



Unia Europejska

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME POLAND-RUSSIA 2014-2020 ON THE SUPPORT AREA

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY RESULTS

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Desk research

CAWI/CATI

In-depth
interviews

Case studies

Delphi method

Network analysis

Media query

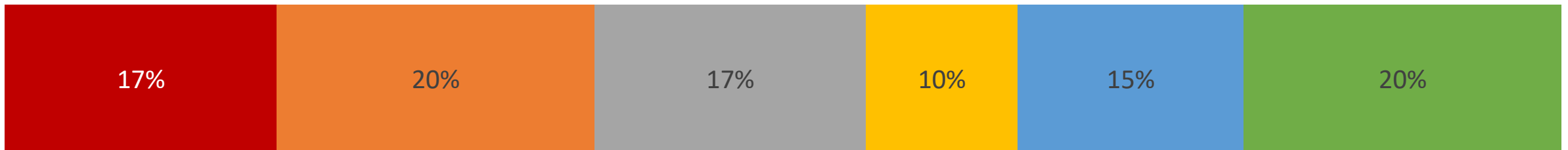
Measurement of
outcome
indicators

NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES



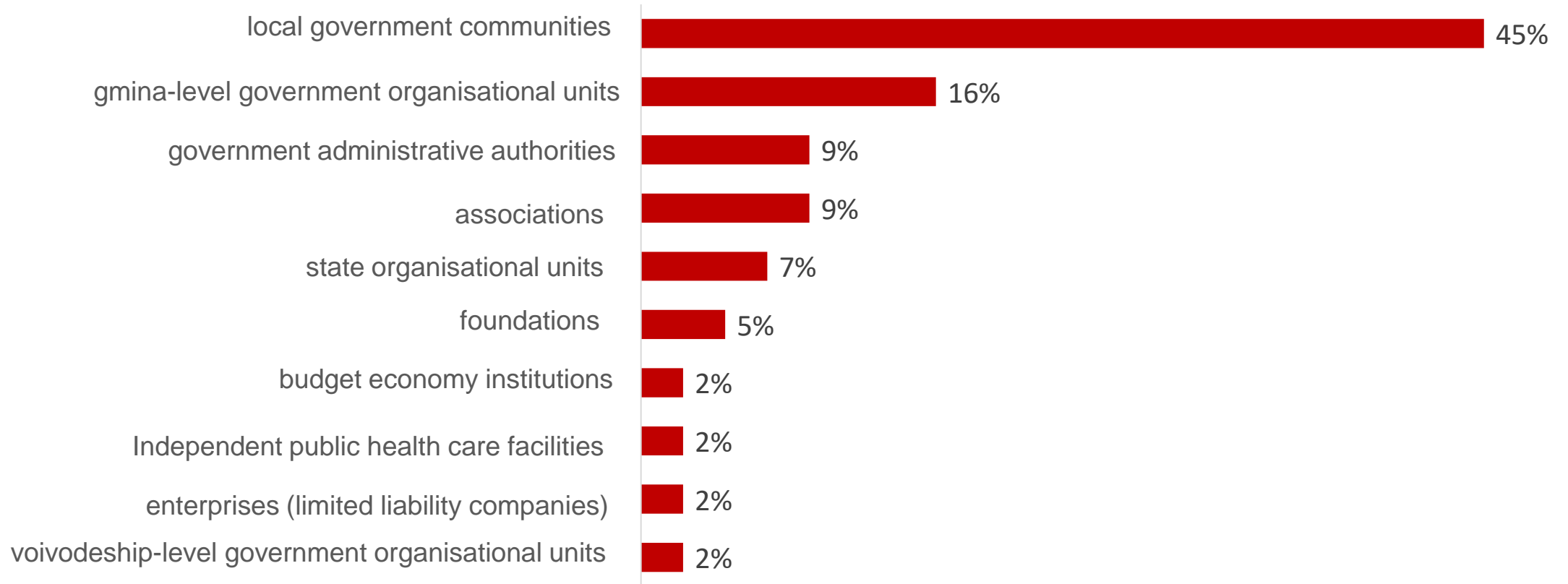
STRUCTURE OF PARTNERSHIPS

There was no significant variation in the number of project consortia members. Both consortia consisting of a leader and one partner and consortia with 6 partners in addition to the leader were popular.

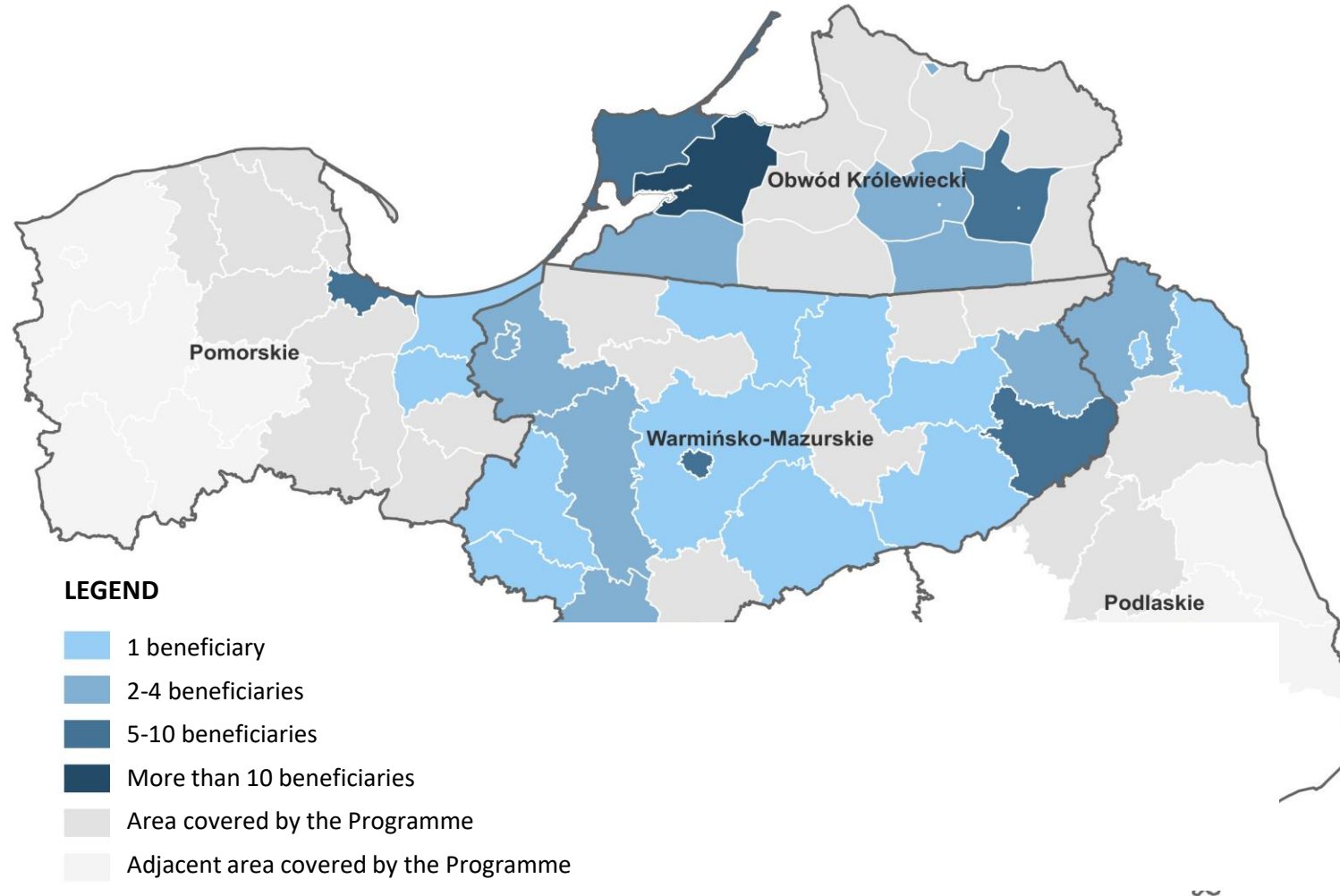


■ Leader + 1 partner ■ Leader + 2 partners ■ Leader + 3 partners ■ Leader + 4 partners ■ Leader + 5 partners ■ Leader + 6 partners

PREDOMINANT TYPES OF BENEFICIARIES

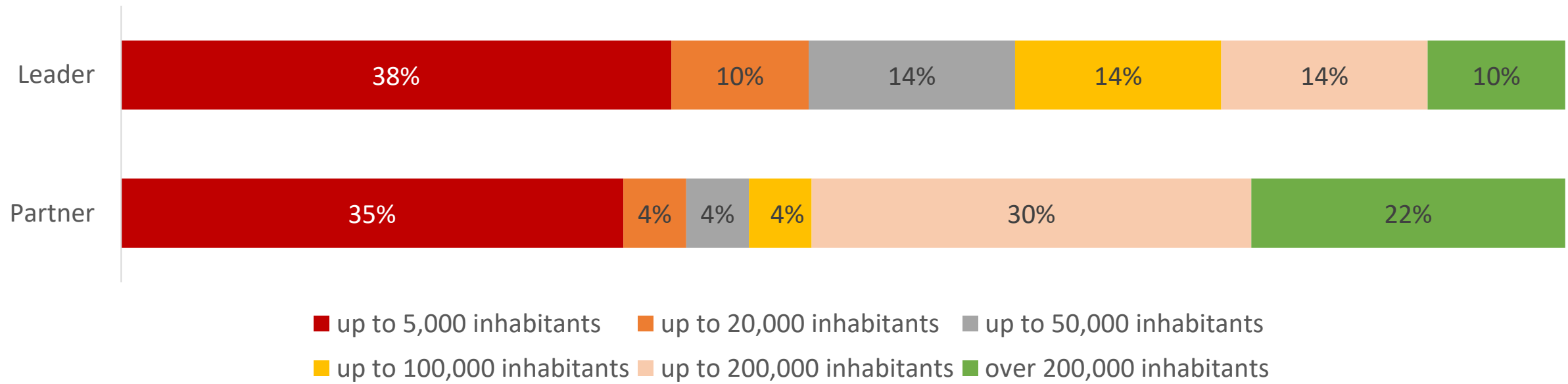


BENEFICIARIES BY LOCATION



BENEFICIARIES BY LOCATION

It is worth noting that **project leaders are more likely to come from towns with a small population, while partners are more likely to come from larger localities.** Across the Programme, more than half of the project partners (52%) represent areas with a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants, while there are only 24% of leaders from such areas.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

Product indicator	Subject-matter objective	Target achievement percentage
Number of organisations benefiting from the programme support to promote local culture and preserve historical heritage	HERITAGE	60.00%
Number of improved cultural, historical, tourist and nature sites as a direct consequence of programme support	HERITAGE	100.00%
Number of cross-border cultural events organised with Programme support	HERITAGE	50.00%
Additional population served by improved wastewater or waste treatment systems	ENVIRONMENT	12.82%
Additional wastewater and waste treatment capacity	ENVIRONMENT	55.89%
Number of projects to improve water supply	ENVIRONMENT	25.00%
Number of joint actions and measures to protect the environment or to address climate change	ENVIRONMENT	40.00%
Total length of altered or modernised roads	ACCESSIBILITY	31.84%

INTENSITY OF CONTACT BETWEEN PARTNERS

Average monthly contact frequency between partners before and after the break-up of cooperation with the Russian Federation



INTENSITY OF CONTACT BETWEEN PARTNERS

As part of the quantitative study, beneficiaries and partners were asked whether they felt that the number of meetings between the lead beneficiary and partners was sufficient for proper project implementation. It can be observed that after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation, this aspect was rated lower than before the suspension of cooperation in terms of the average rating of the beneficiaries and partners participating in the survey. Before the conflict broke out, the average rating was 6.88 on a scale of 1-10, and after the conflict erupted, the rating is 5.60 on a scale of 1-10.

6.88

Average rating of the sufficiency of meetings before the outbreak of war in Ukraine

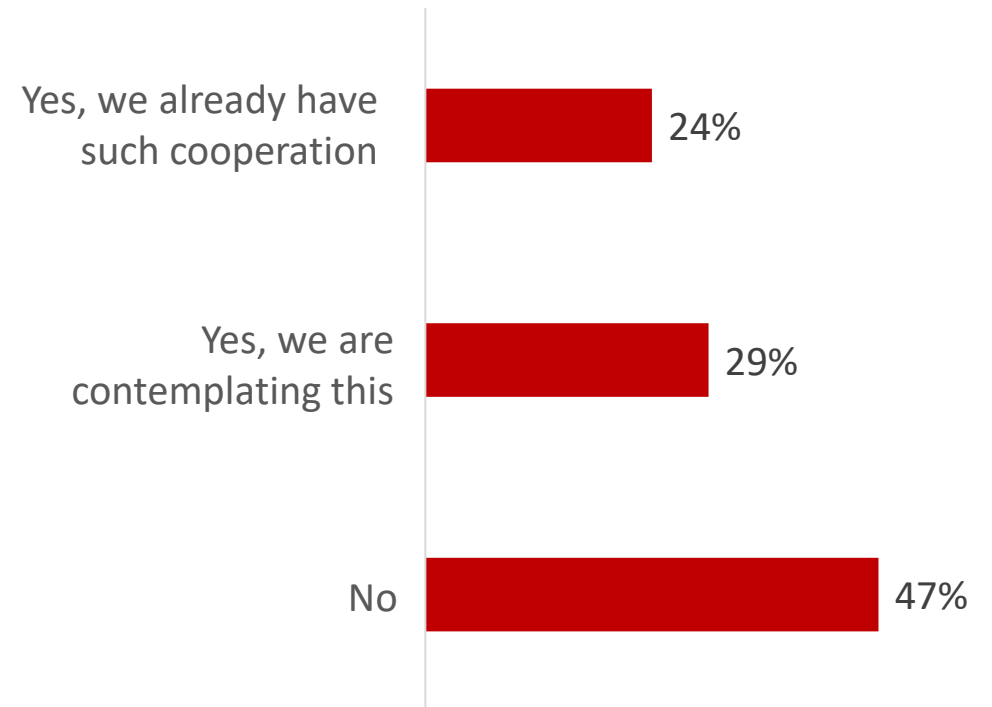
5.60

Average rating of sufficiency of meetings following the outbreak of war in Ukraine

FURTHER PROJECT PLANS

The chart presents the responses of the surveyed beneficiaries and project partners to the question 'Do you plan to cooperate with partners from other countries under other cooperation programmes?'.

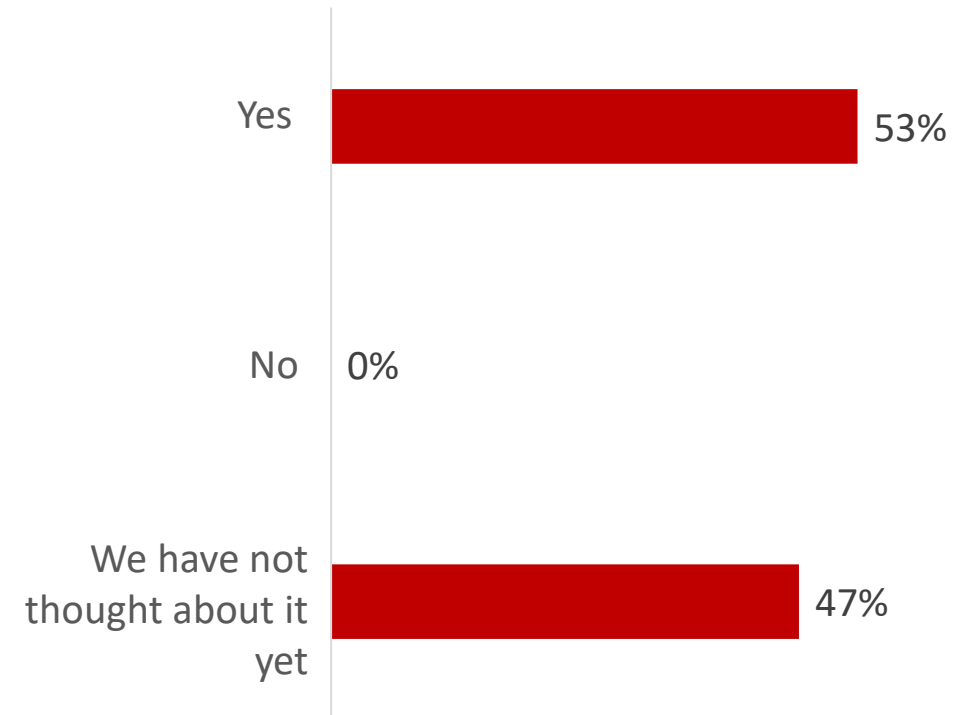
More than half of the entities surveyed plan to cooperate with partners from countries other than Russia: 24% of those surveyed have already established such cooperation, while 29% are considering it. Most plan to base their cooperation on subsequent projects co-financed by the Territorial Cooperation Programmes implemented in the 2021-2027 perspective.



FURTHER PROJECT PLANS

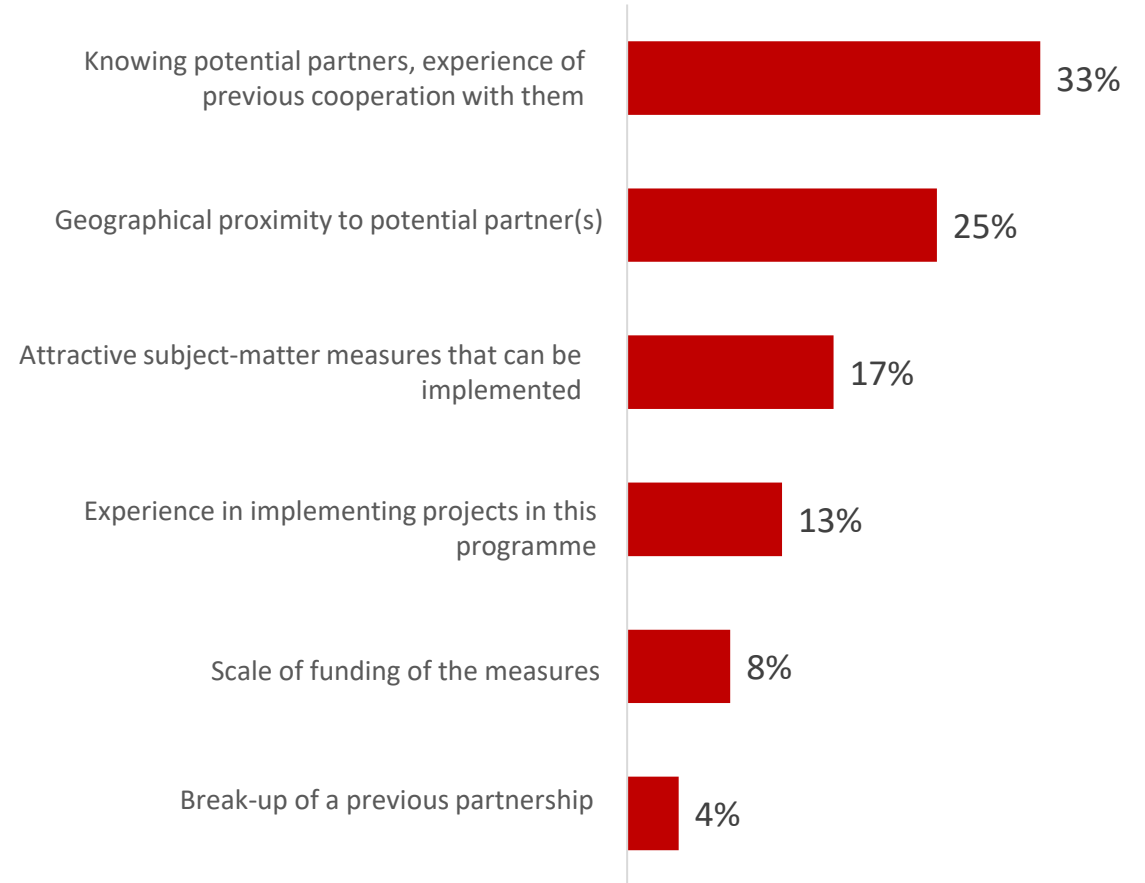
This next chart presents the responses of the surveyed beneficiaries and project partners to the question 'Do you plan to implement a project as part of any Territorial Cooperation Programme that is carried out in the financial perspective 2021-2027?'.

Given the geographical location, the natural direction of cooperation is the support area of the Lithuania-Poland Programme (for half of the beneficiaries), the South Baltic Programme (for every third respondent) or the Baltic Sea Region Programme. It is worth noting that two of the three Programmes being contemplated by the beneficiaries as directions for further cooperation are not cross-border, but interregional programmes, which have different cooperation dynamics. Following the cooperation plans, the countries with which the beneficiaries have established or plan to establish cooperation should be mentioned. These are mainly: Lithuania, Germany, Croatia, France, Portugal, Romania, Ukraine and Hungary.



DETERMINANTS OF PARTNERSHIP COMPOSITION

When justifying the choice of direction for further cooperation, the beneficiaries mainly mentioned factors such as knowing their partners and having previously implemented other projects. Thus, it has to be pointed out that the experience of previous cooperation positively affects the implementation of future projects. Other reasons mentioned for choosing this direction of cooperation were the geographical proximity to the partners as well as the adequacy of measures to be implemented under the various Programmes, which were of interest to the beneficiaries. The cooperation planned by the beneficiaries will mainly focus on cultural heritage, education, social inclusion and integration, and infrastructure development. Less emphasis was placed on environmental protection, health care, economic development and communication.



SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

The vast majority of participants in the quantitative survey (project beneficiaries) concluded that the effects of their project would continue long after the project has ended (over 88% of responses), while 12% of those surveyed said that the effects would continue for some time but would diminish without further projects. It is worth mentioning that none of the beneficiaries explicitly stated that the effects of the project would not be sustained (their answer was: 'The effects ceased or will cease with the end of the project'). Therefore, the respondents' answers allow the conclusion that the sustainability of the projects will be maintained, but some of them (12%) believed that the effects would diminish after some time without further support. Further on in the quantitative survey, the beneficiaries were asked about the impact of the suspension of cooperation with Russia on project sustainability.

The Commission issued only a war decree in which it helped us a little bit by exempting us from the sustainability requirement in relation to the Russian or Belarusian partner.

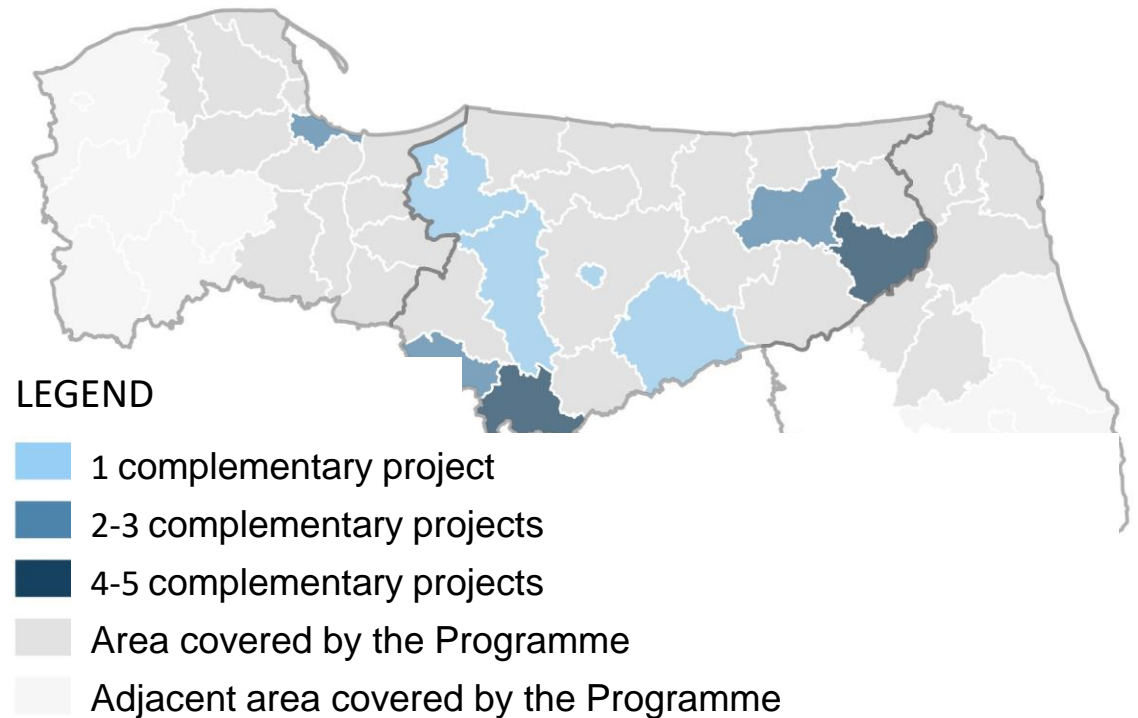
Source: A personal in-depth interview.

Without a doubt, the best chance of preserving and sustaining effects comes from infrastructure projects that retain their functionality, even with time-limited use. Cultural effects are more challenging to assess, where the suspension of cooperation with foreign partners could mean project expiry and the consequent loss of outcomes.

Source: Delphi study.

COMPLEMENTARITY OF PROJECTS

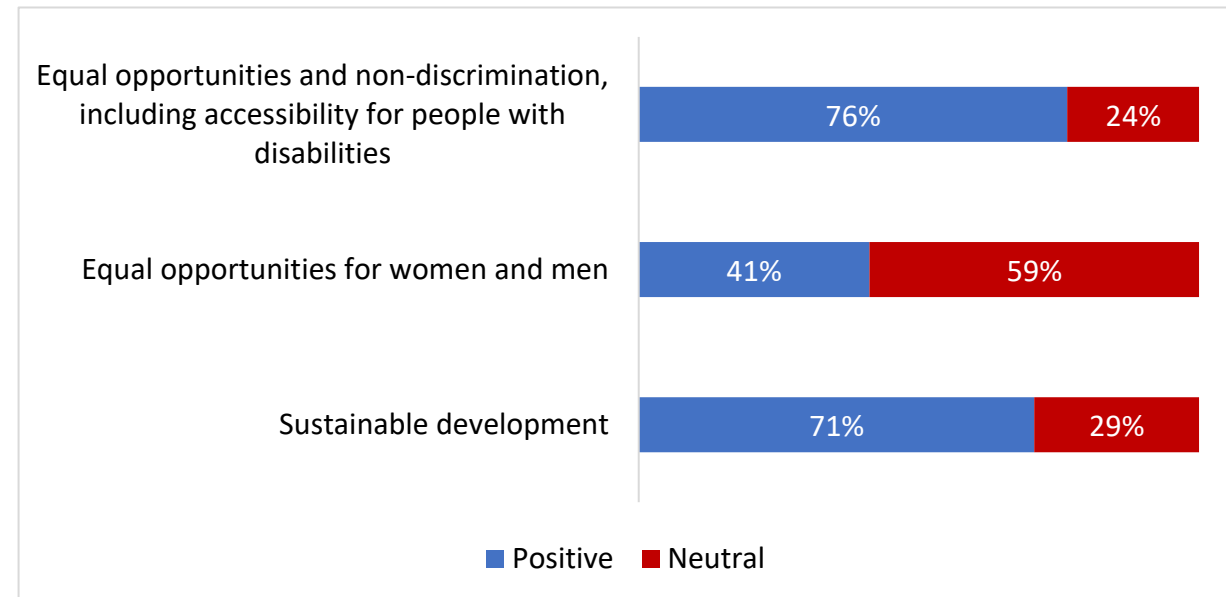
Projects implemented as part of the Cooperation Programme Poland-Russia 2014-2020 were usually **complementary to projects implemented using ROP funds**. This is probably because of the relatively extensive use of these funds by the entities also benefiting from the Cooperation Programme funds. Nearly all of the beneficiaries (except one) of the Cooperation Programme Poland-Russia 2014-2020 who implemented projects from other funds benefited from the ROP.



HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

The impact of projects on the adherence to the horizontal principles was examined on the basis of a CAWI among Polish beneficiaries and project partners. The survey found that projects predominantly showed a positive impact on the fulfilment of the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and sustainable development. As regards the principle of equal opportunities for women and men, the projects' impact was mainly neutral.

No difficulties were reported by beneficiaries having to refer to the horizontal principles.





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STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (1)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
High level of territorial concentration of support	A high level of support concentration is observed in the Programme at each level of the analysis. Support mainly focuses on the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, which has the longest land border with the Russian Federation. It is also concentrated in large localities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. In addition, there are white spots (places where not even a single project from the Programme has been implemented) in the support area, even in the case of localities close to the border.	If support is to continue in any form, it is recommended to introduce mechanisms to promote a more even distribution of support.	It is recommended to introduce mechanisms that will encourage at least one of the entities participating in the project consortium to be represented by an entity based in a poviats near the border, e.g. in the form of extra points if this condition is met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased representation of poviats and gminas, which are currently white spots. Greater proportionality in the distribution of support across the area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (2)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
Loss of ties with partners from the Russian Federation	The loss of ties with partners from the Russian Federation created a vacuum that will be difficult to fill in terms of projects and cross-border cooperation. The Polish beneficiaries of the support are experienced in the implementation of other cross-border and interregional programmes, but the cooperation with the Russian entities was a reflection of unique common challenges and problems. The study confirmed that a kind of compensation for the lost ties could be the inclusion of the border area in other programmes (the EC agreed to this during the work on this evaluation), but these plans do not include the whole area which lost ties with Russia.	It is recommended that the Olsztyn sub-region be retained as an eligible area under the South Baltic and Lithuania Poland programmes and the Łomża sub-region be retained under the Lithuania Poland programme.	It is recommended that further consultations and negotiations with the EC are undertaken in order to obtain a decision on the extension of the scope of the South Baltic and Lithuania-Poland Programmes.	It is recommended that further consultations and negotiations with the EC are undertaken in order to reach a decision on the extension of the South Baltic and Lithuania-Poland Programmes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (3)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
Loss of ties with partners from the Russian Federation and discontinuation of the Poland-Russia Programme	<p>The Polish-Russian border region is distinctive in comparison to other border regions in the country.</p> <p>Neighbouring a country with an openly hostile policy means that the border region on the Polish side is at high risk of being marginalised, depopulated and experiencing some negative developments. Including the area in other cross-border programmes cannot fully make up for the negative effects of losing the partnership.</p>	<p>Although the plans to include the area of the existing Poland-Russia Programme are to be assessed positively, it is recommended that a special mechanism be put in place to allow the development of the border area in view of its specificity.</p>	<p>It is recommended to contemplate a special, one-sided support mechanism as a programme aimed only at entities on the Polish side of the border, which would respond to cross-border challenges (e.g. the need to counteract the negative effects of natural hazards and environmental pollution). These challenges, even if addressed only on one side of the border and without a partnership, will have a cross-border impact and respond in a feedback mechanism to threats emerging from the other side of the border.</p>	<p>Effective response to cross-border challenges and threats in the absence of a partner from the other side of the border.</p>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (4)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
In the present study, it is not possible to fully assess the extent to which the specific objectives of the Programme have been achieved	The lack of assessment of the extent to which the specific objectives of the Programme have been achieved by its individual axes (due to the unavailability of information on the achieved levels of the indicators), including the lack of assessment of the impact of the LIP on the achievement of the objectives, makes it impossible to properly plan the objectives for subsequent programmes and to achieve an optimal allocation among their axes.	It is recommended that studies are carried out to determine the achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme and the impact of the LIP on the achievement of the objectives after it has ended.	Estimation of the achievement of the specific Programme objectives once all projects have been completed and accounted for	Achieving a better alignment of the potential programme beyond 2027 with the needs of the support areas.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (5)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
Differing descriptions of indicators to characterise the performance of the same CT in the Programme, Programme Manual and monitoring tables	In the absence of a proper description or in the case of differing descriptions of indicators and/or their measures, it is difficult to correctly and quickly assess the degree of implementation of the Programme and to properly evaluate the achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme.	It is recommended that the indicator cards and descriptions (with requirements) contained in them be used throughout the descriptions of indicators in all Programme documents.	It is recommended to use previously prepared (and agreed upon) indicator cards.	Better and quicker evaluation of the implementation of the Programme and its axes, if the Programme is to be implemented in any form

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (6)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
Relatively poor awareness of the beneficiaries as regards the significance and scope of the horizontal principles, lack of sufficient descriptions of the principles in the Programme Manual and examples of their possible implementation	The beneficiaries usually mention a neutral impact of the project on the implementation of the horizontal principles or use typical solutions to meet the requirement to implement the project according to these principles. The projects being carried implemented do not in most cases incorporate innovative solutions, but focus only on fulfilling the requirement to apply the principle.	<p>It is recommended that the Programme Manual be supplemented with descriptions of the suggested methods of implementing the horizontal principles and that a publication on best practice in applying the principles to projects is drawn up.</p> <p>Given the advanced implementation stage of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, the recommendation may be applicable to subsequent programme editions if cooperation with Russia is resumed.</p>	It is recommended to complete the Programme Manual with regard to the horizontal principles, to develop a publication on best practices, and to make this publication available on the Programme's webpage.	Raising the beneficiaries' awareness of the significance and scope of the horizontal principles and thus improving how the horizontal principles are implemented in the projects and achieving better (higher) results through their correct application, if the Programme is implemented in any form

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (7)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
Insufficiently thorough evaluation of how the horizontal principles are implemented by the assessors during the verification of proposals/project applications	Inadequate understanding of the significance of the horizontal principles by project evaluators, resulting in the acceptance of projects which do not implement these principles in the best way. This translates into an inability to enforce proper reference to the fulfilment of the horizontal principles during project implementation.	<p>During training for assessors evaluating projects, it is recommended to emphasise the significance of meeting the horizontal principles and the need for more a thorough verification of this aspect.</p> <p>Perhaps the amount of time devoted to reviewing the submitted proposals/project applications should be increased.</p> <p>Given the advanced implementation stage of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, the recommendation may be applicable to subsequent programme editions if cooperation with Russia is resumed.</p>	It is recommended that the importance of implementing the horizontal principles is discussed more extensively during assessor training. It would be advisable to make available to the assessors publications on best practice in applying the principles to projects.	Improved evaluation of how the beneficiaries implement the horizontal principles planned (as well as improved quality of the evaluation of the whole proposal/project application), if the Programme is implemented in any form

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (8)

Identified problem	Conclusion	Recommendation	How to implement the recommendation	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation
No indicators to show the implementation of the horizontal principles among the project indicators	The absence of indicators showing the implementation of the horizontal principles allows the beneficiaries to incompletely implement these principles, and makes it impossible for the persons controlling the implementation of the projects to properly check them and identify possible non-fulfilment of this scope of the project.	<p>It is recommended to introduce indicators to show the implementation of the horizontal principles in each project and to monitor the achievement of these indicators during project implementation.</p> <p>It is also proposed to introduce appropriate provisions on this topic in the Programme Manual.</p> <p>Given the advanced implementation stage of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, the recommendation may be applicable to subsequent programme editions if cooperation with Russia is resumed.</p>	It is recommended to establish a set of indicators to monitor the implementation of the horizontal principles.	Improving how horizontal principles are implemented in projects, if the Programme is implemented in any form

THANK YOU.

