

## Effect of sport on social exclusion within local communities in Poland

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### Abstract:

Worldwide sport is perceived not only as a human activity that aims at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, but also as a tool for economic and social change, enabling improvement of social status for individuals and the collective. While the relationship between the broadly understood sport and local development is commonly known, there is no research, in particular in the field of economics, on using sport to combat social exclusion under relatively new, bottom-up approach of territorial development used in the European Union, namely Community-Led Local Development. Due to the fact that this approach is implemented by Local Actions Groups, the article focuses on their activities in this field. It aims to verify whether and to what extent broadly understood sport (including active and passive participation, as well as sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure and organization of sports and recreational events) is used by Local Actions Groups in Poland as a tool for increasing social inclusion within local communities. Groups operating in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship served as an example. The study found that for most of Local Action Groups in the region the barriers to local development include sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure (its quality, accessibility and distribution). This was reflected in the strategic goals formulated in their strategies and planned projects which aimed usually to improve the quality of life of residents (without indicating specific groups of them) rather than supporting infrastructure aimed at adapting it to the needs of people from disadvantaged groups and implementing projects aimed at including these people in the local community. The article concludes that the implementation of a bottom-up approach to local development in Poland is accompanied by the conviction that sport is an important factor for local development. However, sport has been used very rarely as a tool for increasing social inclusion.

**KeyWords:** social inclusion, Community-Led Local Development, Local Action Groups, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship

### Introduction

Sport undoubtedly has a positive impact on social inclusion because it breaks down barriers. People just come together and play, regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender expression, ability/disability, religion, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Not only physical activity but also passive participation in sport events contributes to integration within society, because it creates a feeling of inclusion in society, a sense of belonging to a given community and acceptance to the community, as well as a feeling of having valued roles in it.

In the last two decades due to its non-sporting role in communities, sport has begun to be perceived as a kind of intervention tool for building peace in areas of conflicts, health education or youth empowerment (Giulianotti, Hognestad&Spaaij, 2016, p. 130; Beutler, 2008; Coalter, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Coalter, 2013; Darnell, 2012; Young, Okada, 2014) and as a tool of community development (Gratton& Henry, 2001; Ignasiak-Szulc, 2020). The social and economic benefits of sport for local communities come down to cost-effective health prevention, attracting new businesses or growing existing ones, promoting ethnic/cultural harmony, reducing alienation of some groups and ensuring a sustainable environment (Collins& Kay, 2003, p. 28).

In the EU in the financial perspective 2014-2020 one of the most important instruments of territorial development, focused on local communities, is Community-Led Local Development (CLLD). It consists of three key components: Local Actions Groups (LAGs), local development strategies (LDSs) prepared by them and their own designated areas covered by the strategies (Regulation (EU), 2013). LAGs are area-based partnerships representing public, private, voluntary and social sectors functioning in local socio-economic environment, operating on the basis of LDSs. LDSs are programmes frequently presented as a means of addressing social exclusion, both through the inclusive nature of the partnership structure, and through the local nature of the partnership, which is perceived to allow a greater access to excluded groups than centralised policy (Shortall, 2004, p. 113). The desired outcome of functioning of LAGs is therefore social inclusion of disadvantaged groups living in the areas covered by the LDSs (Kola-Bezka, 2020, p. 508). Sport can be, potentially, a tool for LAGs in achieving their social goals. Its integral role has been indicated, although not very clearly, in guidelines for LAGs prepared by the European Commission connected with implementation of CLLD (European Commission,

2014). Although the issues of sport and social exclusion/inclusion have already been analysed in a number of publications (e.g., Bailey, 2005; Frisby&Ponic, 2013; Collins& Kay 2003; Kennett, 2013; Spaaij, Magee& Jeanes 2014), there is a lack of studies on using sport as a remedy for social exclusion within 'bottom-up' approach, which is CLLD. The paper is a first step to fill this gap. It aims to verify whether and to what extent broadly understood sport (including active and passive participation, as well as sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure and organization of sports and recreational events) is used by LAGs in Poland as a tool for increasing social inclusion within local communities.

### Material & methods

The study covered all 28 LAGs operating in one Polish region, namely Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship. There were two reasons for choosing this region. Firstly, in 2014-2020 financial perspective Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship was the only region in Poland in which CLLD was implemented using direct method both in cities and rural areas. It means that in LDSs of all LAGs operating in this voivodship, at the moment of their selection, the indicative budget (including such financial sources as: European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) for projects implemented under LDS was specified. As a result, it is highly probable that these projects will be implemented, and that their planned effects and goals of LDSs will be largely achieved. This gives credibility to the conclusions drawn on the basis of analysis of these documents. The second reason was that the voivodship is a region characterized by a relatively high level of risk of social exclusion compared to the rest of the country, as evidenced by the following sample indicators (Statistics Poland, data for 2019):

- share of the long-term unemployed in the number of people of working age: 2.1% (13<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking of 16 voivodships; indicator for Poland 1.4%);
- percentage of the population in retirement age: 21.6% (8<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking of 16 voivodships; indicator for Poland 21.9%);
- percentage of persons in households with expenditures below extreme poverty threshold: 3.4% (9<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking of 16 voivodships; indicator for Poland 4.2%; extreme poverty threshold sets the level of the satisfaction of needs below which there is a biological threat to life or psychophysical human development).

It therefore seems that, especially in a region with such a high risk of social exclusion, efforts to reduce the scale of social exclusion should be intense, and the set of tools used for this should include instruments of various nature. Among LAGs covered by the study were: 7 urban LAGs operating in the cities with the population exceeding 20,000, 18 urban-rural LAGs (operating in other cities, urban-rural and rural communes) and 2 rural LAGs (operating only in rural communes). The list of all LAGs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. LAGs covered by the study

Group of LAGs	Names of LAGs
Urban LAGs	"LGD Miasta Brodnicy" (LAG1), "LGD Grudziądzki Spichlerz" (LAG2), "LGD Inowrocław" (LAG3), "LGD Miasto Włocławek" (LAG4), "LGD Chełmno" (LAG5), "LGD Dla Miasta Torunia" (LAG6), "LGD Dwie Rzeki" (LAG7)
Urban-rural LAGs	"LGD Gminy Powiatu Świeckiego" (LAG8), "LGD Dolina Drwęcy" (LAG9), "LGD Bory Tucholskie" (LAG10), "LGD Dorzecza Zgłowiączki" (LAG11), "LGD Gmin Dobrzyńskich Region Północ" (LAG12), "LGD Czarnoziem na Soli" (LAG13), "LGD Gmin Dobrzyńskich Region Południe" (LAG14), "Stowarzyszenie Nasza Krajna" (LAG15), "Stowarzyszenie Lokalna Grupa Rybacka Nasza Krajna i Pałuki" (LAG16), "LGD Pałuki-Wspólna Sprawa" (LAG17), "Stowarzyszenie Partnerstwo dla Krajny i Pałuk" (LAG18), "Stowarzyszenie Partnerstwo dla Ziemi Kujawskiej" (LAG19), "LGD Pojezierze Brodnickie" (LAG21), "LGD Razem dla Powiatu Radziejowskiego" (LAG22), "LGD Sąsiedzi wokół Szlaku Piastowskiego" (LAG23), "LGD Trzy Doliny" (LAG24), "LGD Vistula-Terra Culmensis-Rozwój przez Tradycję" (LAG25), "LGD Ziemia Gotyku" (LAG27), "LGD Ziemia Wąbrzeska" (LAG28)
Rural LAGs	"LGD Podgrodzie Toruńskie" (LAG20), "LGD Zakole Dolnej Wisły" (LAG26)

Source: own preparation.

The subject of the study were LAGs' strategies (LDSs) containing plans to use EU funds in the 2014-2020 financial perspective to increasing the level of socio-economic development of areas where LAGs operate, mainly by influencing the improvement of the situation of people from disadvantaged groups (socially excluded and those at risk of social exclusion). To achieve the goal of the article, first of all the LAGs' strategies were analysed in terms of identifying disadvantaged groups living in the area of LAGs operation, most in need of support. Then it was verified whether sport is treated by LAGs as a factor increasing social inclusion of these groups and, thus, as a factor of local development. For this purpose, SWOT areas where LAGs implement CLLD were analysed in terms of the presence of issues connected with sport both among the strengths and weaknesses of these areas as well as the opportunities and threats they faced. Next, the focus was on the analysis of the strategic goals of LDSs and the undertakings assigned to them in order to check whether and to what extent sport-related issues were included in them. These analyses are supplemented by conclusions formulated on the basis of a review of the list of projects related to the development of sport and recreational infrastructure,

organization of sports events, etc., implemented in the voivodeship, for which LAGs obtained support from EU funds (in the form of indicative budget for implementing their strategies). The focus was on actions 7.1 and 11.1 of the Regional Operational Program of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship (ROP), which were dedicated for financing CLLD in the region.

**Results**

The starting point for verifying whether and to what extent broadly understood sport is used by LAGs as a tool for increasing social inclusion was identifying which groups of disadvantaged were perceived by LAGs as in greatest need of support. The study revealed that in LDSs of LAGs operating in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship in 2014-2020 programming period among the disadvantaged groups (excluded or at risk of social exclusion) the following were most often indicated: people with disabilities (indicated in 21 out of 28 LDSs), people over 50 (19) whose limited opportunities in the labour market result from outdated qualifications or poor health, women (18), whose difficult situation on the labour market and low earnings are often related to breaks in employment caused by the birth of a child or the need to take care of dependent persons (minor children, elderly parents), people under 35 (14), whose qualifications and experience often turns out to be insufficient to find a satisfactory job, the long-term unemployed (9), people with low or no qualifications (7), and children and young people up to the age of 25 years (7). The following disadvantaged groups were much less frequent: economically inactive people, people who do not work and do not want to work and are reluctant to participate in activation activities, families using social welfare benefits, people with lower secondary, primary or no education, people in post-working age, families with many children, dependent people, youth with educational difficulties, dysfunctional families, homeless people, those leaving prison, the poor and inhabitants of rural areas. The analysis of the results of the SWOT relating to the areas covered by LAGs showed that broadly understood sport (including physical activity, awareness of a healthy lifestyle, access to sports and recreational infrastructure etc.) was treated by LAGs as an important factor of local development. The importance of this factor was recognized by 27 LAGs, and it appeared much more often as a strength or weakness of the area where LAGs operate than an opportunity or a threat faced by them (Table 2).

Table 2. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to widely understood sport, identified in SWOT analyses of the areas where LAGs operate

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive recreational and tourist values of the LAG area (2)</li> <li>• Well-developed sports infrastructure (11)</li> <li>• A rich sports offer - the local community can participate in free sports events (1)</li> <li>• Involvement of the local community in active leisure activities (1)</li> <li>• High competences of people involved in the implementation of sports and tourism projects (1)</li> <li>• Good condition of the sports infrastructure of public educational institutions (swimming pools, sports halls, playgrounds) (2)</li> <li>• A large supply of places with recreational potential (green areas, bicycle paths, hiking trails, canoeing routes) (5)</li> <li>• Sports traditions of the towns (2)</li> <li>• Promotion of towns through sport (2)</li> <li>• Non-governmental organizations actively operating in the field of sport and recreation (2)</li> <li>• Sport-active youth (1)</li> <li>• Cooperation of local entities (schools, NGOs, public institutions) in the organization of sports events (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient number of sports facilities, shortages in recreational infrastructure (17)</li> <li>• Poor condition of sports and recreation infrastructure (9)</li> <li>• Insufficient offer of free sports activities for children and youth (3)</li> <li>• No sports activities for the disabled (1)</li> <li>• Too few sports organizations working for children and youth (2)</li> <li>• Insufficient offer of free sports activities for the poor (2)</li> <li>• Little involvement of children and adolescents in sport (1)</li> <li>• Limited access of children and adolescents from communities at risk of exclusion to educational entities, including those offering sports activities (1)</li> <li>• High risk of addictions and crime among young people resulting from the lack of alternative ways of spending free time (1)</li> <li>• Uneven distribution of sports infrastructure in the LAG area (1)</li> <li>• Insufficient use of the existing infrastructure (sports and recreation, tourism), including the low level of use of the sports infrastructure of schools in the afternoon in order to conduct open sports and recreational activities (6)</li> <li>• Low availability of the offer of smaller sports clubs, amateur clubs and hobby clubs from non-mainstream sports discipline (1)</li> <li>• Lack of effective systemic mechanisms of activating children and adolescents from dysfunctional families or groups at risk of social exclusion through sport (1)</li> <li>• Poor offer of sports activities for the disabled (3)</li> <li>• A small offer of integration activities for children + parents (2)</li> <li>• Poor offer of sports activities for seniors (3)</li> <li>• Lack of funds for organizing open sports and recreational events (2)</li> <li>• Lack of guardians and animators conducting sports activities (2)</li> <li>• Low activity of people at risk of poverty, excluded and other disadvantaged groups in terms of sports activity (1)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to attractive tourist areas, conducive to sports and recreation (3)</li> <li>• Growing demand for sports and recreational services (1)</li> <li>• Fashion for physical activity and a healthy lifestyle (4)</li> <li>• Promotion of a town / LAG by organizing sports events (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falling number of mass sports events (1)</li> <li>• Declining financial outlays on sports and recreation (1)</li> <li>• Growing poverty and social exclusion of disadvantaged groups (1)</li> </ul>

Notes: in parentheses there is a number of LAGs which have indicated a given factor in their LDSs.  
 Source: own preparation based on Local Development Strategies.

Strategic objectives and undertakings directly connected with the sport-related factors identified in the SWOT analyses were included in the strategies of 19 LAGs. The groups of sport-related objectives and sport-related undertakings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Sport-related objectives and sport-related undertakings identified in LDSs

Objective	Undertakings	LAGs whose LDSs contain objective and some of the undertakings
Improving the standard and availability of sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure; improvement of the tourist and residential attractiveness of the LAG area	Construction or reconstruction of the following infrastructure elements: tourist routes, water infrastructure (piers, kayak marinas, sheds, viewing platforms), accompanying recreational infrastructure (outdoor gyms, playgrounds, mini-playgrounds for team games, bicycle paths, walking and cycling routes), civic centres and other facilities serving as social and cultural centres in the countryside	LAG 9, LAG 11, LAG 13, LAG 14, LAG 16, LAG 17, LAG 20, LAG 21, LAG 22, LAG 23, LAG 24, LAG 25, LAG 26, LAG 28
Social inclusion of residents through social integration based on sport, tourism and recreation	Support of activities in the field of social integration, cultural integration, civil, sports and health activation offered by institutions rendering services for socially excluded groups or those at risk of social exclusion; initiatives of local organizations using the local historical, cultural and touristic potential for activation of inhabitants to fulfil social roles and engage them in common activities	LAG 2, LAG 6, LAG 10, LAG 18, LAG 19

Source: own preparation based on Local Development Strategies.

Table 4 presents projects related to the broadly understood sport, recreation and tourism which received EU financing under actions 7.1 of the ROP.

Table 4. Sport-related projects which received funding under Action 7.1 of the Regional Operational Program of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship for the years 2014-2020

Project name	Project summary
Recreation and road traffic town in Kończewice	Construction of a recreation and road traffic town in Kończewice. Beneficiary: Chelmża Commune.
Adaptation of the Volunteer Fire Department buildings in Ustroń and Janowice as well as adaptation and equipment of rooms in the building of the Municipal Cultural Centre and the sports square in Lubań for the purposes of social activation	Adaptation of public buildings - the Volunteer Fire Department buildings in Ustroń and Janowice, the Municipal Cultural Centre building and the sports square in Lubań to the needs of people participating in ESF projects. Beneficiary: Lubanie Commune.
Reconstruction of a sports field with the creation of recreational facilities for the purpose of the Outdoor Centre for Local Activity in MałyCzyste	Reconstruction of a sports field along with the creation of recreational facilities for the purpose of the Outdoor Centre for Local Activity in MałyCzyste, aimed at creating space for activation and social and professional integration. Beneficiary: Stolno Commune.
Land development and modernization of the village club in Broniewo	Land development and modernization of the village club in Broniewo. The land development includes: a mini playground, a playground for children, an outdoor gym, a wooden gazebo and 2 parking spaces. Beneficiary: ZłotnikiKujawskie Commune.
Reconstruction of sports and recreational playgrounds in Chelmce and Polanowice	Reconstruction of sports and recreation playgrounds in Chelmce and Polanowice. After the project it is planned to organize sports and recreational activities for all age groups, which will contribute to the activation of people in retirement age, and will also be effective for people from poor families, benefiting from community social assistance, who cannot afford to pay for training or travel for professional athletics fields. Beneficiary: Kruszwica Commune.
Establishment of the Rural Activity Centre in Kazin with accompanying infrastructure	Reconstruction and expansion of the existing facility in Kazin. The area around the facility will be developed - a playground and a place for recreation will be built, where recreational activities for young people will be held as part of the youth club. Beneficiary: NaklonadNotecią Commune.
Adapting the infrastructure of the school playground in order to implement tasks in the field of social activation of seniors, adults and children and adolescents at risk of social exclusion	Transformation of a dilapidated multi-functional school playground into a public playground. The multifunctional playground will be designed for handball, basketball, volleyball and tennis. Beneficiary: AleksandrówKujawski.
Modernization of a sports facility in Pigża	Modernization of a sports facility in order to create the infrastructure necessary to conduct social revitalization of residents. Infrastructure works include: renovation of the pitch, construction of a fence, purchase and assembly of shelters for substitute players, 50 stadium seats and football goals. Beneficiary: Łubianka Commune.
Creation of a cultural, sports and educational centre in Lisnowo	Improving the quality of public areas by creating a cultural, sports and educational centre for the purposes of integration and development of social competences. Beneficiary: ŚwiecianaOsą Commune.
Reconstruction of a playground in Siniarzewo	Reconstruction of an existing playground into a multi-purpose one. The investment includes: a football pitch with a grass surface, fencing of the pitch, construction of a running track, assembly of small architecture devices, sanitary installations and electrical power installations and devices. Beneficiary: Zakrzewo Commune.
Modernization of the sports playground at the Primary School in Ruże	Modernization of a playground for the purposes of integrating the local community - creating a base for conducting activating activities for residents of the Ruże commune and Zbójno commune. The scope of the project includes the construction of a school pitch, the assembly of goals and benches for players and fans. Beneficiary: Zbójno Commune.

Revitalization of the village of Tuczno: modernization of the civil centre in Tuczno	Modernization of the civil centre with the adaptation of the residential part of the building for the needs of the civil centre and retrofitting the recreational area next to the centre (a playground and an outdoor gym). Beneficiary: ZłotnikiKujawskie Commune.
Adaptation of degraded space in Marków for the purposes of social development - modernization of the building of a civil centre in Marków along with the development of the park area	Modernization and retrofitting of the existing civil centre along with the development of the adjacent park area in the form of the installation of a park gazebo with a grill, an outdoor gym with devices such as a runner, orbitrek, a rider and a playground. The project responds to the diagnosed problems and needs of the socio-economic environment, i.e. a high percentage of children covered by family benefits and a high share of households benefiting from community social assistance. The aim of the project is social and economic revival in the LAG area by creating an infrastructure that will be the basis for the implementation of social projects. Beneficiary: Gniewkowo Commune.

Source: own preparation on the basis of [https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/media/93994/Lista\\_projektow\\_FE\\_2014\\_2020\\_04092020.xlsx](https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/media/93994/Lista_projektow_FE_2014_2020_04092020.xlsx) (retrieved 26.09.2020).

The analysis of the list of projects which received EU financing under action 11.1 of the ROP revealed that no sport-related project was included on it.

### Discussion

The subject of the study is consistent with the discussion on the relationship between the broadly understood sport and local development as well as the related problems of social inequalities, social inclusion and exclusion, which has been conducted intensively on the EU forum since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The Treaty conferred on the EU specific powers to take support, coordination and development measures in the area of sport, with the overall aim of developing the European dimension in sport (Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). The inclusive role of sport has been highlighted in the Council conclusions on the role of sport (2010), the European Commission Communication on Sport (2011) and the Council Conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy, and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion (2014). The inclusive role of sport has also been noted in the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (European Commission, 2010), which aims to empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their rights and participate fully in society. Other significant document highlighting the importance of sport not only for health and wellbeing, but also for a number of key areas such as social cohesion, innovation and research, territorial regeneration, economic growth or tackling climate change was The 2018 Conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States which recognised the economic dimension of sport and its socio-economic benefits. A direct contribution of sport to economic activity and social cohesion through the Structural Funds was evidenced by the 2016 study (European Commission, 2016) which concluded that this contribution is creating direct business activity (e.g. local sport clubs and gyms), generating locally-rooted employment, driving attractiveness and impacting positively the image of territories, developing innovation and fuelling Information and Communication Technologies with sport content, promoting well-being and social cohesion and engaging with social groups other policies fail to attract, increasing soft mobility solutions and decreasing negative health impacts thanks to increased physical activity. Sport (and in particular investments related to sport) is also perceived as a driver for actions which can contribute to realization the five main objectives of Cohesion Policy in the 2021-2027 programming period (European Commission, 2020) by: addressing investment priorities such as, for example, investing in education, training and lifelong learning or modernise public administration (a “Smarter Europe” priority objective); developing and protecting of green infrastructure supporting the growth of active tourism and outdoor sport activities (a “Greener, low-carbon Europe” priority objective); enhancing access and use of ICT (a “more Connected Europe” priority objective); enhancing social inclusion of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities, refugees, people at risk of poverty or the unemployed youth (a “more Social Europe” priority objective); fostering an integrated and sustained development in urban, rural and coastal regions (a “Europe closer to its citizens” priority objective). The novelty of the study is looking at sport as a potential remedy for social exclusion under CLLD which is territorial development instrument used in the EU since 2014.

The study started from revealing that in LDSs of LAGs operating in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship in 2014-2020 financial perspective, social exclusion was usually perceived as a consequence of the particularly difficult situation of some people on the labour market. Among the disadvantaged groups (excluded or at risk of social exclusion) the following were most often indicated: people with disabilities, people over 50, women, people under 35, the long-term unemployed, people with low or no qualifications, and children and young people up to 25 years old. Therefore, the dominant directions of support for disadvantaged groups specified in LDSs were: implementation of activation and professional integration programs, improvement of professional qualifications, social employment, organization of educational classes leading to building social and professional competences, organization of internships and apprenticeships, support for voluntary activities as the way of social and professional reintegration.

Despite such defined disadvantaged groups, LAGs, while analysing in their LDSs the strengths and weaknesses of areas where they operate, did not limit the factors favouring and hindering development to factors related to the labour market. Sport-related factors of socio-economic development were indicated in 27

out of 28 LDSs and they appeared usually as strengths and weaknesses of the areas, where LAGs operate, rather than opportunities and threats faced by them. Nevertheless, sport-related factors were most often mentioned as the weaknesses of these areas. In 17 LDSs, insufficient number of sports facilities and deficiencies in recreational infrastructure were identified as weaknesses, in 9 strategies the poor condition of sports and recreational infrastructure was indicated, and in 6 strategies insufficient use of the existing sports, recreational or tourist infrastructure in order to conduct open sports and recreational activities was highlighted.

In some SWOT analyses, sport-related factors were directly related to disadvantaged groups. This was the case with: insufficient offer of free sports activities for children and adolescents indicated in 3 LDSs, insufficient number of sports organizations acting for children and adolescents indicated in 2 LDSs, insufficient offer of free sports activities for the poor indicated in 2 LDSs, poor offer of sports activities for the disabled indicated in 3 LDSs and poor offer of sports activities for seniors indicated in 3 LDSs. Other factors directly related to sport, but mentioned only once, include: a lack of sports activities for the disabled, low involvement of children and adolescents in sports, limited access of children and adolescents from communities at risk of exclusion to entities offering sports activities, high risk of addiction and crime among young people resulting from the lack of alternative ways of spending free time, a lack of effective mechanisms of activation of children and adolescents from dysfunctional families or groups at risk of social exclusion through sport and low activity of excluded in terms of sports activities.

Sport-related factors identified as part of the SWOT analyses carried out for the purpose of defining the development strategy of LAGs, were reflected in the strategic goals and undertakings aimed at their implementation in 19 LDSs. The strategic goals were twofold. One type boiled down to the improvement of the standard and accessibility of sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure and improvement of the tourist and residential attractiveness of the areas where LAGs operate. The second type was the social inclusion of inhabitants through social integration based on sport, tourism and recreation. Under the first, dominant type of strategic goals, various types of infrastructure projects were planned, while under the second, which was present only in 5 LDSs, support for various organizations was provided for the implementation of 'soft' (non-infrastructure) projects.

Among LAGs whose strategic goals were related to the sport-related factors identified in the SWOT analysis, there were only two urban LAGs. In order to achieve their strategic goals, they planned 'soft' undertakings related to supporting disadvantaged groups. The lack of infrastructure projects in their case was not due to the lack of needs for the development of sports and recreational infrastructure, but resulted from the possibilities that the EU provided for financing CLLD in cities. In the 2014-2020 financial perspective, LAGs operating in cities could only include the ESF as a source of project financing in their strategies, which could result in including only non-infrastructure projects.

The dominance of infrastructure projects in the context of the implementation of sport-related strategic goals of LAGs is confirmed by the list of projects for which applicants received support from EU funds as part of actions dedicated to CLLD in the ROP. As of September 26, 2020, the list of projects that received funding under Action 11.1, intended for financing 'soft' projects, did not include any related to sport. On the other hand, 13 sport-related projects were included in the list of 84 projects that received funding under Action 7.1, intended for financing infrastructure projects. However, the analysis of the descriptions of these projects leads to the conclusion that, in very few cases, the support for infrastructure was aimed at adapting it to the needs of people from disadvantaged groups and implementing projects aimed at including these people in the local community. The subject of most projects was to improve the quality of life of residents (without indicating specific groups of them) and to create a base that can be used for the implementation of 'soft', social projects that build social and professional competences.

## Conclusions

The disadvantaged groups were defined in LDSs of LAGs operating in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship through the prism of the labour market. However, LAGs, while analysing in their LDSs the strengths and weaknesses of areas where they operate, did not limit the factors favouring and hindering development to those related to the labour market and saw the importance of such a factor as sport.

In the case of most LAGs, the barriers to local development include sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure (its quality, accessibility and distribution). Sport-related factors directly related to disadvantaged groups such as, for example, poor offer of sport activities for disadvantaged or their low sport activity were indicated as development stimulants by a much smaller number of LAGs.

This was reflected in the strategic goals formulated by LAGs in their strategies and the projects the implementation of which was to bring the LAGs closer to their achievement. The dominant type of strategic goals, which was mentioned in the LDSs of 14 LAGs, was the improvement of the standard and accessibility of sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure and improvement of the tourist and residential attractiveness of the areas where LAGs operate. Social inclusion of inhabitants through social integration based on sport, tourism and recreation was a strategic goal only in 5 LDSs.

Consequently, among sport-related projects, which received support from EU funds under actions dedicated to CLLD in the ROP, there were only infrastructure projects. Their aim was usually to improve the

quality of life of residents (without indicating specific groups of them) rather than supporting for infrastructure aimed at adapting it to the needs of people from disadvantaged groups and implementing projects aimed at including these people in the local community.

Concluding, the widespread belief about the importance of broadly understood sport for local development was generally expressed in the LDSs of LAGs covered by the study. However, only in a few cases sport was used as a tool for increasing social inclusion.

**Conflicts of interest** - The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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