

## IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH THE CREATION OF A NETWORK OF WATER RESCUE STATIONS ON THE GREAT MASURIAN LAKES

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### Abstract

The project initiates the creation of a comprehensive solution to the question of safety on the waters of the Great Masurian Lakes through the creation of a network of water rescue stations.

The aims of the proposed project are to create a network of water rescue stations throughout the Great Masurian Lakes, to improve the equipment of the rescue services operating on the Great Masurian Lakes (rescue equipment), and to improve the skills of these rescue services (professional training).

The area of the Great Masurian Lakes constitutes a region of unique natural beauty of international importance. It provides perfect conditions for the development of sailing tourism, which in turn causes a rise of safety concerns. This situation calls for organizational changes and an increase in efforts to enhance the safety of tourists on the lakes.

The project aims to enhance the safety of navigation on the Great Masurian Lakes through complex solutions – the creation of a network of water rescue stations and the creation of favourable conditions for the further development of sailing tourism through ensuring safety and health services for both tourists and local residents.

The effect of the project will be economic growth in the region through rising revenue from sailing tourism, as well as a greater involvement of residents, social institutions, local administration and local businesses in promoting tourism and enhancing safety on the water.

**POPRAWA BEZPIECZEŃSTWA POWSZECHNEGO POPRZEZ BUDOWĘ  
SYSTEMU PORTÓW RATOWNICZO-ŻEGLARSKICH  
NA SZLAKU WIELKICH JEZIOR MAZURSKICH**

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**Słowa kluczowe:** sieć portów ratowniczo-żeglarskich, system bezpieczeństwa na wodzie, ratownictwo wodne, szlak Wielkich Jezior Mazurskich.

**A b s t r a k t**

W projekcie założono stworzenie kompleksowego rozwiązania w zakresie bezpieczeństwa wodnego na szlaku Wielkich Jezior Mazurskich poprzez stworzenie sieci portów ratowniczo-żeglarskich.

Celem projektu jest poprawa bezpieczeństwa żeglugi po Wielkich Jeziorach Mazurskich poprzez rozwiązanie systemowe – stworzenie sieci portów ratowniczo-żeglarskich oraz poprawę warunków do rozwoju turystyki żeglarskiej – wyposażenie działających tam służb ratowniczych w sprzęt oraz doskonalenie ich umiejętności (specjalistyczne szkolenia) dla bezpieczeństwa i zdrowia turystów oraz mieszkańców regionu.

Wielkie Jeziora Mazurskie stanowią unikatowy zespół przyrodniczy o znaczeniu międzynarodowym. Sprzyja to rozwojowi turystyki żeglarskiej na tym akwenie, a z kolei to przyczynia się do wzrostu zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa. Sytuacja taka zmusza do zmian organizacyjnych i intensyfikowania działań związanych ze zwiększaniem bezpieczeństwa poruszania się turystów po jeziorach.

Efektem podjętych działań będzie wzrost gospodarczy regionu wynikający ze wzrostu przychodów generowanych przez rozwój turystyki żeglarskiej oraz aktywizacja mieszkańców, partnerów społecznych, samorządów oraz przedsiębiorców lokalnych na rzecz rozwoju turystyki i poprawy bezpieczeństwa wodnego.

## **Introduction**

The project initiates the creation of a comprehensive solution to the question of safety on the waters of the Great Masurian Lakes through the creation of a network of water rescue stations.

It proposes measures to build water rescue stations on the Great Masurian Lakes, to improve the equipment of the rescue services operating on the Great Masurian Lakes (rescue equipment), and to improve the skills of these rescue services (professional training).

The area of the Great Masurian Lakes constitutes a region of unique natural beauty of international importance. It provides perfect conditions for

the development of sailing tourism, which in turn causes a rise of safety concerns. This situation calls for organizational changes and an increase in efforts to enhance the safety of tourists on the lakes (NARSTEDT 1998).

Within the framework of the project the following goals and objectives have been set:

- the creation of a system covering the whole region of the Great Masurian Lakes with respect to sailing tourism;
- enhancing the safety of navigation on the Great Masurian Lakes through comprehensive solutions – the creation of a network of water rescue stations;
- the creation of favourable conditions for the further development of sailing tourism through ensuring safety and health services for both tourists and local residents;
- enhancing the attractiveness of the region of Warmia and Masuria as a tourist destination;
- attracting new investments to the region as a result of improving its appeal to tourists;
- economic growth through rising revenue from tourism;
- greater involvement of residents, social institutions, local administration and local businesses in promoting tourism and enhancing safety on the water.

### **Scope of project**

The measures proposed in the project concern the further development of tourism, especially sailing tourism, in the area of the Great Masurian Lakes, which relies on the ability to provide for the safety of tourists at their destination. Safety is often an important factor in the process of deciding on a holiday destination. Therefore, finding comprehensive solutions to the question of safety in concurrence with the law of the land, legal regulations and norms, opens prospects for sustainable growth of the tourism industry in the region (*Analiza techniczno-ekonomiczna...* 1997). The comprehensiveness of the proposed measures in turn guarantees the functionality of the system. In result it will add to the creation and the consolidation of the Great Masurian Lakes' image as a place that beyond its natural beauty provides for all needs and safety concerns of the tourist, especially the sailing tourist.

It needs to be pointed out here, that time is an all-important factor in the success of a water rescue operation – the time it takes the rescue team to reach the scene of an emergency or accident. Therefore the proposed comprehensive solutions include a network of water rescue stations to guarantee a high level of safety for the tourist. The measures intended to reach this goal are focused

on the creation of a network of water rescue stations on the Great Masurian Lakes (some of the stations, operated by the Voluntary Water Rescue Service (WOPR<sup>1</sup>), will operate all year round, others only during the summer holiday season), improving the equipment of the rescue services operating on the Great Masurian Lakes, and improving the skills of these rescue services.

### **Project description**

The proposed system for developing sailing tourism through the creation of a network of water rescue stations on the Great Masurian Lakes is in concurrence with the national system of rescue services concerning safety on the water. The organizational structure of the system complies with all regulations of the applying law. The body administrating the network of water rescue stations to be established in the framework of the strategy will be the Voluntary Water Rescue Service (WOPR).

The law prescribes in detail the organisation of as well as the system of cooperation between the organizations that are part of the national system of rescue services, which constitutes the executive element of the public safety system which guarantees the undertaking of rescue operations whenever life, health, property or the environment are endangered. The organizations involved in the system of safety on the waters of the Great Masurian Lakes are all part of the national safety system, such as:

- the State Fire Service;
- the Police;
- the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service;
- the Masurian Rescue Service;
- associations and foundations involved in water rescue services, as well as businesses interested in improving safety on the water.

The system will also include independent harbours and marinas, holiday resorts on the Great Masurian Lakes and the sailors themselves.

The network of water rescue stations will cover the whole territory of the Great Masurian Lakes. This area covers four administrative districts of the Voivodship of Warmia and Masuria – the Poviats (counties) of Węgorzewo, Giżycko, Mrągowo and Pisz (KLIMCZAK et al. 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Polish abbreviation for Wodne Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratownicze.

## **Objective of the project and measures to be taken**

The objective of the project is to create a network of water rescue stations on the Great Masurian Lakes, equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment, increasing the safety of tourists on the water and enhancing the region's attractiveness for water sports tourism and active tourism in general. As results from an audit, the area of the Great Masurian Lakes lacks in infrastructure, i.e. water rescue stations, rescue equipment, and especially any comprehensive system to provide for safety on the water and the rescue of lives. Therefore it appears an imperative to create comprehensive solutions to the question of safety on the water which would cover the whole area of the Great Masurian Lakes, complying with the law of the land, legal regulations and norms, and the national system of rescue services, and integrating already existing rescue services in an effective way.

The organisational solutions of the system for safety on the waters of the Great Masurian Lakes are mainly based on the structures of the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service (WOPR), which is the organization presently working most effectively in the field of water rescue. But the project also takes account of the need to provide equipment and training to the remaining services interested in active participation in the project, especially the State Fire Service and the Police. The complex solutions proposed in the project also cover the need of providing rescue equipment to participating marinas, harbours and holiday resorts, to enable them to provide basic help until the arrival of professional rescue services.

The implementation of the project is divided into three stages:

**Stage 1.** Information campaign to popularize the project among local residents, owners of harbours, marinas and holiday resorts as well as local governments in the area of the great Masurian Lakes. Aims: to inform about the introduction of the system, to gain support for the system, especially from local governments.

**Stage 2.** Implementation of the project, including:

- the construction of water rescue stations by the Mazurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service;
- providing new rescue equipment to the rescue services;
- improving the skills of rescue service staff by introducing a special training programme concerning safety on the water for all participating services;
- providing first-aid rescue equipment to harbours, marinas and holidays resorts;
- an information campaign directed towards sailors to inform about the new safety system.

**Stage 3.** PR campaign about the system and solutions to improve safety on the Great Masurian Lakes directed to tourists from Poland and abroad, and continuation of the information campaign directed towards sailors, tourists, and local residents.

The above stages define the scope and direction of measures to be taken.

The information campaign to popularize the project is essential to the successful implementation of the whole project. This concerns both the part of the campaign directed towards local residents and business people – owners of harbours, marinas and holiday resorts – and the part aiming for support from local governments (the cession or letting out on favourable conditions of building grounds for the construction of rescue stations; financial support for the equipment of the rescue stations). Furthermore the information campaign is aimed to reach as many potential beneficiaries as possible. Special emphasis will be put on the **complex solutions offered by the system** as well as on the fact, that the strategy opens the possibility of attaining **financial support from EU structural funds** for both the planned infrastructural investments as well as the training programmes and information campaigns.

Similarly important at this stage is a close cooperation of the involved parties with the Marshal's Office of the Voivodship of Warmia and Masuria and the Voivodship Office. These institutions ought to support the project, promoting it locally and helping to gain support from central authorities. Local self-government bodies, including the Marshal's Office of the Voivodship, have been engaged in the project from the first planning stages, considering the subject addressed by the strategy as highly important for regional development, which is an important step towards its successful implementation.

The next stage involves the undertaking of concrete investments in the region. This stage includes the development of infrastructure in the area of the Great Masurian Lakes serving the rescue of lives, the supply of new rescue equipment to the involved water rescue services, and the implementation of a training programme addressed to these services (including periodic training sessions). The applicant's own contribution may be contributed by local governments which are particularly interested in enhancing the safety of tourists on their territory (which is why the information campaign directed towards local governments constitutes such a vital part of the project).

### **Funds and costs of the project**

The presented costs of the project are only estimates – aimed to provide an idea of the scale of investments that the region, including the participating institutions, has to make to achieve the primary goal of improving safety for both tourists and residents.

The estimated costs were established by an inquiry among the participating institutions into their needs for both rescue equipment and training courses. The participants reported their needs according to criteria earlier established by a group of experts and specified the kind of equipment and schooling support they requested.

The authors of the project estimated the overall costs of the project considering the needs of each of the participating services, at the same time recommending those investments that are of fundamental importance to a lasting improvement of the safety of tourists on the water (KLIMCZAK et al. 2012). The authors of the project did not interfere with the decisions of the rescue services as to their needs. They described the needs of the services in the same form as these presented their estimates.

Table 1

Overall costs of the project

Participants	Investment needs	Estimated costs (in PLN)
Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service	- infrastructure	
	- all-year rescue stations	834,000.00
	- seasonal rescue stations	
	- rescue equipment and boats	2,348,000.00
	- training programmes	67,000.00
	Total:	3,249,000.00
State Fire Service	- rescue equipment	521,500.00
	- training programmes	87,650.00
	Total:	609,150.00
Police	- rescue equipment	1,810,000.00
	- training programmes	9,000.00
	Total:	1,819,000.00
Masurian Rescue Service	- rescue equipment	2,225,000.00
	Total:	2,225,000.00
Association for development and safety on the great masurian lakes	- promotion and marketing, including teaching aids	500,000.00
	Total:	500,000.00
Marinas and holiday resorts	- rescue boats + basic equipment	1,250,000.00
	- rescue equipment for rescue stations	300,000.00
	- first aid kits	190,000.00
	- training programmes	120,000.00
	Total:	1,860,000.00
Total		10,262,150.00

Source: Raport of Polish Tourism Development Agency (2009).

In the Table 2, investment costs have been divided according to the source of funding – national funds (public and private) and EU funds. In case of the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service, the Masurian Rescue Service, and

associations, EU funds may cover up to 75% of the costs, while in the case of harbours and marinas, EU funds cover up to 50% of the costs.

Table 2

Investment costs according to the source of funding (in PLN)

Participant	National funds (public and private)	EU funds	Total
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c = a + b</i>
Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service	812,250.00	2,436,750.00	3,249,000.00
Association for development and safety on the great masurian lakes	732,037.50	2,196,112.50	2,928,150.00
Masurian Rescue Service	556,250.00	1,668,750.00	2,225,000.00
Marinas and holiday resorts	930,000.00	930,000.00	1,860,000.00
Total:	3,030,537.50	7,231,612.50	10,262,150.00
Share [%]	29.5	70.5	100

Source: Report of Polish Tourism Development Agency (2009).

## Beneficiaries and involved institutions

The proposed safety system for the area of the Great Masurian Lakes involves entities that are part of the National Rescue System and provide water rescue services as well as associations in the region for which safety on the water is a high-priority issue. The entities involved in the system will participate in full compliance with the regulations set forward in the law on the system of rescue and fire-extinguishing services and the draft bill for the National Rescue System. NGOs and associations have declared their intention to participate in the system and have been taken into consideration in all further work on the project.

Participants of the system are the following entities:

- Association for Development and Safety on the Great Masurian Lakes;
- State Fire Service;
- Police;
- Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service;
- Masurian Rescue Service;
- businesses interested in the improvement of the safety system on the Great Masurian Lakes.

Apart from the abovementioned participants, the system will involve also independent harbours, marinas and holiday resorts in the area of the Great Masurian Lakes. These entities will receive the proposal to have their objects

equipped with basic rescue equipment and first aid kits. The system will thus not only include specialized services trained for water rescue operations, but also entities directly involved with tourists and sailors. This will contribute to the creation of one all-embracing system, including all entities involved in providing safety on the water for sailors and tourists. The safety system is being created mainly with regard to sailors and tourists, who will be its main beneficiaries, but naturally also local residents will profit from it, both directly and indirectly.

The system will increase the feeling of safety, shorten the time for rescue services to reach the location of an emergency situation, and will improve the image of the Great Masurian Lakes as a safe and tourist-friendly region (KLIMCZAK 2012).

### **Organisational structure of the system**

The project and the solutions put forward in it aim at improving safety on the Great Masurian Lakes. The unit of the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service, for which the system of water rescue systems on the Great Masurian Lakes was designed, has become an equal participant of the system after the law on the National Rescue System took effect. The extension of the system of water rescue stations basing on the structures of the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service is warranted both by its human resources and its existing infrastructure and equipment. The service has been operating in the area for years, its personnel know the lakes and the region well, and are continuously improving their professional skills (professional development).

The Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service cooperates with all services involved in water rescue on the Great Masurian Lakes, i.e. with the State Fire Service, the Police, the Masurian Rescue Service, and the Ambulance Service. In accordance with legal regulations (the law on the National Rescue System) the central unit taking emergency calls will be the Poviats Rescue Centre, with whom the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service will remain in constant contact (as the Headquarters of the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service already does today).

The network of water rescue stations based on the structures of the Masurian Voluntary Water Rescue Service will consist of 3 all-year rescue stations, including the headquarters in Giżycko, and 6 seasonal rescue stations scattered throughout the Great Masurian Lakes (both the northern and the southern part of the lake district).

The construction of professional water rescue stations in the lake district and the improvement of the equipment of all services involved in water rescue

in the area, combined with a professional development programme for the services' personnel, will considerably improve the safety of tourists in the region. The system will also involve independent harbours, marinas and holiday resorts, which will support the rescue services providing first aid measures at the scene of an emergency.

The implementation of the comprehensive solutions set forth in the project will increase the effectiveness of rescue operations (and contribute to the reduction of lethal accidents on the water) and shorten the time for rescue teams to arrive on the scene of an emergency. The water rescue stations allow for a better surveillance of the lakes and more effective pre-emptive measures to avoid accidents.

### Planned marketing measures

The aim of the project is to further the development of sailing tourism by providing for greater safety for tourists on the Great Masurian Lakes through a complex solution to the question of safety on the water.

A plan for marketing measures for a comprehensive solution to the question of safety in Masuria, including the construction of water rescue stations on the Great Masurian Lakes, was presented divided into three main elements:

- product
- promotion
- distribution.

The plan does not include any prices, as **the project is a non-profit enterprise** (not generating profits). The content of the marketing campaign was designed separately for four target groups of the system:

- local governments in the area of the Great Masurian Lakes, financial institutions;
- harbours, marinas, holiday resorts in the area of the Great Masurian Lakes
- tourists – sailors;
- local residents of the area of the Great Masurian Lakes.

### Conclusion

The implementation of the *Strategy for the Development of Sailing Tourism through the Creation of a Network of Water Rescue Stations in the Area of the Great Masurian Lakes* will be successful if the measures will be well coordinated and decisions consequent. The strategy may encounter difficulties and

opposition from different social groups. Nevertheless, the measures proposed in the strategy should be carried out without compromise, while carefully monitoring developments of the market, both internal and external.

Some of the main problems that could jeopardize the implementation of the strategy are the following:

- EU funding might not be available (currently the aims and priorities of the project are being reviewed to make them fully compatible with the conditions for EU funding in the framework of the EU budget for the years 2013–2020);
- lack of funding for the participants' own contributions (water rescue services are financed by the State Treasury, which during an economic downturn may decide to cut funds for their maintenance or development);
- difficulties in deciding on the entity that will administrate the whole system and coordinate its implementation (a number of entities in the region are rivalling over who should supervise a comprehensive system to provide for safety on the water);
- insufficient funding for promoting the project and insufficient efforts of single participants to obtain organizational and financial support.

It should be pointed out that the project meets all essential criteria to qualify for subsidies from the EU, i.e. the following:

1) Eligibility criteria:

- consistence of the measures with their detailed aims;
- consistence of the measures with the project types eligible for subsidies;
- consistence with the development strategy of the voivodship;
- positive effects on horizontal objectives (environmental protection, employment policy);
- consistence with Polish and European law.

2) Additional criteria:

- measures going beyond the level of the municipal/communal territory;
- the project meets regional needs and takes into consideration market demand;
- positive effects on the region's attractiveness to tourists;
- positive effects on the preservation and creation of new jobs;
- measures can be continued after the completion of the project.

The modern and comprehensive solutions of the system aim at increasing the number of tourists visiting Masuria, increasing tourist safety, and improving tourist services to meet EU standards.

Presently the project is in the planning and financing stage. Its authors view it as a continuation of the project to create a network of eco-marinas, which is currently under construction in the region of the Great Masurian Lakes and in the area of Lake Jeziorak in the Western part of the Voivodship of Warmia and Masuria. This network of twelve eco-marinas will be a natural

starting point for the creation of a general safety system in the region. With the necessary rescue equipment added, they will be a ready-made network of water rescue stations. Once funding has been secured from EU funds and the State Treasury, the project should be implemented in the years 2013–2020.

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