

# Case Study

## Home Hospice to Improve Care for Farmers and Farming Families (Poland)



*Improving farmers' wellbeing through social innovation*



*This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000797.*



# FARMWELL!

## Home Hospice to improve care for farmers and farming families

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This case study presents an inspiring social innovation of a home hospice in Poland that addresses the challenge of struggle with difficulties in accessing of health care services in rural areas that also largely impact on the wellbeing of farmers, especially elderly farmers and their family members. The hospice presented in the case study provides healthcare services for elderly, terminally, and chronically ill rural people of five municipalities in Podlaskie region so that they can live the last months of their lives with dignity. 80% of people using the services provided by this entity, are former farmers. The case study also shows how FARMWELL has highlighted the benefits of this social innovation, leading to key recommendations.

What benefits **home hospice** services can bring to rural areas?

How such service impacts on **farmers and farming families**?

What can health ministries do to better enable such services and hence improve **farmers' wellbeing**?



## GET INSPIRED!

Read the **longer version** of the FARMWELL case study [here](#)!

Watch the **'Farming with care'** short documentary [here](#)!

Check out **other exciting social innovation** cases [here](#)!



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## The story of Prophet Elias Hospice

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Rural areas occupy 93% of the area of Poland, and almost 40% of the country's population lives in these areas. Statistics show that the rural population is growing, but it applies mainly to suburban areas, whereas in peripheral monofunctional regions largely dependent upon the agriculture and other primary industries, depopulation is occurring. Young people, in particular, leave rural areas, many of whom move abroad.



The decreasing human resources reflect in lowering contribution – via taxes and other local payments – to the municipal budgets that, consequently, suffer from insufficient financial resources to deliver public services to the local farming communities and other residents. Thus, the service provision is more and more limited and results in shrinking access to different types of social services, such as healthcare and public transport.

Studies show that access to healthcare services in Poland is 2-2.5 times worse in rural than in urban areas. These challenges are evident in Podlasie, which is a traditionally agricultural region with a significant poverty problem. **Elderly rural residents, often owners of small family farms, whose attachment to land and home is a significant part of their identity, struggle with difficulties in accessing specialist doctors** including geriatricians, general practitioners, day care homes, care and treatment facilities, social welfare homes, and hospices. To address the needs of farmers and other rural dwellers, the Prophet Elias Hospice Foundation was established in 2009 and has been operating a home hospice since 2011.

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## Highlights of the most innovative aspects of the home hospice service



Creating a network including neighbourhood help as well as informal groups, public sector organisations, and NGOs.



The work of a Dependent Care Coordinator (KOOZ), who recognises patients' needs and organises the network activities.



Members of the hospice's medical team (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, nutritionists, and caregivers) provide their services at home, tailoring their scope to the changing needs of the patient during the progress of the incurable disease.



Hospice workers support families in caring for the elderly; they also educate and advise so those caring for their loved ones can better cope with the new reality.



The foundation encourages neighbourly help in rural areas. In actions promoting mutual support, it refers to traditional values and the Christian ethos, presenting neighbourly help as "the simplest way of doing good". In this way, it sensitises the entire community to the needs of those at risk of exclusion.

The hospice team works closely with NGOs and the public sector. The Prophet Elias Hospice Foundation, in cooperation with the Regional Centre for Social Policy in Białystok, the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the NGO Support Centre in Białystok is now implementing the **"To Give What Is Really Needed"** project. This innovative model of professional home care creates a network of resources in rural areas that would help on many levels – from neighbourhood help and informal groups to public sector organisations and NGOs.

The services provided by the home hospice are very important for farming families, taking care of dependent people by offering respite care for the former. Home hospice also covers farmers' social needs through activities aimed at rebuilding social bonds with the local community.



## How FARMWELL worked with the case of Prophet Elias Hospice

One of the main social **challenges** identified by FARMWELL, has been **the lack of social services, in particular, difficulties in accessing health services**. Due to the ageing rural population and rapid depopulation, this problem primarily affects the elderly, who often run a single household.

[Read the Polish Mapping Report of challenges of the FARMWELL project](#)



One of the main goals of the FARMWELL project has been to improve the policy and institutional support for social innovations like hospice services, that are proven to improve the wellbeing of farmers and the wider rural society.



The FARMWELL project identified Prophet Elias Hospice as one of the most inspiring social innovations that provides care to rural people, most of whom are former farmers, who are dependent, terminally, and chronically ill, supporting their families and caregivers in their place of residence.

The project "To Give What Is Really Needed" is a significant response to the challenges in the public health system, especially in rural areas where shortages of medical staff, including doctors and nurses, are acute. The initiative addresses these gaps through social innovation, offering flexible and tailored support to individuals, in contrast to the rigid assistance provided by the NFZ. The project's approach optimizes financial resources, providing free services to alleviate the impact of low incomes, particularly among former farmers. By creating a comprehensive palliative care system, the initiative involves various professionals and a local support network, which not only fills the gaps in the national healthcare system but also addresses the loneliness experienced by beneficiaries. Additionally, social innovation engages local resources and fosters positive attitudes among young people through educational meetings, encouraging a sense of responsibility to support the elderly within their communities

The leader of the "To Give What Is Really Needed" project, together with Partners, prepares recommendations for hospice care in rural areas. They are under development, but it is already possible to indicate the "milestones" of the recommendations being prepared, i.e.:



- expanding the indications for hospice care
- expanding the hospice team with caregivers
- provision of care in a flexible, tailor-made manner and not according to rigidly established rules
- creation of the position of the a Dependent Care Coordinator (KOOZ)
- building and maintaining a local support network



## FIND OUT MORE!

Check out the full case study: [here!](#)

Check out the FARMWELL Toolkit for more information & inspiration [here!](#)

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