplings and serve with stuffed quail eggs

DOUGH FOR DUMPLINGS:

- 3 cups of wheat flour
- 1,5 cups of hot water
- 1 egg
- · Pinch of salt

FILLING:

- 1 kg wild boar shoulder
- 0,5 stick of butter
- 1 onion
- Salt, pepper, marjoram

PREPARATION:

Cook the wild boar meat until soft, mince it and add the finely chopped onion, glazed in butter. Season to taste with salt, pepper and marjoram. Knead the dough for dumplings using the given ingredients. Divide the dough into four parts, roll out and cut out discs. Stuff it with the filling and crimp the edges. Cook in salted water for 10 minutes.

HORSERADISH SAUCE:

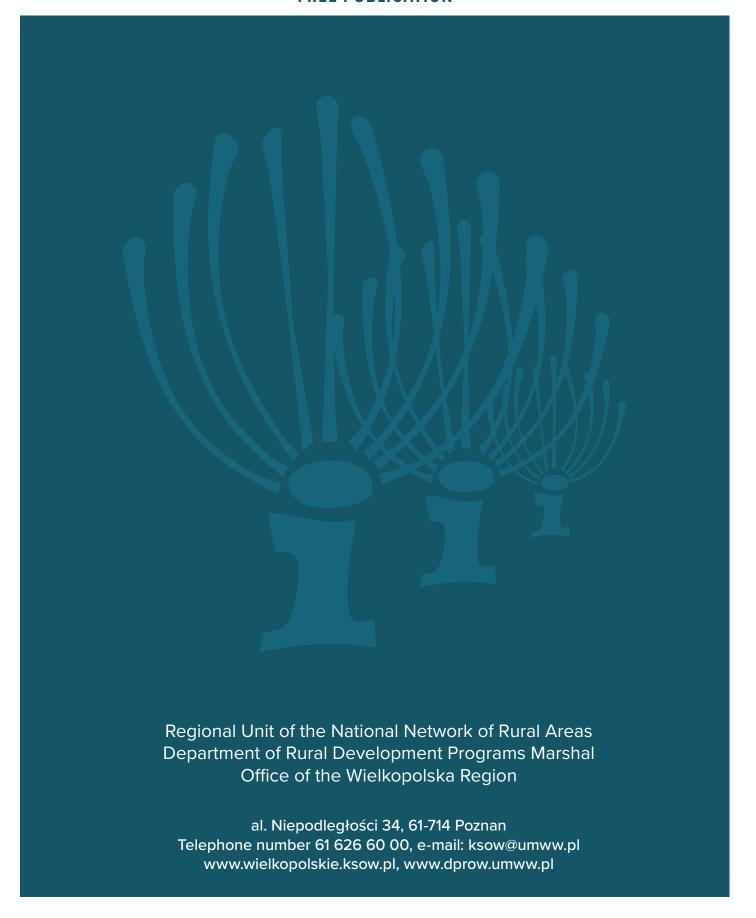
- · 25 dag of butter
- 2 onions
- A spoonful of horseradish
- 250 ml of dry white wine
- Salt, white pepper

Fry the onion in butter, add finely grated horseradish, and pour in the wine. After the alcohol evaporates, season with salt and white pepper.





FREE PUBLICATION











"European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas".