

Podcast no. 3 – interview with Jadwiga Zwolińska

Hi! Welcome to SOENGAGE, an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Commission. The overall objective of SoEngage Plus is to support farmers learn about and engage in social farming and to promote their social farm services for the economic benefit and sustainability of the farm and the rural community. Hi this is Maciej Dymacz and I work for ARID Association.

SOENGAGE PLUS PODCAST EPISODE number 3. Today we will have a conversation with Jadwiga Zwolińska, an expert in Social Farming. about the present and future for farmers in relation with Social Farming in Poland.

Could you tell us something about the place we are?

We are located on a social and agrotourism farm in Koślinka.

What is the history of the establishment of this farm?

My husband and I started running this farm 38 years ago, it was a small farm, about 1.5 ha. At the moment, it is 40 ha, largely a forest. At the beginning we ran this small farm additionally, my husband was working as an agronomist at the time and I was a social worker at the local health center. The agritourism farm started about 22 years ago. The farms were doing badly then, the milk prices were low, and it was then invented that farmers could offer holidays in the countryside by running agritourism farms. And so we got into it - we started building a house, so we adapted it for that purpose. We had wonderful guests, Mrs. Sławka and her husband, who advised us to get involved in this type of activity. We took a course for agritourism farms. At that time, an association of agritourism farms was also created, brochures were written - there was no Internet then, so there weren't many visitors. The first to arrive, they entered the room and we didn't see them again for hours. We wondered if it were Romeo and Juliet, who came to commit suicide and that is why they are not leaving. And they were just kayaking and so tired they fell on the bed and slept.

How did it happen that you changed your farm profile to social farm and when did it happen?

The originator of the care farms was director Ryszard Kamiński, who had a real vision. The Agricultural Advisory Center in Minikowo wrote a project - it started with visits to the Netherlands, where we saw how such farms operate. It was a great idea, because without seeing such farms, I would have thought that I would not be able to run such farms, because I am not competent enough, I live in a place that is not suitable for it. In the Netherlands, I saw

a variety of farms - some were fancy and others were simple, like ours. We took the courage to do it.

What did you start with?

First, there were courses for caretakers of the elderly people. We were slowly entering this project. Then we organized the first group of people, which was difficult, because four years ago in the countryside people thought it is strange to leave the house and go to some other farm. But when the first group was satisfied, the next recruitments were not a problem. There were even problems with parting after the project was over - and so we met once a week.

Can you tell us what an ordinary day looks like on your farm?

We start with a prayer, then we eat breakfast, after breakfast we do various jobs - we create bouquets, go for a walk with nordic walking poles, recently we went to the horse stable, we didn't ride, but we took a photo with them and it was good for us.

How do you use the nature around you?

We go on various trips, to the lake or to another farm. We spend time together with other pupils, sometimes they come to us. We are not bored here. We share stories, share what is good. Our moods improve every minute.

How large is the group of charges currently?

There are currently 6 people, but people change from time to time. Sometimes we also have guests from different parts of Poland - we exchange experiences. We spend time together, we show them around the farm.

What are your plans for the future?

I myself am already a senior, but as far as possible I try to look for new projects so that we can meet. We can't do everything for free, because we simply can't afford it. But we actually do a lot of things pro bono. When it starts, it's hard not to.

Good luck!

Thank you very much.

That's all for this episode! Thanks for listening to SOENGAGE PLUS podcast and remember, if you want to be a part this project follow us on Facebook or visit our website: <https://www.soengage.eu/soengage-plus/>