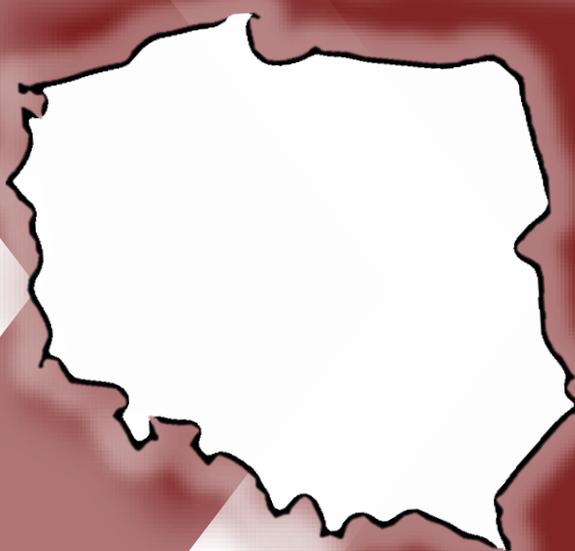




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EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE POLAND-RUSSIA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2014-2020 ON THE SUPPORT AREA

FINAL REPORT



Warsaw 2024



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Ordering Party



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

Abbreviation	Explanation
BEI	Business Environment Institution
CATI	Telephone survey (in English: Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview)
CAWI	Online survey (in English: Computer Assisted Web Interview)
CBCP	Cross-Border Cooperation Programme
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
DK	National Road
EC	European Commission
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENR	Equivalent Number of Residents
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDI	In-Depth Interview
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
LGU	Local government units
LIP	Large Infrastructure Projects
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OP EP	Operational Programme Eastern Poland 2014-2020
OP IE	Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment 2014-2020
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
TO	Thematic Objective



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SUMMARY

The main objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of activities implemented under all Thematic Objectives of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 (Programme) and to analyse their effects and the impact of the Programme on the socio-economic life of the inhabitants of the support area.

It should be noted that the 2014-2020 financial perspective was a period of **unpredictable circumstances and crisis situations** that significantly influenced the implementation of European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) programmes, primarily on Poland's eastern border. Analysed in chronological order, the factor that led to many changes in the implementation of the Poland-Russia Programme was the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent economic crisis, rising inflation, and then the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, which ultimately led to the situation that the Programme between Poland and Russia in the 2021-2027 perspective will not be implemented. Despite the circumstances, the intervention in the 2014-2020 financial perspective on the Polish side was implemented. Due to the policy of the Russian authorities, including violations of international law and lack of respect for values such as sovereignty, independence and democracy, the basic assumptions of the Programme regarding shaping ties between local communities, equalising differences and overcoming social, economic and functional barriers have not been achieved to such an extent as originally assumed.

The implementation of projects in the Polish-Russian partnership in 2014-2020, before the suspension of cooperation, **was effective, allowing for the implementation of the assumptions and the formation of lasting relations**, which were sometimes a continuation of the cooperation established under the Lithuania-Poland-Russia 2004-2006 and Lithuania-Poland-Russia 2007-2013 programmes. Nevertheless, taking into account the current political context and the situation on Poland's eastern border, it is difficult to expect that the positive experiences from previous years could result in new projects in the near future and the willingness to undertake any joint initiatives of Polish and Russian partners.

The scope of activities provided for in the Programme met the needs of project implementers. The vast majority of challenges identified under the Programme were reflected in the implemented projects. The exceptions are issues related to air condition monitoring and biodiversity protection, which have not been addressed as part of the implemented projects. However, many needs could not be fully met due to the lack of sufficient funds in the calls for proposals that could cover the high demand for support among applicants. Due to the current effectiveness and still unmet needs on the Polish side of the border, support for the current thematic areas should be continued under other programmes, partially covering the current scope of the Programme, i.e. INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027, INTERREG South Baltic 2021-2027 and INTERREG NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027. It is also worth putting more emphasis on projects related to health (mental and physical), as well as health tourism.

The study shows that most of the projects implemented under the Programme **influenced the lives of local communities**. This impact concerned mainly the creation or arrangement of places and spaces used for integration, cultural and recreational purposes, increasing the tourist potential,



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improving the quality of life and reducing the negative impact on the environment by improving access to water and sewage infrastructure, increasing transport accessibility of the border area, shortening travel time and improved safety. The study showed that similar project results could not be achieved without the support of the Programme or with lower financial outlays, or it would be very difficult, which is mainly due to the limited funds available to the project promoters. It was also emphasised that the support of the Programme was the main impetus for the implementation of joint projects.

The implementation of the projects contributed to **the development of tourism, an increase in the number of visitors to cultural heritage sites, improvement of transport infrastructure, increase in road traffic safety, environmental protection, access to water and the effectiveness of fire fighting**. According to the beneficiaries, the greatest results occurred in terms of an increase in the number of visitors to historical and cultural heritage sites.

It should also be noted that **60% of entities implementing projects under the Programme were (in the 2014-2020 financial perspective) beneficiaries of at least one other programme implemented under the cohesion policy**¹: 42% of beneficiaries implementing projects under other EU funds and the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 implemented projects complementary to the projects of the evaluated intervention. The projects were linked to each other first by objectives and secondly by activities. Converging goals are primarily the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, environmental protection and tourism development. The most common examples of complementarity of project activities are the modernisation of various elements of the same infrastructure under two programmes. Projects implemented under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme were most often complementary to projects implemented from ROP funds. To a small extent, the projects were related to other territorial cooperation programmes.

Projects implemented under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 also respected and were in line with the assumptions of horizontal policies. The applied requirements regarding compliance with horizontal principles result in examples of practical solutions in projects. The principle that the projects had the greatest (positive) impact on was the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities, and then the principle of sustainable development.

The effectiveness and efficiency of information and promotional activities carried out in 2014-2020 were relatively high. These activities were influenced by two key external factors: the Covid-19 pandemic and Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting termination of cooperation with the Russian side. In the case of activities addressed to applicants and beneficiaries, the change in the nature and form of information and promotional activity did not reduce their effectiveness (extensive activities were still carried out to inform about support possibilities, as well as training, workshops, communication channels were maintained to answer questions, doubts, etc.). In the case of this

¹ I.e. Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, INTERREG Lithuania-Poland, Eastern Poland Operational Programme, Regional Operational Programme for the Podlaskie Voivodeship, Regional Operational Programme for the Pomeranian Voivodeship or Regional Operational Programme for the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship.



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target group, transferring activities to the online sphere increased efficiency (by reducing costs while maintaining the same effects). In the case of activities aimed at society, external factors reduced their effectiveness, although not to as great an extent as might have been feared. The effect of disseminating the effects of the Programme implementation was smaller because the online format temporarily limited the number of message recipients. For obvious reasons, the suspension of cooperation with the Russian side also reduced the scope of information and promotion activities. The effectiveness of this type of activities remained at the current level (lower costs of activities related to the online formula and with a smaller territorial scope, but also lower effects).



METHODOLOGICAL PART

INTRODUCTION

This study was carried out in September-December 2023. Its aim was to assess the effectiveness of activities implemented under all Objectives of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, and to analyse their effects and the impact of the Programme on the socio-economic life of the inhabitants of the support area. As part of the evaluation, it was also important to assess the response of the Programme and projects to crisis situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which is reflected in the content of this report. The study also assessed the degree of implementation of horizontal policies (promoting equality between men and women; equal opportunities and non-discrimination; sustainable development), as well as information, promotion and communication activities – the Research Team identified factors influencing the method of their implementation and indicated good practices within these areas.

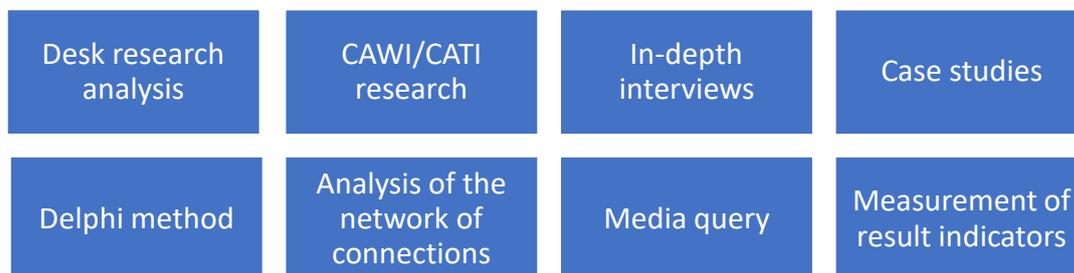
The subject scope of the study was the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020.

The subjective scope of the study covered various groups of respondents:

- Polish beneficiaries (leaders and partners) participating in the Programme;
- Representatives of institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme on the Polish side;
- Experts from outside the Research Team.

The scope of the study was limited to the Polish side of the support area, which is related to the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the resulting suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation. For this reason, the study did not envisage any contacts with the Russian side.

The study used a wide range of methodological instruments, including:



As part of **the desk research analysis**, a number of documents were taken into account, starting from legal acts regulating cross-border cooperation, through Programme and reporting documents, as well as other evaluations regarding the evaluated Programme).

CAWI/CATI research was conducted with Polish project partners. 17 effective surveys were conducted, including 8 surveys with project leaders and 9 surveys with project partners. Thus, a



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response rate of more than 40% of the population was achieved, which, given the population of beneficiaries and partners, guarantees a maximum estimation error of no more than 5% at a confidence level of 95%, which allows for extrapolation of the results achieved to the entire population and very reliable conclusions about reality based on them.

In-depth interviews included representatives of 9 institutions on the Polish side: Managing Authority, National Authority, Joint Technical Secretariat, Joint Monitoring Committee and National Contact Point. They were conducted remotely, using MS Teams software or by telephone.

Case studies – 6 case studies were conducted, two for each Thematic Objective of the Programme (2 studies – TO Heritage, 2 studies – TO Environment, 2 studies – TO Accessibility). Matrices containing descriptions of case studies constitute an annex to this report, and the findings from the studies have also been incorporated into the content of the report.

The Delphi method involved 3 experts specialising in cross-border cooperation and regional development. The three-iteration study used allowed us to draw reliable findings in the scope of the goal set for this method – much more reliable and well-thought-out than would be the case in the case of a two-iteration study.

Also noteworthy is the **analysis of the network of connections** between partners. It was carried out in two stages – before and after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation. This approach to the issue allowed to show the changes that occurred in partnerships in the support area as a result of the suspension of cooperation with partners from Russia.

The media query was conducted in relation to local, regional and social media from the support area on the Polish side. A total of 3 local, 1 regional and 4 community sources were included. Such diversity allowed to show the multitude of points of view on the analysed topic, and thus contributed to ensuring an even greater degree of triangulation.

An integral element of the study was **the measurement of result indicators**, which was carried out taking into account existing data as well as data collected from beneficiaries.

The research was accompanied by **structuring workshops** at each stage. Their role was to constantly cooperate with the Ordering Party and provide it with information about the progress of work. Moreover, these workshops served to involve the Ordering Party in the study at every stage, from establishing the methodology to formulating recommendations.

The culmination of the research is this report, presenting the accumulated knowledge in a systematic way. The structure of the report is divided into three parts: **methodological**, constituting a brief presentation of the research assumptions and methodology, **analytical**, constituting the main part of the study, and **summarising**, collecting conclusions and recommendations for the future Programme.

Description of the subject, main assumptions and objectives of the study, description of the circumstances surrounding the study).



ANALYTICAL PART

I. PROGRAMME

1.1. THE DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

Research question: Have the specific objectives of the Programme been achieved in individual priority axes and to what extent? To what extent have large infrastructure projects (LIPs) contributed to achieving the Programme objectives?

Based on the analysis of the socio-economic situation of the area in which the Programme was to be implemented and the identified strengths and weaknesses of this area, opportunities and threats, as well as taking into account the conclusions drawn from previous cross-border cooperation – the Programme activities focused on four Thematic Objectives selected from the list attached to the Programming Document for the European Neighbourhood Instrument programmes 2014-2020 and the corresponding priorities:

- **TO 3 Promotion of local culture and protection of cultural heritage (HERITAGE)** – priority: Cooperation in the field of preservation and cross-border development of historical, natural and cultural heritage,
- **TO 6 Environmental protection and adaptation to climate change (ENVIRONMENT)** – priority: Cooperation for a clean natural environment in the cross-border area,
- **TO 7 Improving the accessibility of regions, development of transport and communication networks and systems (ACCESSIBILITY)** – priority: Accessible regions and sustainable cross-border transport and communication,
- **TO 10 Promoting border management and border security, mobility and migration management (BORDERS)** – priority: Joint actions for border security².

According to the information provided at the conference marking the end of the Programme (Olsztyn, 12 October 2023), 31 projects co-financed by Polish beneficiaries with an amount of EUR 36,288,421.51 were implemented (or are currently being implemented) in the Programme. The numbers and amounts of project funding for individual thematic objectives are presented Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic objectives and contracted funds of the Programme

Thematic objective	Number of projects	Amount contracted to Polish beneficiaries [EUR]
Heritage	16	13,380,346.11
Environment	10	10,124,262.23
Accessibility	5	12,783,813.17
TOTAL	31	36,288,421.51

² Ultimately, due to the lack of projects in the first call for projects, TO 10 Promoting border management and border security, mobility and migration management (BORDERS) was not implemented and the funds from this objective were transferred to the remaining objectives of the Programme.



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Source: own study based on a presentation for the Conference on the occasion of the completion of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme co-financed by the European Union, Olsztyn, 12 October 2023.

The achievement of the Programme objectives was measured by output indicators and result indicators for individual TOs. Three output indicators (in accordance with the Programme) and three result indicators were defined for TO Heritage, four product and four result indicators for TO Environment, and two product and two result indicators for TO Accessibility.

The output indicators for **TO Heritage** were (by 14 December 2023) achieved in 233.3%, 22.2% and 55.6%. For **TO Environment**, the indicators were achieved at the level of 20.0%, 46.1%, 50.0% and 133.3%. Output indicators for **TO Accessibility** – one indicator was achieved at the level of 92.4%, while the other one was not reported. As can be seen from this summary, six out of eight indicators did not achieve their intended values, while two – *Number of organisations benefiting from support from the Programme for the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage* and *Number of joint actions and measures aimed at protecting the environment or preventing climate change* – exceeded the assumed values.

In most cases, failure to achieve the assumed values of output indicators results from failure to complete projects or failure to report the achieved indicator values. For TO Heritage, the indicators *Number of improved cultural, historical, tourist and natural facilities as a direct consequence of Programme support* and *Number of cross-border cultural events organised with Programme support* were reported in only three projects out of 15 in which they were used. In turn, for TO Environment, the indicator *Additional population served by improved sewage or waste treatment systems* was reported in two projects out of six in which it was used. It should be added here that this indicator was not reported in the project in which its target value was assumed at the level of 10,724 ENR. The next two indicators for this objective – *Additional sewage and waste treatment capacity* and *Number of projects to improve water supply* – were reported in one of the five and one of the four projects in which they were used, respectively.

As the above analysis shows, non-completion of projects (or failure to report the achievement of indicators) is the main reason for low values of some indicators for TO Heritage and TO Environment. However, the impact of the suspension of cooperation with Russia cannot be ignored. For this reason, even though the projects are completed, some indicators – although they will have a higher value than those given in the table – may not be achieved.

In the case of TO Accessibility and the indicator *Total length of converted or modernised roads*, all projects were completed and the values of the achieved indicators were reported. Therefore, the assumed value of this indicator has not been achieved and will probably not change. However, the extent of failure to achieve the assumed target value is small and amounts to approximately 8 percentage points. The reason for not achieving the assumed value of this indicator is the suspension of cooperation with Russia and the failure to complete (or not report) the works performed on the Russian side. However, it is worth pointing out and emphasising the good work of the institutions implementing the Programme. Based on the information provided to the Research Team during interviews with the beneficiaries, it was found that it was possible to 'supplement' the projects and



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introduce additional road sections on which works co-financed by the Programme were carried out. Without these activities, the degree of implementation of this indicator would be even lower.

Details on achieving targets for each output indicator are provided in Table 1 Table 2.

Table 2. Implementation of output indicators (given in the Programme) for each thematic objective of the Programme

Output indicator	Thematic Objective	Unit of measurement	Base value	Target value (assumed in the Programme)	Value achieved	Percentage of target achieved
Number of organisations benefiting from the support of the Programme for the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage	Heritage	number of organisations	0	9	21	233.3%
Number of improved cultural, historical, tourist and natural facilities as a direct consequence of Programme support	Heritage	cultural, historical, tourist and natural facilities	0	18	4	22.2%
Number of cross-border cultural events organised with the support of the Programme	Heritage	cultural events	0	9	5	55.6%
Additional population served by improved sewage or waste treatment systems	Environment	Equivalent Number of Residents (ENR)	0	6805	1360	20.0%
Additional sewage and waste treatment capacity	Environment	Equivalent Number of Residents (ENR)	0	3220	1486	46.1%
Number of projects aimed at improving water supply	Environment	number of projects	0	2	1	50.0%
Number of joint actions and measures aimed at protecting the environment or preventing climate change	Environment	number of projects/activities	0	3	4	133.3%
Total length of converted or modernised roads	Accessibility	km	0	21.297	19.67	92.4%
Number of organisations benefiting from programme support for the development of information and communication technologies (ICT)*	Accessibility	organisations	-	-	-	-

Source: own study based on data provided by the Ordering Party (as of 14 December 2023).

* The indicator was not reported.

At the time of preparation of this report (end of 2023), due to non-completion of projects or too short a period of time having passed since their completion, the value of result indicators cannot be clearly determined. Therefore, in accordance with the *Report on the measurement of result indicators developed as part of this evaluation*, the next table analyses only the implementation of the



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Programme result indicators by completed projects and only those that reported the achievement of these indicators (usually those for which a year has passed since the project completion). This table also includes information obtained during the CAWI survey, as well as information obtained from provincial police headquarters.

The analysis of the degree of implementation of result indicators showed, first of all, an extremely low (compared to the achieved) target value of the *Increased safety/reduced number of accidents in cross-border traffic indicator assumed in the Programme* – 0.006% compared to the achieved value of 774.35%. The assumed target values of the indicators *Percentage of the population using improved sewage or waste management systems* and *Percentage of the population using advanced sewage treatment or waste processing systems / percentage improvement in water status/class* – 0.13% and 0.0%, which (taking into account completed projects) were achieved at the level of 41.28% and 30.57%, respectively.

Only one indicator: *Increased number of visitors to historical and natural heritage sites and cultural sites* did not achieve its value (the difference between the expected value is 8.1 percentage points). However, the number of visitors to historical and natural heritage sites and cultural facilities, instead of increasing by 6 percentage points, decreased by 2.1 percentage points. The reason for this state of affairs was and is the reduction in the number of visitors due to the closure of the border between Poland and Russia, as well as the suspension of cooperation with Russia and thus the lack of data on the number of visits to facilities on the Russian side.

The extent of achievement of the indicator values for *Increased number of visitors to historical and cultural heritage sites*, *Increased number of visitors to cultural sites*, *Percentage of population benefiting from improved water supply* and *Percentage of population benefiting from environmental protection and climate change prevention measures* has not yet been reported.

Details on the degree to which the target values for each result indicator have been achieved are provided in the next table.



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Table 3. Implementation of result indicators (given in the Programme) for the Thematic Objectives of the Programme

Result indicator	Thematic Objective	Unit of measurement	Base value	Target value (assumed)	Value achieved (actual)	Planned (assumed) change	Change achieved (actual)	Target value (assumed)	Percentage of target achieved
More visitors to historical and cultural heritage sites	Heritage	number of people	0.00	0.00	0.00	--	--	2.7%	--
More visitors to historical and natural heritage sites and cultural sites	Heritage	number of people	500.00	5500.00	395.00	5000.00	-105.00	6.0%	-2.10%
More visitors to cultural sites	Heritage	number of people	0.00	0.00	0.00	--	--	2.5%	--
Percentage of population using improved sewage or waste management systems	Environment	ENR	0.00	453.00	187.00	453.00	187.00	0.13%	41.28%
Percentage of population using extended sewage treatment or waste treatment systems / percentage improvement in water status/class	Environment	number of people	0.00	12,970.00	3965.30	12,970.00	3965.30	0.0%	30.57%
Percentage of population benefiting from improved water supply	Environment	number of people	0.00	0.00	0.00	--	--	0.2%	--
Percentage of the population that benefits from actions to protect the environment and prevent climate change	Environment	number of people	0.00	0.00	0.00	--	--	0.6%	--



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Result indicator	Thematic Objective	Unit of measurement	Base value	Target value (assumed)	Value achieved (actual)	Planned (assumed) change	Change achieved (actual)	Target value (assumed)	Percentage of target achieved
Increased safety/reduced accidents in cross-border traffic	Accessibility	pcs.	447.49 ³	389.83	1 ⁴	-57.66	-446.49	0.006%	774.35%
Increased number of people using information and communication technologies (ICT)*	Accessibility	number of people	-	-	-	-	-	0.0083%	-

Source: own study based on data provided by the Ordering Party (as of 19 October 2023).

* The indicator was not reported.

³ One project is responsible for such a high number, in which the base number was 397 accidents per year on the road section covered by the project. In the opinion of the evaluators, these data is significantly overstated and therefore unreliable.

⁴ According to data provided by the Provincial Police Headquarters competent for the project implementation area, in 2023, 1 accident occurred on the road sections covered by the project activities.



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Analysing the above tables, it can be concluded that the Programme objectives should be achieved or almost achieved (due to the suspension of cooperation with the Russian side) after the completion of the projects. Final verification of this will be possible after the completion and settlement of all projects, as well as after assessing the implementation of result indicators. This assessment should be completed one year after the completion of each project and then performed annually for five years.

At this time, it is possible to confirm the implementation of the Programme in relation to the objectives of TO Accessibility. The output indicator was achieved at the level of 92.4%, while the result indicator (in relation to completed projects) was at the level of 774.35% (although the Research Team has some reservations here in relation to one of the base data. However, this should not reduce the indicator's performance.)

According to people interviewed during direct interviews:

(...) the objectives of the programmes were satisfactorily achieved, given the circumstances that occurred (...). Of course, we cannot say that the goals were achieved as we imagined, but we did everything to protect the interests, especially the financial interests, of the Polish beneficiaries.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

(...) the indicators in the second priority axis regarding the environment were achieved to a good extent, i.e. where activity was high, and for us as a region it was a very important priority axis.

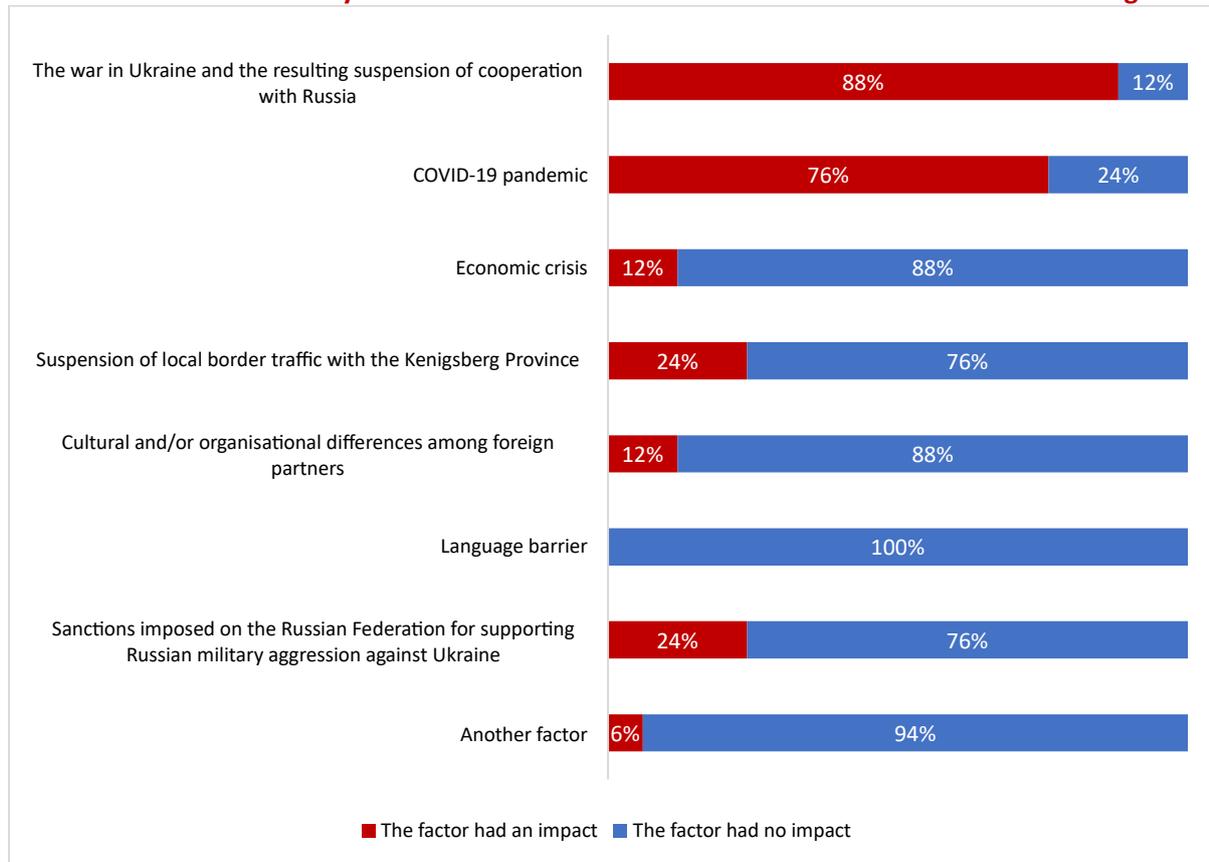
Source: Individual in-depth interview.

Generally, the Programme beneficiaries with whom CAWI surveys were conducted assessed the degree of achievement of the goals they set for themselves in the project at 8.5 on a ten-point scale, where 1 meant 'we failed to achieve the assumed goals at all,' and 10 'we fully achieved the assumed goals.' The beneficiaries indicated primarily the war in Ukraine and the resulting suspension of cooperation with Russia, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, as the reason for the lower than expected level of implementation of the indicators. In their opinion, other factors had less impact on the achievement of the assumed goals. What is positive is that none of the beneficiaries indicated the language barrier as a problem. Details of the responses regarding individual factors that made it difficult to achieve the assumed goals are provided in the chart below.



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Chart 1. Factors indicated by the beneficiaries that made it difficult to achieve the assumed goals



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

The Programme included three large infrastructure projects [LIP]. Two of them were implemented in TO Heritage: 'Development of tourism, recreation and water tourism potential in the cities of Svetly and Malbork (phase 2)' and 'CBCycle: Cross-Border bicycle routes for the promotion and sustainable use of cultural heritage,' while one: 'Construction of a new route of provincial road No. 512 along with the construction of a bridge over the Łyna River in Bartoszyce' in TO Accessibility. Until 19 October 2023, none of the above projects reported the values of the indicators achieved, and thus the degree of achievement of the goals. As in both projects implemented in TO Heritage the leading partner was a Russian partner, it is not known to what extent the Russian parts of the project were implemented, or what impact it had on the indicators of the entire project. The opinion of the Polish partner of one of these projects shows that the part of the project it implemented was of little importance. However, the reason for this opinion was the project assumptions assuming the majority of investment works on the Russian side, which were not reported due to the suspension of cooperation with Russia. However, the second project in TO Heritage 'Development of tourism, recreation and water tourism potential in the cities of Svetly and Malbork (phase 2)' was of great importance and contributed more than the previous one to achieving the programme indicators.

In the case of LIP regarding provincial road 512, the funds contracted by the Polish partner accounted for over half of the total funds contracted under TO Accessibility (63%). In this case, as another respondent pointed out, this project contributed to achieving the indicators of the entire TO of the



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Programme to a greater extent than regular projects. Based on the interview (conducted for the purposes of the case study), information was obtained that all the project goals set by the Polish partner were achieved (it should also be noted that due to the nature of the works – the cost of bridge works is relatively high compared to the cost of road works – the Programme indicator The total length of the converted or modernised roads does not best reflect the importance of the works carried out).

(...) this is a flagship project in our voivodeship and (...) it really solved the communication problems in the city to a large extent.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

Chapter Summary:

At the moment, it can be said that the goals for Accessibility have been achieved. The objectives of the remaining two TOs of the Programme have not yet been achieved due to the unfinished and unsettled projects implemented under them. Therefore, it is recommended to finally verify the achievement of the objectives of these TOs after the completion and settlement of all projects, as well as after assessing the implementation of result indicators. The evaluation of result indicators should be carried out one year after the end of each project and then every year for five years.

It can be concluded that the most desirable axes that would be worth developing in the next financial perspectives are TO Accessibility and TO Heritage. The need for further continuation of TO Heritage is evidenced by the relatively large number of projects submitted during calls for proposals on this topic. In turn, the need to implement TO Accessibility is indicated by the quick and efficient completion of projects of this axis.

Of the three large infrastructure projects, two have been largely completed. Beneficiaries report the need to continue implementing such projects. Due to their size, they affect a relatively large area, thus enabling the solution of many social needs.

Taking into account the current international situation, we believe that there is no justification for continuing the Programme in its current form in subsequent programming periods. It seems advisable to include the activities of the current Programme in other INTERREG programmes, such as INTERREG South Baltic or INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027.

1.2. PROGRAMME RESULTS

Research question: How do the results of the Programme implementation affect the lives of local communities? Would the results achieved be achieved without the Programme's intervention or with lower financial outlays?

Projects implemented under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, in addition to affecting the entire border area, also affect the development of individual municipalities/communes and the communities inhabiting them. Cross-border cooperation is to be based on the implementation of projects that primarily respond to the needs of the inhabitants of the supported areas and use the local potential for further development.



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Polish beneficiaries and partners were asked about the impact of projects implemented under the Programme on the environment as part of the CAWI quantitative study. The distribution of the answers obtained indicates that 24% of respondents declared that their project had an impact both on the immediate surroundings (i.e. the local community), but also on the areas adjacent to the project implementation sites (e.g. neighbouring municipalities/communes), and therefore had a supra-local character. According to 35% of respondents, the project had a significant impact on the immediate surroundings; the same percentage of project promoters also believed that the project had an impact on the local community, but to a small extent. Only 6% of respondents admitted that the implemented project only influenced the project implementers (beneficiaries and partners). The respondents' answers confirm the opinions collected during in-depth interviews conducted as part of the case studies. Respondents indicated that the projects they implemented were mainly aimed at improving the quality of life of the local community.

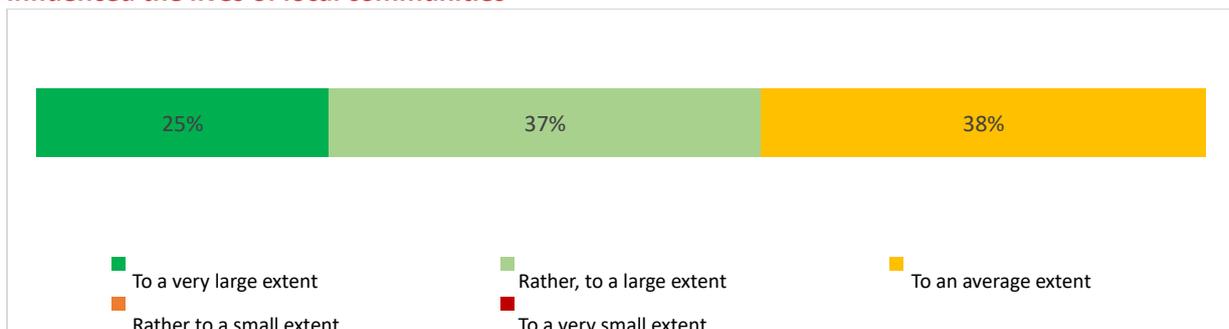
Chart 2. The impact of projects on the environment



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Respondents who noticed the impact of the project on the local community were asked to assess the degree of this impact. 25% of respondents assessed that the results of the implemented project influenced the lives of local communities to a very large extent, 37% assessed that this impact was rather large and 38% – that it was average. None of the respondents assessed the impact of the projects as small or very small.

Chart 3. The extent to which, according to beneficiaries and partners, the results achieved have influenced the lives of local communities





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Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=16). The total value of the responses is greater than 100% due to rounding

As part of the survey, respondents also described how the project results impacted the local community. In the case of projects implemented under Priority 1. *Cooperation in the field of preservation and cross-border development of historical, natural and cultural heritage (TO Heritage)* most often indicated effects related to the construction or modernisation of infrastructure for tourist, cultural and recreational purposes. As a result of the project, among others: bicycle and pedestrian-bicycle trails were created and rebuilt (e.g. along the river), which serve both to develop tourism and recreation for residents, public squares were modernised, as well as facilities serving a tourist, cultural or artistic function, such as museums, galleries and spaces to conduct workshops and other types of integration meetings. It is worth noting that due to the need to implement the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, the supported infrastructure was adapted to the needs of people with disabilities. Respondents emphasised that **improving the conditions for tourism brings results not only for people visiting a given commune, but also benefits its residents, because it contributes to increasing their income and increasing the attractiveness of modernised facilities and spaces**. Reference was also made to the effect of increasing the physical activity of residents, observed after the implementation of the project involving the creation of a 23 km bicycle route. The integration of residents was also considered an important result of the projects for the local community (before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, this integration also had a cross-border nature), including: thanks to the possibility of taking advantage of the offer of various types of facilities and spaces used to organise artistic, cultural or recreational meetings (workshops, performances, exhibitions, festivals, concerts, sports competitions, bicycle rallies). The ability to preserve and promote the historical heritage of the supported areas was also considered an important result for the local community. An example of an initiative that achieved such a result is a project involving, among others: conducting archaeological research in the Sedyty settlement in Olsztyn and in the Truso settlement cemetery in Janów. The effects of research carried out at archaeological sites and memorial sites have been marked and are promoted, among others: via the infokiosk.

In the case of projects implemented under Priority 2. *Cooperation for a clean natural environment in the cross-border area (TO Environment)* respondents participating in the survey indicated primarily the results related to the construction and modernisation of infrastructure for managing water resources. **The completed projects contributed to improving the quality of life of residents, e.g. by increasing access to the water supply network and sanitary sewage system**, among others in the communes of Stare Juchy, Młynary and Zalewo. New sections of water and sewage infrastructure, the construction of water treatment plants and storm sewage systems contributed to improving the residential attractiveness of the supported areas. Moreover, the investments also have consequences for the natural environment, because direct connection to the sewage network eliminates the problem of old, leaky waste tanks, which reduces the emission of pollutants into groundwater.

In turn, as part of projects implemented under Priority 3. *Accessible regions and sustainable cross-border transport and communication (TO Accessibility)* respondents indicated the results of activities involving the construction and modernisation of road infrastructure. **The indicated impact on local**



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communities included improving the accessibility of border areas, taking into account both cross-border accessibility and communication within a given city/town, improving the quality of road surfaces, which translates into driving safety and comfort and reducing pollutant and noise emissions, as well as the development of sustainable, climate-resilient transport and communication networks and systems. Infrastructure activities were accompanied by information activities (conferences, meetings).

Experts were also asked about the impact of projects implemented under the Programme on the lives of local communities as part of the Delphi study. The participating experts rated the degree of this impact as moderate (average rating: 6.0 on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the lowest and 10 is the highest). The obtained results are somewhat consistent with the quantitative assessment presented by the project promoters (most of the surveyed beneficiaries and partners assessed this impact as rather large or average). Experts also indicated what, in their opinion, aspects of the life of local communities are most influenced by the implementation of projects. The most frequently mentioned were environmental protection (66.6%), cultural heritage (66.6%), transport accessibility (66.6%), economic development (33.3%) and social inclusion and integration of various groups (33.3%). One of the experts also pointed to the impact of the projects on establishing personal contacts and the functioning of Euroregions.

As the media query conducted as part of this evaluation showed, descriptions of project results, also from the perspective of local communities, were published in the form of articles by local and regional media. These articles, often supplemented with photos, provided information about the effects of the project activities undertaken and the source from which the implemented projects were financed. Examples of information about the effects of projects posted on local and regional portals include a description of renovation investments in the Boyen fortress in Giżycko, a description of the course of a cross-border bicycle rally, during which participants could get to know the places covered by activities under the project *Cooperation for the development of the preservation of historical and cultural heritage and natural cross-border area*, a description of the ship's renovation as part of the *2 Ships – common sea* project, as well as a description of the renovation works undertaken as part of the Amber Museum in the Great Mill in Gdańsk.

Information on the impact of the project results on local communities in the border area was also provided by in-depth interviews. Respondents emphasised that the implemented projects primarily affect the lives of the inhabitants of the supported areas. In the case of projects related to the promotion of cultural and natural heritage, initiatives were undertaken to preserve local monuments, traditions, regional products, as well as valuable resources of the natural environment. Supported facilities and spaces therefore become an attractive place not only for visitors, but also for residents, for whom they serve an integrating, cultural and recreational function.

As part of the Programme, city parks were also modernised, revitalised and made more attractive, because some stages, climbing walls, and various types of investments were built in these parks, which the local government would certainly not be able to afford if it were not for these funds from the Programme. Bicycle paths have also been created, primarily used by residents.



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Source: Individual in-depth interview.

Similarly to the beneficiaries and partners in the CAWI study, respondents to in-depth interviews (representatives of institutions responsible for implementing the Programme) emphasised that the increase in the tourist attractiveness of a given area, achieved thanks to the implementation of projects, contributes to the generation or preservation of jobs in various types of services, which influences the economic development of the municipalities/communes in the support area.

Tourists who could use such infrastructure, such as bicycle paths created in tourist-attractive towns, to some extent contributed to the fact that these jobs in the tourism sector were at least maintained, or perhaps developed.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

In the case of projects aimed at improving the quality of the natural environment, respondents to in-depth interviews recalled the impact of the projects on filling infrastructure gaps, primarily in the area of water and sewage services. It was emphasised that this type of investment, on the one hand, enables the use of network infrastructure, which eliminates the need to secure water intake and sewage disposal on one's own, and also improves the condition of the environment by limiting the discharge of untreated substances.

Environmental projects have had a huge impact on improving the quality of life of residents, because now there is a better quality of public services in terms of water purity in waterworks or sewage disposal through sewage pipes. They were modernised or built, so it certainly influenced the quality of the environment in these towns, and thus the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

An example of a project influencing the life of the local community in this thematic area is the project entitled *Protection of natural heritage through improvement and development of water and sewage infrastructure in the Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality*. As part of the project, 2.6 km of sanitary infrastructure and a sewage treatment plant were built in the village of Jamielnik in the Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality. The conducted case study shows that the inhabitants of the town appreciate the results of the project. Thanks to its implementation, they have access to infrastructure that meets their needs, i.e. water and sewage networks. Moreover, the constructed sewage treatment plant counteracts the accelerated environmental degradation, which has been intensified in recent years by the influx of new residents.

In turn, in the case of projects related to transport accessibility, respondents emphasised the importance of the investments in increasing the level of safety and comfort of travel by improving the quality of infrastructure (surfaces, signs, lighting, pedestrian crossings). Reference was also made to investments consisting in supplementing the existing road network with new sections that solve the problem of the so-called bottlenecks. An example of such an undertaking is the project entitled *Construction of a new route of provincial road No. 512 along with the construction of a bridge crossing over the Łyna River in Bartoszyce*, which included the construction of a new bridge over the

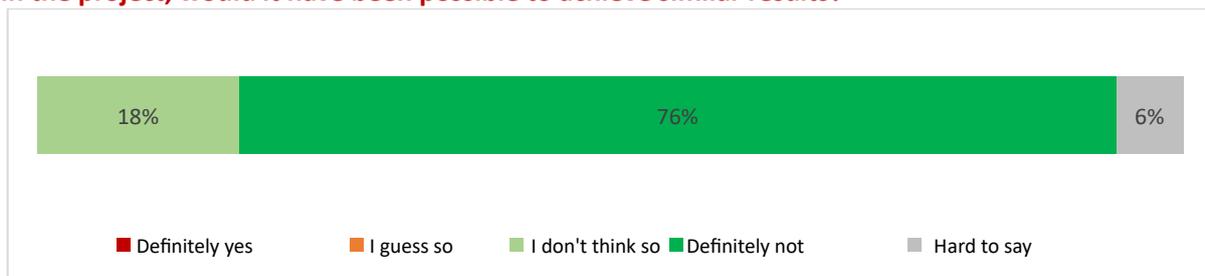


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Łyna River, equipped with street lighting, a pavement and a bicycle path. To access the bridge, a new road (with a pavement and a bicycle path) with a length of 0.64 km was also constructed. The existing 0.60 km long road was also rebuilt and four bus bays and five parking bays were built. The conducted case study shows that the new crossing has significantly improved communication in the east-west direction, relieving the existing bridge on DK51 and at the same time constituting an alternative in the event of a road accident on this section. The investment also enables further work to be carried out aimed at moving freight traffic away from the densely built-up part of the town.

As part of the survey, Polish beneficiaries and partners were asked whether it would be possible to achieve project results similar to those achieved under the project without the support of the Programme. In total, as many as 94% of respondents stated that **without the support of the Programme it would not be possible to achieve similar results**, while for 76% of respondents it would be definitely impossible, and for 18% – rather impossible. None of the respondents admitted that they would have been able to achieve similar results without the support of the Programme, while 6% of them could not clearly answer this question.

Chart 4. Respondents' answers to the question: 'If it weren't for the financial support you received in the project, would it have been possible to achieve similar results?'



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

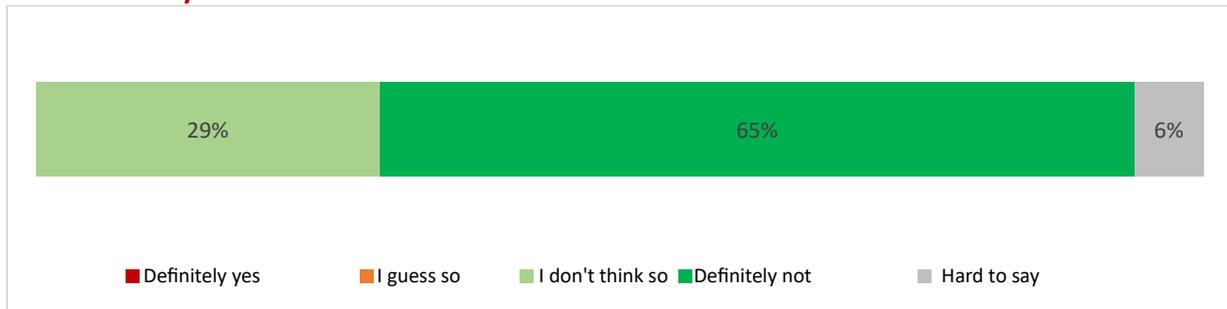
Beneficiaries and partners participating in the survey were also asked to assess to what extent the financial outlays allocated to the project were sufficient to achieve the assumed goals. The average rating on this issue was 8.65 (the scale ranged from 1 to 10, where 1 meant 'they were not sufficient at all' and 10 'were completely sufficient'). This means that in the case of most projects there was no situation in which the planned budget was significantly exceeded. The few cases of difficulties in this matter were related to increases in market prices. Investment costs were estimated by beneficiaries at the beginning of the financial perspective. However, due to the increase in prices on the construction market, the value of the investment turned out to be underestimated, which resulted in the need to make an own contribution beyond the project budget or difficulties in implementing the entire scope of the investment.

Polish project implementers also assessed whether they would be able to achieve similar project results with lower financial outlays. As in the case of the previous question, a total of 94% of respondents admitted that they did not see such an option, with 65% definitely rejecting such an option, while 29% rather rejected it. 6% of respondents had no opinion on this issue. None of the respondents indicated that they would have achieved the project results with lower expenditure.



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Chart 5. Respondents' answers to the question: 'Could similar results be achieved with lower financial outlays?'



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

The impossibility of implementing projects without the support of the Programme or the possible implementation, but with a very limited scope, was also confirmed by the beneficiaries of the projects analysed as part of the case study. Respondents most often cited the lack of adequate financial resources, which made it impossible to cover the costs of projects.

Certainly, this project would not have been implemented either at this time or in this scope if this funding were not available. (...) We would certainly be able to finance this project, or at least co-finance it from external funds, but it would probably take us more time to implement it to its full extent. And these would certainly be phased activities.

Source: Individual in-depth interview as part of a case study.

We certainly would not have undertaken this task without EU support. It is not possible for the voivodeship to bear such a large investment, because it would consume a significant portion of the funds also allocated to other projects.

Source: Individual in-depth interview as part of a case study.

The information provided by project promoters confirms the opinions collected during in-depth interviews. Representatives of the institutions implementing the Programme indicated that without the Programme's support, achieving similar results would be very difficult. Attention was drawn primarily to the fact that the implementation of the Programme contributed to initiating partnerships and establishing cooperation in the border area, which would be extremely difficult without the impulse provided by the Programme's financial resources.

I think [results – note] could be achieved, but to a much lesser extent, I suppose. Undoubtedly, there would be no partnerships, without funds there would be no cooperation, this is probably the greatest value of these programmes.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

Respondents also pointed out that it was possible to implement similar investments from other funds, including: funds from the Government Local Investment Fund, but it was the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 that was the support instrument that offered funds for relatively small investments, including infrastructure, implemented on the basis of established partnerships.



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Chapter Summary:

The study shows that most of the implemented projects influenced the lives of local communities. This impact concerned mainly the creation or arrangement of places and spaces used for integration, cultural and recreational purposes, increasing the tourist potential, which has a potential impact on the creation and preservation of jobs in services, improving the quality of life and reducing the negative impact on the environment thanks to improved access to water and sewage infrastructure, increasing transport accessibility, shortening travel times and improving safety. The study also shows that similar project results would not have been achieved without the support of the Programme and with lower financial outlays.

1.3. ADEQUACY OF SUPPORT TO THE NEEDS OF THE BORDERLAND

Research question: Did the scope of the Programme's interventions respond to the challenges faced by the border section? Were there any challenges/project ideas that could not be implemented in the Programme?

The needs and challenges occurring in the Polish-Russian border area, diagnosed at the stage of creating the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, were discussed during meetings of representatives of the areas designated for support. Then, based on these discussions and taking into account the amount of funds available under the Programme, the thematic scope of support was agreed. Activities implemented under the Programme were focused on 3 thematic objectives⁵ selected from a closed list indicated in *the Programming Document for European Neighbourhood Instrument programmes*. The following thematic objectives were selected under the Programme: TO 3 *Promotion of local culture and protection of cultural heritage*, TO 6 *Environmental protection and adaptation to climate change*, TO 7 *Improving the accessibility of regions, development of transport and communication networks and systems*. Selected thematic objectives were implemented under three Priorities. **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** presents the challenges identified in the Polish-Russian border area and the priorities assigned to them, as well as the scope of project interventions that were implemented under the Programme.

Table 4. Challenges identified in the Poland-Russia border area and the priorities assigned to them and the scope of interventions undertaken as part of the implemented projects in the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020

Challenge	Priority	Scope of interventions of implemented projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation and promotion of the cultural and historical heritage of border regions; • Strengthening cultural connections and cooperation; • Increasing the activity of local communities; 	Priority 1: Cooperation in the conservation and cross-border development of historical, natural and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection, development and promotion of public goods in the field of culture and heritage; • Development and promotion of public tourism services; • Protection, development and promotion of public tourist attractions;

⁵ Due to the lack of interest of applicants in the call for projects, the implementation of the originally adopted fourth thematic objective TO10 Promoting border management and border security, mobility and migration management was abandoned.



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Challenge	Priority	Scope of interventions of implemented projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the image and attractiveness of the region; Improving the condition of tourist and cultural infrastructure; Strengthening contacts and networks between stakeholders from the cultural and tourism sectors. 	cultural heritage (TO Heritage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and promotion of public services in the field of culture and heritage; Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas; Bicycle and walking paths.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of surface and groundwater; Air condition monitoring; Mitigating climate change; Protection of biological diversity. 	Priority 2: Cooperation for a clean natural environment in the cross-border area (TO Environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change adaptation measures and protection against and management of climate-related hazards, e.g. erosion, fires, floods, storms, droughts, including awareness-raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructure disasters; Wastewater treatment; Water management and protection of drinking water (including river basin management, water supply, specific measures to adapt to climate change, measurement of water consumption in separate areas of the water supply network and at consumers, charging systems, limiting leaks); Climate change adaptation measures and protection against and management of climate-related hazards, e.g. erosion, fires, floods, storms, droughts, including awareness-raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructure disasters; Supply of water for human consumption (infrastructure for intake, treatment, storage and distribution).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing transport accessibility of the cross-border area; Developing environmentally friendly transport; Construction of networks and communication systems; Development of local roads; Integration of different types of transport; Making the transit of goods and people faster and more human-friendly. 	Priority 3: Accessible regions and sustainable cross-border transport and communication (TO Accessibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other converted or modernised roads (motorways, national, regional or local roads).

Source: own study based on the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 and the database of projects provided by the Ordering Party.



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As the table above shows, **the vast majority of challenges identified under the Programme were reflected in the implemented projects.** In the case of TO Heritage, in response to the needs related to the promotion of historical, cultural and natural heritage, improving the condition of the infrastructure used for this purpose, improving the image and tourist attractiveness of the border area and increasing social activity around issues related to local heritage, were met through projects aimed at promoting the natural and cultural values through infrastructural activities (e.g. creation of hiking trails and bicycle paths, construction of playgrounds, viewpoints, modernisation of cultural facilities, revalorisation of parks or equipping spaces with small architecture objects), information activities (publications, broadcasts, mobile applications, guides), as well as various types of 'soft' activities, such as the organisation of study trips, festivals, concerts, exhibitions, workshops and rallies.

Under Priority 2 Environment, the identified challenges regarding water protection, monitoring air quality, biodiversity protection and taking actions to mitigate unfavourable climate changes were reflected in projects relating primarily to investments in water and sewage infrastructure. The projects included the construction and modernisation of sewage treatment plants and pumping stations, water intake and treatment stations, and sections of water and sewage installations. In addition, environmental protection and counteracting climate change were also supported by investments supporting the activities of rescue services (Fire Brigade), aimed at more effective response to threats resulting from forest fires and other crisis situations; however, it should be noted that such assumptions were implemented within only one project. There were no projects aimed directly at monitoring the air quality or protecting biodiversity.

In response to the Programme's diagnosis of challenges related to improving transport accessibility of the border area, including local and regional connections, developing environmentally friendly transport and integrating various types of transport, the Programme under Priority 3 implements investments aimed at the construction and modernisation of road infrastructure, enabling faster and safer communication and greater road capacity. In addition to creating and modernising road sections, the project also supported bus, bicycle and pedestrian transport by creating bicycle paths, pavements and bus stops. Infrastructure investments were accompanied by 'soft' activities (conferences, educational campaigns, seminars, bicycle rallies) aimed at promoting road safety and exchanging experiences in the field of effective practices related to transport.

Initially, the Programme also identified challenges related to improving border security, but due to the lack of interest in implementing projects under the Thematic Objective Borders during the announced call for projects, the Joint Monitoring Committee resigned from implementing this priority.

The issue of the appropriateness of selecting programme activities for the purposes of the borderland was raised as part of a survey with Polish beneficiaries and project partners. Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which the scope of financial support they received in the project met their needs. The average rating given by the respondents is 9.35 (the scale of possible ratings is 1-10, where 1 meant 'it did not meet the needs at all' and 10 – 'it completely met the needs'), which proves that the scope of the Programme to a very large extent met the needs of project promoters. The obtained ratings confirm the desk research results presented above. Respondents who had



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comments on the appropriateness of the scope of possible support were asked to indicate what needs the support did not meet, but the answers provided largely concerned not the scope of the Programme support itself, but rather financial issues. Respondents indicated that the increase in prices caused difficulties in implementing the project as planned. It was also pointed out that the project allocated too little money for translations.

The adequacy of the scope of support to the needs of the border area was also assessed by experts as part of the Delphi study. Experts did not raise any major reservations on this issue. Attention was only drawn to the need to create conditions for the proper functioning of the Baltic and Łyna-Ława Euroregions, towards moving away from the border function in this borderland as a barrier. However, in the current political situation, it is difficult to count on the possibility of conducting this type of activities quickly.

The study shows that the selection of the scope of support offered in the Programme to the diagnosed challenges of the border area should be considered accurate and responds to the needs of the project promoters. This was also confirmed by the participants of in-depth interviews, both representatives of the institutions implementing the Programme and the beneficiaries during in-depth interviews.

In my opinion, [the scope of support – note] responded to a very large extent to the challenges identified in the programming document. Of course, only on the Polish side, because de facto later the cooperation with the Russian Federation in the Programme was broken off. (...) Also, the challenges that were specified in the programming document were met by the projects.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

From our side, it seems that the scope of support was very wide and we more than achieved everything we wanted.

Source: Individual in-depth interview as part of a case study.

Both activities related to supporting the historical, cultural and natural heritage, increasing the tourist attractiveness of the borderland, as well as activities aimed at supplementing the transport network and improving its quality and capacity should be considered as key areas in which it is worth developing cross-border cooperation, because such activities make it possible to solve common problems by increasing local development potential. Activities supporting the natural environment by limiting its pollution were also considered particularly important in the context of responding to existing challenges in the border area. Projects implemented in this area concerned primarily filling the gaps in the basic water and sewage infrastructure. As shown by the interviews, the aim of the Programme was to support primarily smaller local governments in this matter, which, due to the requirements regarding the minimum level of ENR (equivalent number of residents), could not benefit from the support of other programmes, such as the Infrastructure and Environment Programme 2014-2020. The study shows that due to the effectiveness of projects and still unmet needs, it is worth continuing to support the current thematic areas in the 2021-2027 financial perspective, under INTERREG programmes, which will cover the current scope of the Poland-Russia



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Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, i.e. INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027, INTERREG South Baltic 2021-2027 and INTERREG NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027.

During interviews with representatives of the institutions implementing the Programme and with the beneficiary as part of the case study, it was also noted that although the Programme provides for measures to support joint actions taken in response to threats to human health resulting from climate change, the need to develop common systemic institutional solutions in the field of crisis management has not been successfully addressed. Only one project was implemented under the Programme regarding the prevention and removal of the effects of climate change by purchasing vehicles and fire-fighting equipment to fight forest fires, but the implemented activities did not include the development of solutions for joint response in a crisis situation, which was probably due to the inability to implement such far-reaching cooperation with the Russian administration. According to respondents, in the next perspective it is also worth paying more attention to health-related activities. In particular, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed unmet needs in supporting both infrastructure and medical equipment, taking joint initiatives to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and the increasingly urgent problem of supporting mental health. Moreover, due to the high natural potential of north-eastern Poland, health tourism could also be a new direction of support.

The interlocutors also emphasised that the scope of support largely responded to existing needs, but the limited allocation of the Programme meant that many of these needs could not be met due to the lack of a sufficient pool of funds in the calls for proposals. This is evidenced by the significant interest of applicants and the fact that the number of submitted applications was several times greater than the financial capabilities of the Programme. This shows the scale of needs in the border area and the readiness to implement this type of projects.

The study also showed the importance of financing opportunities under the Infrastructure Action Programme, which is still considered by applicants to be a significant incentive to apply for funds due to the belief that these types of projects are most desired by the local community and their effects are visible to a larger number of residents and visitors.

The specifics speak. When we say that we have to build a model, tools or exchange experiences, [applicants – note] react differently, especially in the aspect of dwindling budgetary resources of a given entity. They must choose whether to participate in an operational, regional, or nationally managed programme, or in international projects. It cannot be denied that there are not many international programmes that offer the construction of infrastructure in various sectors: educational, medical, industrial or environmental. This is a huge problem.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

Chapter Summary:

The study showed that the scope of activities provided for in the Programme met the needs of project implementers. The vast majority of challenges identified under the Programme were reflected in the implemented projects. The exceptions are issues related to air quality monitoring and



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biodiversity protection. Many needs could not be fully met due to the lack of sufficient funds in the calls for proposals that could cover the high demand for support among applicants. Due to the current effectiveness and still unmet needs, support for current thematic areas should be continued under other programmes, partially covering the current scope of the Programme (INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027, INTERREG South Baltic 2021-2027 and INTERREG NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027). It is also worth putting more emphasis on projects related to health and health tourism.

1.4. THE IMPACT OF CRISIS EVENTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Research question: What impact did the economic crisis of 2019-2020, the corona virus pandemic, the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border and the war in Ukraine have on the implementation of the Programme and the implementation of projects?

The 2014-2020 financial perspective was a period of unpredictable circumstances and crisis situations that significantly influenced the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Instrument programmes on Poland's eastern border. Analysing in chronological order, the factor that led to many changes in the implementation of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme was the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent economic crisis, rising inflation, and then the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine, which ultimately led to the cessation of the continuation of the cross-border cooperation programme between Poland and Russia in the 2021-2027 perspective.

The first factor that caused significant changes and difficulties in the implementation of all programmes, including cross-border cooperation programmes, was the **outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic**. The corona virus pandemic announced in Poland in March 2020 made it necessary to introduce rules enabling the continuation of programme activities under the prevailing sanitary regime and the restrictions introduced on social and economic life. Due to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 corona virus and the high incidence of disease in countries, borders were closed, changes were introduced in the work system by switching to remote and hybrid mode, and remote communication rules were introduced. In March 2020, on the website of the Poland-Russia Programme, the Managing Authority published a document entitled *'Supplement to the Programme Manuals and Guidelines for the Verification of Expenditures in connection with the situation caused by COVID-19'*, which contains basic principles aimed at, among others, to beneficiaries regarding further implementation of projects. In order to counteract the effects of the pandemic, the Programme Managing Authority has introduced a number of solutions enabling the continuation of projects, such as the possibility of extending the project implementation period, changing the deadlines for submitting payment applications, a flexible approach to the deadlines for carrying out on-site inspections, excluding the application of the principle of competition in contracts necessary to counteract the effects COVID-19 due to the required immediate execution of the order. It was possible to modify the scope of planned activities and/or undertake additional complementary activities from savings identified in the project budget.

The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the Programme was emphasised by all respondents to the qualitative research carried out as part of the evaluation. The



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institutions responsible for the implementation of the Programme emphasised the negative effects of the pandemic in the context of closed borders, inability to move people, difficult contacts taking place only remotely and the resulting disruptions in establishing relationships, which, according to the assumptions of cross-border cooperation programmes, are an indispensable element in the development of relationships, durability of partnerships and cooperation.

(...) The pandemic caused huge changes to the programme because the border was closed. It was not possible to organise meetings even in Poland. And cross-border programmes are largely focused on soft activities, on contacts with people. So these types of activities have basically become impossible to implement when it comes to direct contacts. (...) This also resulted in the need to extend the implementation of regular projects and large infrastructure projects, because some tasks were postponed. Everyone hoped that the pandemic would end soon: 'if we don't manage to organise the event now, let's wait, maybe we'll organise it next year.' The beneficiaries cared about this very much. So the pandemic simply made projects longer. It caused prices to increase. And it limited soft activities.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

The negative consequences resulting from the pandemic were also felt due to the **growing economic crisis and sudden price increases**. The economic crisis has affected all regions in Europe and created new challenges in many economic areas. The effects of the economic crisis were felt primarily at the project level, as the beneficiaries were forced to temporarily suspend the implementation of project work, postpone the deadlines for individual tasks due to the difficulty of purchasing materials, failure to select contractors in the organised tenders, and staffing problems. Moreover, the increase in prices of materials and services meant that in many cases the beneficiaries had to look for additional sources of financing or make changes to the projects, which required additional administrative work both on the level of the beneficiaries and the institutions managing the Programme. The strong, negative impact of the pandemic was also highlighted among respondents (Polish beneficiaries and project partners): 77% of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine (82%) were factors that had a significant negative impact on the achievement of goals within the implemented projects. The issues of the impact of individual crisis events on the implementation of projects are described in chapter 2.5 of this study.

The second thing is the natural process of planning public tenders in a situation when public entities, and only they are qualified in the Poland-Russia programme, also do not make the tasks easier, because this is an eternal pattern of conduct that the realities and the results of tenders show that these deviations are both in plus and in minus, we usually have to look for these funds from other sources and municipalities/communes and municipal decision-makers face the challenge of where to add money from and whether to add it at all, or to implement such a project in a situation where these differences were significant. These are the beneficiaries, this affected the beneficiaries.

Source: individual in-depth interview.



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The outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in necessary changes to the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020. The European Union and its Member States condemned Russia's armed attack on Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia and Kherson. In response to the situation, by decision of the European Commission, cross-border cooperation under the Programme was suspended, and it was also decided to discontinue work on the intervention planned under the new programming period 2021-2027, as it will not be continued.

All these geopolitical events that have taken place recently have had a huge impact on the programme. In fact, they caused its complete transformation. We are currently implementing a different programme, and we have just started implementing a different programme. (...) The war completely turned the programme upside down, because it turned out that all expenses incurred on the Russian side were ineligible. Also because no audits of these expenses were carried out on the Russian side.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

From 24 February 2022, the Managing Authority of the Polish-Russia CBCP 2014-2020, in accordance with the EC guidelines, suspended all payments (advances or refunds) for Russian beneficiaries, decided to recover advance payments and determine all costs incurred by Russian partners as ineligible. On the Programme website, the Managing Authority has published guidelines regarding the suspension of cooperation with Russian partners entitled: *Supplement to the Programme Manuals regarding the suspension of the Financial Agreement*⁶, informing about the possibility of completing the implemented projects by the Polish side. All expenses incurred and paid by Russian partners from 24 February 2022 were found to be ineligible, and the maximum EU funding for Russian beneficiaries is reduced to the amount of the advance payment already paid. It was decided not to accept any expenditure incurred by Russian beneficiaries, even before the cut-off date (i.e. before 24 February 2022), if sufficient audit work has not been carried out in accordance with Article 28 of the ENI CBC Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 897/2014 of 18 August 2014. At the same time, the possibility of incurring additional expenses in projects to provide assistance and support to Ukrainian refugees was launched.

During in-depth interviews with representatives of institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme, it was emphasised that since the outbreak of the war, there had been no communication between Polish and Russian institutions. According to a media query, due to the war, agreements and interregional agreements with Russian provinces concluded by Polish regions were terminated immediately after its announcement. The Programme Managing Authority decided to transfer funds dedicated to Russian partners and funds resulting from project savings generated as a result of the pandemic (e.g. related to the lack of the need to rent rooms, travel due to the transfer of events to

⁶ The document has been updated several times and is consistent with the Regulation (EU) 2022/2192 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 November 2022 on establishing specific provisions for cooperation programmes for 2014-2020 supported by the European Neighbourhood Instrument and under the 'European territorial cooperation' as a result of disruption of programme implementation.



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online mode) to Polish beneficiaries so that the projects could be completed on the Polish side. Generally, it should be noted that all projects on the Polish side of the support area have been implemented and, as a result of additional financial resources, their scopes were often extended, exceeding the assumed values of project indicators.

After the outbreak of the war, funds intended for Russian beneficiaries were redirected to support Polish beneficiaries. The same applies to funds saved during the pandemic. They supported beneficiaries affected by inflation, the loss of a Russian partner, and activities to help Ukrainian refugees were also supported from these funds – spending free time, language courses, learning about Polish culture, etc. In some cases, the support resulted in achieving higher than expected or new indicators.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

Chapter Summary:

The events described above led to a complete break-off of current cooperation with partners from Russia. Despite the circumstances, the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme in the 2014-2020 financial perspective was implemented. However, due to the policy of the Russian authorities, violations of international law and lack of respect for values such as sovereignty, independence and democracy, the basic assumptions of the Programme regarding shaping ties between local communities, equalising differences and overcoming social, economic and functional barriers have not been achieved to the extent originally assumed.

1.5. DELIMITATION OF THE SUPPORT AREA

Research question: What is the actual delimitation of cooperation areas based on the results of projects implemented until the suspension of cooperation with Russia? Were cross-border functional areas created? In what sectors/fields? How to delimit the programme area after suspending cooperation with Russia? What is the effective distance from the border for cross-border cooperation in the absence of partners in Russia?

The scope of support for the Programme covers the following area on the Polish side:

- **Main areas:** Pomeranian Voivodeship, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship and Podlaskie Voivodeship, including 7 subregions (Starogard, Gdańsk, Tricity, Elbląg, Olsztyn, Ełk and Suwałki);
- **Adjacent areas:** Słupsk subregion and Białystok subregion.

On the side of the Russian Federation, the support area covered the Kenigsberg Province – however, due to the armed conflict (attack on the territory of independent Ukraine), cooperation with the Russian Federation was interrupted.

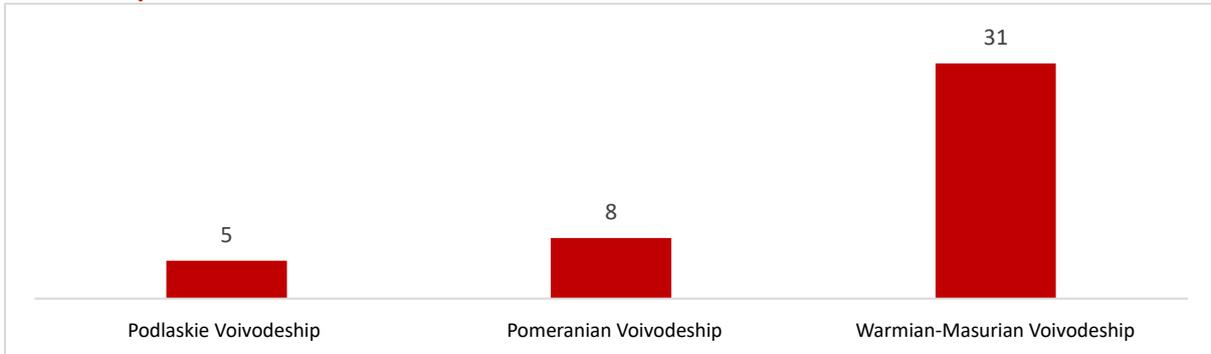
This part of this report analyses whether the programmed delimitation of support corresponds to the actual possibilities (or needs) of cross-border cooperation. As evidenced by the analysis of existing data in the form of the database of Programme beneficiaries and partners, the largest number of



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projects was implemented in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (31 out of 44 Polish beneficiaries and project partners came from there).

Chart 6. Places of implementation of projects implemented under the Programme divided into voivodeships



Source: own study.

It should be noted that Polish beneficiaries and project partners under the Programme came from less than half of the districts in the support area (22 out of 47 districts in the eligible area). Moreover, a significant part of the project partners were located in the two largest cities in the support area – the city of Gdańsk (6 partners) and the city of Olsztyn (7 partners). This means that 13 out of 44 beneficiaries and project partners in Poland came from this area, which constitutes 29.5% of all Polish entities involved in the project. A detailed summary is presented in the table below.

Project leaders who were located in 15 districts – mainly from the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship – had an even greater tendency to concentrate territorially.

Table 5. Number of beneficiaries and project partners by location

Voivodeship	District	Number of beneficiaries and partners	Including the number of leaders
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Augustów city district		
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Białystok district		
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Białystok city district	1	
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Grajewo district		
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Mońki district		
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Sejny district	1	1
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Sokółka district		
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Suwałki district	2	
Podlaskie Voivodeship	Suwałki city district	1	1
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Bytów district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Gdańsk city district	6	2
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Gdańsk district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Gdynia city district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Kartuzi district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Kwidzyn district		



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Voivodeship	District	Number of beneficiaries and partners	Including the number of leaders
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Lębork district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Słupsk city district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Malbork district	1	
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Nowy Dwór district	1	
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Puck district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Słupsk district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Sopot city district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Starogard district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Sztum district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Tczew district		
Pomeranian Voivodeship	Wejherowo district		
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Bartoszyce district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Braniewo district		
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Działdowo district	2	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Elbląg city district	3	
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Elbląg district	2	
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Ełk district	5	3
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Giżycko district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Gołdap district		
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Iława district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Kętrzyn district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Lidzbark district		
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Mrągowo district		
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Nidzica district		
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Nowe Miasto district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Olecko district	2	2
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Olsztyn city district	7	3
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Olsztyn district	1	
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Ostróda district	2	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Pisz district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Szczytno district	1	1
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Węgorzewo district		

Source: own study.

In the further part of the analysis, the average distance between the seat of the Polish project leader/partner and the state border was examined. The average distance from the state border in the case of Polish entities is 90.5 km (in the case of the leader) and 94.3 km (in the case of the partner). Regardless of the beneficiary's role, the median distance from the border is 86.4 km, which means that half of the beneficiaries are closer to the border and half are further away. Next, attention should be paid to the differences in the range of distances from the border. The minimum distance for a



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leader is 35.2 km (for a partner: 50 km). The maximum distance is 172 km for the leader (230 km for the partner). As you can see, the distance in the case of partners is greater.

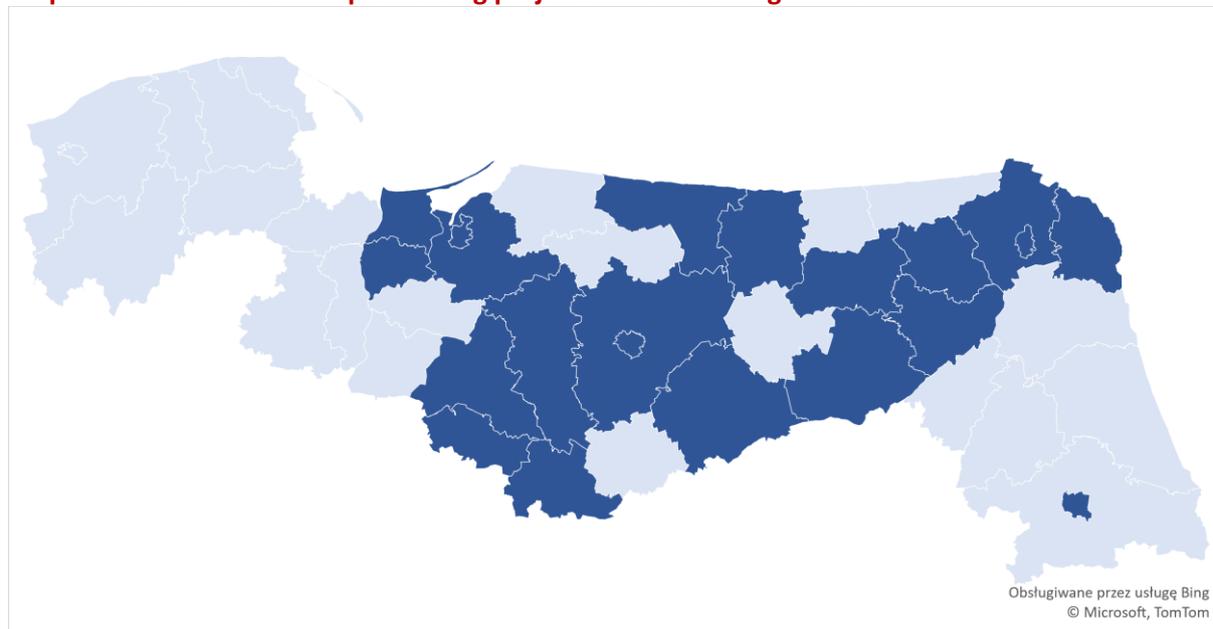
Table 6. Distance of the seats of leaders and project partners from the state border

Value	Leader	Partner
Mean	90.5	94.3
Median	86.4	86.4
Minimum distance	35.2	50
Maximum distance	172	230

Source: own study.

The map below shows the actual scope of the support area, including the seats of entities that implement projects under the Programme (as leaders or partners). It is noticeable that entities from the Pomeranian Voivodeship operate in this area to a very limited extent. Apart from the city of Gdańsk, which is the largest centre of the region, only entities from the Malbork and Nowy Dwór districts, located in the east of the voivodeship, participate in the projects. Entities from the Podlaskie Voivodeship are also relatively inactive – in this case, apart from the cities of Białystok and Suwałki (the largest urban centres in the region), projects are implemented only by entities from the Suwałki and Sejny districts – located in the north of the Podlaskie Voivodeship. In this case, it can be said that the activity of entities from these regions depends on their location.

Map 1. Districts active in implementing projects under the Programme



Source: own study. The total support area is marked in grey, and the part of the support area from which the entities implementing the projects come from is marked in navy blue.

In terms of delimiting the support area, the Delphi method carried out for the purposes of this order brings significant value. Participating experts expressed moderate agreement with the thesis that **cooperation between beneficiaries and partners within projects influences the creation of cross-border functional areas** (average compliance score: 5.67 on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the



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lowest and 10 is the highest). Experts indicated that their moderate assessments resulted from political issues (i.e. sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation in connection with the aggression against Ukraine and the suspension of cooperation with entities from Russia). They assessed that cooperation at the level of local communities was assessed positively. This was also confirmed by a media query conducted for the purposes of this order. The suspension of cooperation and the restoration of the border as a non-connecting function, but rather as a barrier, were determined by issues related to international policy and the isolation of the Russian Federation.

Undoubtedly, Polish-Russian cross-border cooperation has been subjected to a painful test in recent years. It is defined by the unpredictability of political decisions and the consequences resulting from these decisions. The development of Polish-Russian cross-border cooperation depends on the future function of the border – whether it will constitute a barrier, as it is currently – or whether its contact function will be restored, which dominated in the period of local border traffic.

Source: Delphi method.

[The programme – note] creates opportunities and possibilities for the development of cross-border cooperation, on the Russian side there was great social activity in the area of contact during the period of local border traffic. It can be assumed that in the conditions of restoring this traffic, the analysed thesis has a chance of being implemented. However, the current political conditions and the state of Polish-Russian relations call into question the chances of implementing [the Programme – note].

Source: Delphi method.

At the same time, experts participating in the Delphi method indicated that potential functional areas have a chance to be created in areas such as tourism, transport, environment, and cultural heritage. However, it should be noted that currently, due to the violation of international law by the Russian Federation (causing an armed conflict), the Programme will not be continued. Nevertheless, taking into account the positive aspects related to building relationships at the level of local communities, it is hoped that they will be preserved and will bring tangible results if the Russian Federation returns to acceptance of international law and order.

As part of in-depth interviews, the area was determined to be correctly delimited. It was indicated that it covered the area of the immediate neighbourhood of the Russian Federation, as well as part of the Pomeranian and Podlaskie voivodeships. This allowed entities from regions that are most affected by the direct proximity of the border to apply for support.

[The area was delimited – note] very well. The Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship has the longest land border with the Kenigsberg Province, the Pomeranian Voivodeship has a sea border, and the Podlaskie Voivodeship, the upper part of the border, is at the tripoint with Lithuania, because previously this cooperation was tripartite. So I think it's very good.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.



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Chapter Summary:

The activity of beneficiaries in the Programme varies. They come only from part of the support area (mainly from the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship). This means that the actual delimitation of the Programme is lower than that specified in the Programme. The high level of activity of entities from the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship is justified by the fact that this region has the longest land border with the Kenigsberg Province – the proximity of the border and the related challenges have the greatest impact on it.

1.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER SUPPORT

Research question: What thematic directions of support should be maintained in the 2027+ perspective? What scenarios should we adopt in the event of continued failure to continue cooperation with Russia?

Thematic scope of support

Based on the analysed thematic objectives of the Programme, it can be concluded that the most desirable axes that would be worth developing in the next financial perspectives are TO Heritage and TO Accessibility. According to the respondents of the qualitative study, the need to continue TO Heritage is demonstrated by the relatively large number of projects submitted during calls for proposals on this topic. At the same time, despite the great needs in TO Accessibility, most programmes of the 2021-2027 financial perspective do not provide for objectives for submitting transport projects, and this would be very advisable. Of the two large infrastructure projects, both have been largely implemented and the beneficiaries report the need to continue implementing such projects. Due to their size, they affect a relatively large area, thus enabling the solution of many social needs.

The thematic scope of Programme support meets the needs of beneficiaries and partners. However, it was noticed that there were issues that were not included in the Programme in the financial perspective 2014-2020 – health-related issues. They were actively supported under the Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme 2007-2013, which allowed the establishment of lasting partnerships. Currently, there is a need to support the area of health (both physical and mental), also in the context of increasing the attractiveness of the region: support could contribute to the development of health tourism.

Support area

Taking into account the current international situation, we believe that there is no justification for continuing the Programme in its current form in subsequent programming periods. After the suspension of cooperation with Russia, the Programme became an ordinary regional programme, similar in shape to regional operational programmes. In such a situation, it seems advisable to include the activities of the current Programme in other cross-border cooperation programmes. As the study proved, it is justified to extend the scope of support for the INTERREG Lithuania-Poland and INTERREG South Baltic Programmes to include the Polish part of the support area, which was previously covered by the Poland-Russia CBCP. According to the findings of the study, such action can, to some extent, compensate Polish beneficiaries and project partners for the loss of partners from



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the Russian Federation. However, it seems reasonable to also support the Elbląg subregion, which was not included in the Lithuania-Poland Programme and also suffered as a result of the suspension of cooperation with Russia. This issue was also emphasised in in-depth interviews with representatives of the institutions implementing the Programme.

It should be considered whether, in view of the above, special funds should be allocated for the implementation of unilateral projects for entities that have lost partners as a result of the suspension of cooperation with Russia. Such funds could be used to strengthen administrative capacity and strengthen the results of existing projects, which have been weakened by the loss of partners.

Indicators in the Programme

In order to fully assess the implementation of the indicators (and thus achieve the objectives of the Programme), an additional analysis of all indicators should be carried out in terms of changes caused by the suspension of cooperation with Russia and, therefore, the failure to implement (or incomplete implementation) of some indicators.

In addition, detailed verification of the indicators entered into the programme's monitoring system should be ensured so that they are identical to those proposed in the Programme.



II. PARTNERSHIP AND PROJECTS

2.1. RESULTS OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Research question: What results (including division into administrative and functional areas and cooperation topics) did the implementation of the projects bring?

As part of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, beneficiaries and their partners cooperated in 3 main thematic areas, i.e. heritage, accessibility, environment. The desk research analysis, quantitative and qualitative research carried out as part of the study allowed us to identify what specific results the implementation of individual projects brought and what the scale of these results was.

Here it should be indicated to what extent the beneficiaries managed to implement the project assumptions measured by output indicators. This degree is relatively low, which is primarily related to the termination of cooperation with Russia as an aggressor state violating the territorial integrity of independent Ukraine.

Due to the initiation of military aggression by the Russian Federation, Russian partners were excluded from support under the Programme (more on this subject can be found in chapter 1.4 of this report), so it was impossible for them to achieve actual results. Therefore, the analysis below will focus on the results achieved only by Polish partners and project beneficiaries.

Table 7. Implementation of output indicators in relation to the beneficiaries' assumptions for each Thematic Objective of the Programme

Output indicator	Thematic Objective	Unit of measurement	Target value on the Polish side (assumed in the projects)	Value achieved	Percentage of achievement of the target value
Number of organisations benefiting from support from the programme for the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage	HERITAGE	number of organisations	25	15	60.00%
Number of improved cultural, historical, tourist and natural sites as a direct consequence of programme support	HERITAGE	cultural, historical, tourist and natural facilities	3	3	100.00%
Number of cross-border cultural events organised with the support of the Programme	HERITAGE	cultural events	2	1	50.00%
Additional population served by improved sewage or waste treatment systems	ENVIRONMENT	ENR	14,937	1915	12.82%



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Output indicator	Thematic Objective	Unit of measurement	Target value on the Polish side (assumed in the projects)	Value achieved	Percentage of achievement of the target value
Additional sewage and waste treatment capacity	ENVIRONMENT	ENR	2659	1486	55.89%
Number of projects aimed at improving water supply	ENVIRONMENT	number of projects	4	1	25.00%
Number of joint actions and measures aimed at protecting the environment or preventing climate change	ENVIRONMENT	number of projects	10	4	40.00%
Total length of converted or modernised roads	ACCESSIBILITY	km	61.77	19.67	31.84%
Number of organisations benefiting from programme support for the development of information and communication technologies (ICT)**	ACCESSIBILITY	organisations	-	-	-

Source: own study based on data provided by the Ordering Party (as of 19 October 2023).

Analysing the scope of the beneficiaries' activities, it should be noted that, firstly, **the beneficiaries established cooperation to promote local culture and preserve historical heritage**. The largest number of projects was implemented within this thematic area.

Projects implemented in this field were intended to support the development of tourism, in particular cross-border tourism. Unfortunately, the effect that was planned to be achieved (development of cross-border tourism) could have been hampered by the exclusion of Russian partners from the support of the Programme, so after the exclusion of Russia, the projects focused in particular on the development of domestic tourism. In this respect, infrastructure activities were carried out, including: tourist trails, bicycle paths and accompanying infrastructure (e.g. recreation shelters) were built, and historically important facilities for culture and heritage were renovated and repaired. The implementation of these projects also included soft activities, including: organising cultural and entertainment events, promotional activities (e.g. creating brochures, promotional films and websites). It is worth pointing out that soft activities initially (before the suspension of cooperation with Russian partners) envisaged the implementation of joint cross-border events. However, after the suspension of cooperation with Russia, those activities that could not be implemented in most cases were replaced by other or identical activities implemented only on the Polish side. During the implementation of this evaluation, projects were selected which, due to their qualitative implementation, were worth describing as case studies. Within this thematic area, the following were selected for analysis: project implemented by the Polish Lead Beneficiary: **the municipality of Giżycko**. The municipality of the investment area. The beneficiary pointed out that the development of tourism would also have a positive impact on the economic development of the region: the influx of tourists was to result in, among other things, creating more jobs and thus



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counteracting the negative migration balance identified in the municipality. The project included infrastructure activities such as the creation of bicycle paths and pedestrian promenades along with accompanying recreational infrastructure; renovation of the Carnot Wall and its illumination; organisation of a photographic exhibition and promotional activities, i.e. creation of a multilingual website. The implementation of the project brought significant effects for the beneficiary: it increased the number of tourists visiting the municipality, which improved the situation on the local labour market and increased the level of GDP.

Key cultural institutions that promote local culture and heritage include: museums. Therefore, it was crucial that these institutions were beneficiaries of projects implemented under the thematic objective regarding heritage. The implemented projects were intended to contribute to increasing the number of people visiting cultural facilities (including museums). This result was to be achieved by creating modern infrastructure adapted to the needs of recipients (especially people with disabilities), creating modern, digitised exhibitions and conducting activities promoting visits to various cultural institutions. The Gdańsk Museum, which implemented the project selected for description as part of the case study, was able to change the location of **the Amber Museum** as part of the investment, thanks to which more space could be allocated for its exhibitions. The museum's previous location was much smaller and did not support a large number of visitors. Thanks to the completed project, the area of the Amber Museum has tripled and can accommodate a larger number of guests. Therefore, the investment actually contributed to increasing the number of people visiting the facility.

Projects in this area were also addressed to other cultural institutions; one of the beneficiaries of the project in this thematic area was **the 'Światowid' European Meetings Centre in Elbląg**. As part of the project, a multimedia centre with modern technical infrastructure was to be built on the premises. There were also plans to expand the external space where an open museum exhibition was to be created. The innovative approach – the possibility of visiting exhibits in nature and multimedia exhibitions – was intended to attract new visitors to the museum, especially young people. Care was also taken to adapt the created spaces to people with disabilities, so that they could also visit the newly created exhibitions.

The beneficiaries also cooperated in the area of accessibility, and the projects implemented in this respect increased the availability of infrastructure and transport services. The investments undertaken were to solve all emerging communication problems, e.g. shorten travel times, regional transports or eliminate road congestion.

During in-depth interviews, representatives of the institutions monitoring and coordinating the Programme emphasised that the projects implemented in this aspect comprehensively and significantly contributed to solving communication problems in cities.



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In our case, certainly yes, because the large infrastructure project regarding the conversion of road 512 in Bartoszyce and the bridge crossing is a flagship project when it comes to our voivodeship, and participation in this Programme, despite the fact that there were a lot of projects from our voivodeship, most of all on the Polish side of the Programme, but it really solved the city's communication problems to a large extent and this is our, you could say, icing on the cake when it comes to projects (...).

Source: Individual in-depth interview with a representative of the Monitoring Committee.

The above-mentioned project by the representative of the Monitoring Committee was, during the research, selected for description as part of case studies. The Lead Beneficiary of this project was **the Provincial Roads Authority in Olsztyn**, and its activities included, among others: building a new bridge over the Łyna River and creating a new road, pavement and bicycle path there. Roundabouts were also built on the access road to the bridge. The existing road to Paderewskiego Street was also rebuilt, and new bus bays and parking bays were built there. The completed project significantly improved traffic in the city: the newly built bridge improved east-west communication, reduced traffic on the second bridge, which is also an alternative in the event of a collision, and the construction of bus bays and car parks increased access to public transport.

Improving the quality of road infrastructure was also intended to increase the safety of road users. An example of a project that produced such a result is the project selected for description in the case study entitled: **Cross-Border Routes** implemented by the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Implementation of the above-mentioned investment has not only made it easier but also safer for both residents and tourists, including: to Krynica Morska, Nowy Dwór Gdański and Gdańsk.

The beneficiaries also cooperated in the field of environment. The projects they implemented concerned, firstly, the expansion of water and sewage networks, the construction of sewage treatment plants and water filtration systems. There are still many areas in Poland that are excluded from sewage systems, and one of such areas was **the Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality**, located in Eastern Poland. The project it implemented was selected for description as part of the case study and assumed the expansion of the water and sewage network in the village of Jamielnik. Its main goal was to protect the local environment. There are many lakes in the Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality which were exposed to pollution due to the lack of access to high-quality sanitary sewage systems for local residents. The construction and connection of more residents to high-quality sewage systems also prevented groundwater contamination.

It is also important to emphasise that support under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 in the scope of expanding water and sewage networks in their areas also included smaller municipalities/communes that were not eligible for support under other EU or national programmes, due to failure to achieve a specific equivalent number of residents.

(...) what was particularly important for us was that the programme allowed us to invest in those smaller municipalities/communes that were not included in national programmes, including EU ones, due to the so-called ENR, i.e. the equivalent number of residents, which was specified in national or national EU



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programmes, i.e. infrastructure and environment, at the minimum level, so Poland-Russia was a gateway for smaller municipalities/communes, local government units to implement this type of projects.

Source: Individual in-depth interview with a representative of the Monitoring Committee.

In the area of the environment, health care institutions also cooperated, including: hospitals. One of the projects implemented by such an institution is another project selected for description as part of the case study. The Lead Beneficiary, **the Provincial Hospital in Suwałki**, implemented a project to increase awareness of environmental diseases. As part of the project, it had the opportunity to implement infrastructural activities including the purchase of new medical equipment and the renovation of the neurological ward, as well as soft activities, such as training for medical staff in diagnosing environmental diseases and awareness campaigns for local residents. The implementation of the project contributed to increasing awareness of current environmental diseases and additionally improved the quality of medical care offered by the beneficiary.

Projects implemented in this respect also contributed to reducing the degradation of the local environment and local natural resources. The implemented projects also concerned the sustainable use of water resources, including: by cleaning water reservoirs and developing areas for recreational purposes. The implementation of such projects could also contribute to increasing the number of residents and tourists spending recreational time in these areas.

Additionally, as part of environmental projects, it was possible to purchase fire-fighting equipment (including fire-fighting vehicles) used in particular to fight forest fires. Such a project was implemented, among others, by: **Provincial Headquarters of the State Fire Service in Olsztyn**, which, in addition to purchasing equipment needed to effectively extinguish fires, also carried out soft activities to strengthen the effects of the project: training and exercises for fire fighters.

Respondents were also asked about the project results achieved by individual beneficiaries as part of the quantitative study. This allowed us to determine the actual scale of the individual project results identified above.

By far the largest part of the beneficiaries (65%) identified an increase in the number of visitors to historical and cultural heritage sites in their areas.

The beneficiaries did not identify any results related to improving access to health care and social services, because the Programme did not assume actions aimed at generating such results. As part of the quantitative survey, respondents were also asked whether they identified results related to the increase in the efficiency of border checks and the acceleration of border checks of passengers and cars. The lack of identification of these results is related to the fact that TO Borders was removed from the Programme due to the lack of interest on the part of the applicants.

The next largest group of respondents (18%) identified positive results in terms of improving the local environment: improving the condition of sewerage and/or waste management systems. Slightly fewer respondents (12%) also identified an improvement in the condition of local water resources. And the smallest percentage of beneficiaries (6%) identified effects related to the expansion of sewage



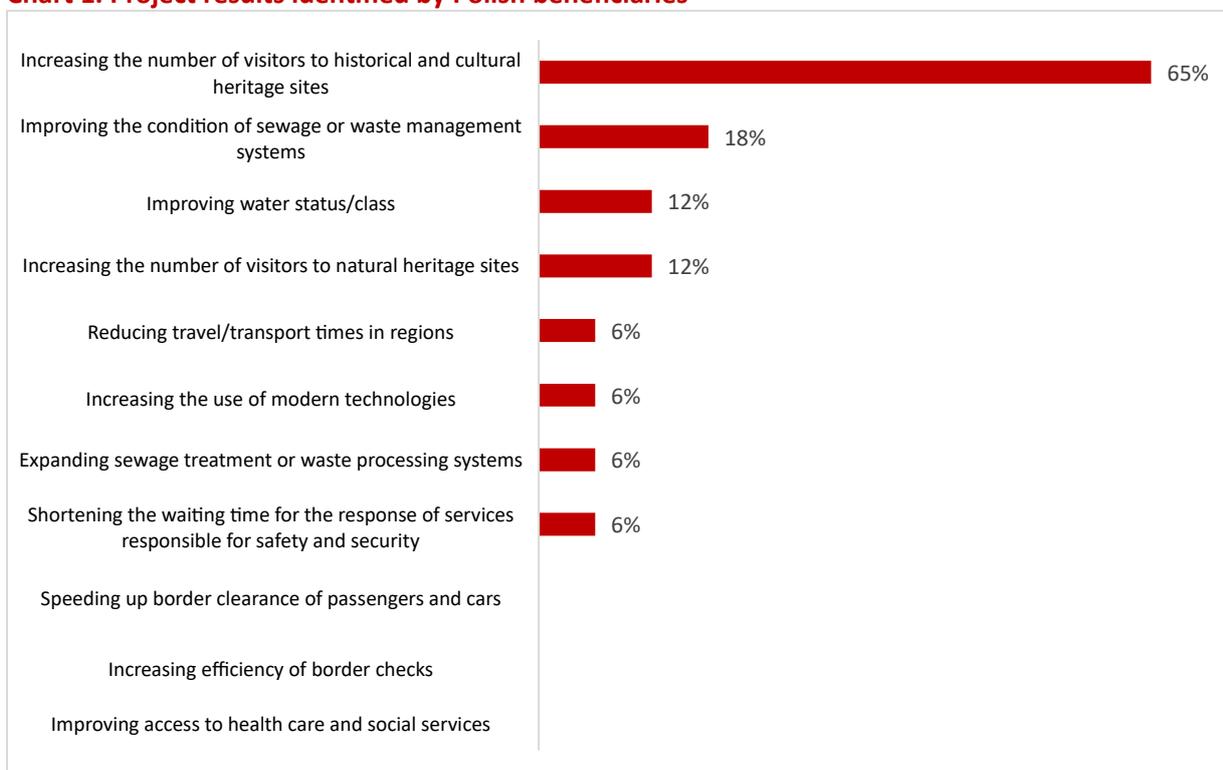
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treatment systems or waste processing. From the above results it can be concluded that the beneficiaries mainly focused on modernising the existing rather than building new infrastructure.

A moderate percentage (12%) of respondents also identified an increase in the number of people visiting natural heritage sites. This result could have resulted from both environmental projects related to the purification of water reservoirs and the development of the areas around them, but also heritage projects where tourist trails and bicycle paths were built, among others in areas of natural importance for the regions.

A smaller percentage of beneficiaries (6%) identified that their investment shortened travel and transport time in the regions. Despite the implementation of activities to increase the quality and availability of road infrastructure, solving this problem turned out to be more complex and creating high-quality effects in this aspect may be more laborious and time-consuming.

Chart 1. Project results identified by Polish beneficiaries



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

As part of the quantitative study, an effect was also defined that was not revealed during individual interviews and was not identified during the desk research analysis. 6% of beneficiaries indicated that their investment contributed to the increase in the use of modern technologies. Therefore, it can be added to the list of the above project results identified as part of the desk research analysis and in-depth interviews that the implementation of projects under the Programme also contributed to the increase in innovation in some regions.



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Chapter Summary:

The implementation of the projects in particular contributed to the development of tourism and an increase in the number of visitors, among others, to cultural institutions, improving the quality and availability of infrastructure or transport services, improving the quality of movement in regions, increasing the safety of road users, improving the condition of the environment, increasing the availability and quality of infrastructure, i.e. water and sewage networks, improving water quality and increasing the effectiveness in the fight against forest fires.

The majority of beneficiaries identified an increase in the number of visitors to historical and cultural heritage sites in their areas. The beneficiaries did not identify any results at all, i.e. improved access to health care and social services, increased efficiency of border checks or acceleration of border checks of passengers and cars. This was due to the fact that the Programme did not assume activities aimed at supporting health care and social services, and the Thematic Objective Borders was withdrawn from the Programme due to the lack of interest of applicants in implementing projects in this TO.

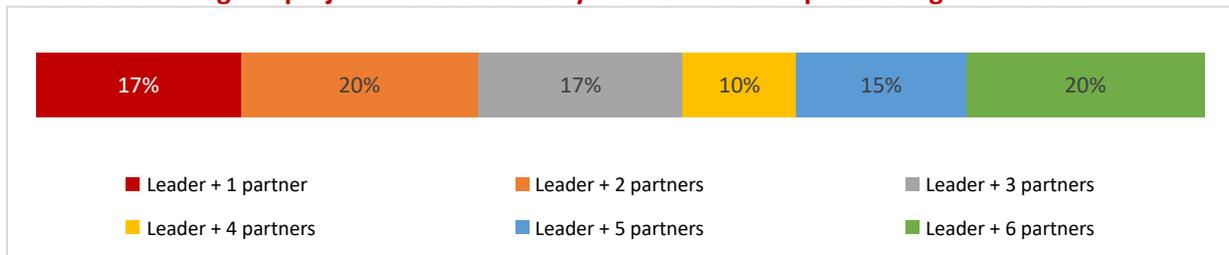
2.2. ACTIVITY OF BENEFICIARIES

Research question: What is the activity of beneficiaries in the Programme? (analysis based on, among others, location, type of beneficiary, e.g. local government unit, NGO)? Were there any types of beneficiaries missing or was their participation too small? What were the correlations between the applicants' activity/passivity and, for example, the distance of their seat from the border, the region's GDP, the number of inhabitants, and were there any other correlations?

As shown in section 1.5 of this evaluation, the beneficiaries' activity in the Programme varies, taking into account their location. In this part, this issue is explored in more detail, including: by showing the diversity of activities based on the specific features of the region and the beneficiaries and project partners themselves.

First of all, the number of partners participating in the projects was analysed. **No significant differentiation was observed, both consortiums consisting of a leader and one partner and consortiums consisting of 6 partners apart from the leader were popular.**

Chart 7. Percentage of projects broken down by the size of the implementing consortium



Source: own study based on the database of project partners.

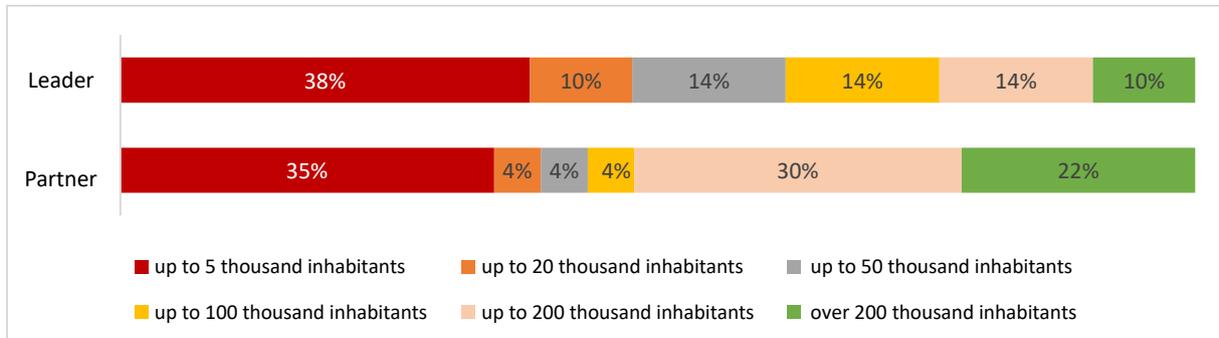
Next, the specificity of the region from which the beneficiaries come was taken into account, divided into leaders and project partners. What is worth noting is that **project leaders more often come from towns with a small population, while partners come from larger towns.** On the Programme scale,



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over half of the project partners (52%) represent areas with a population exceeding 100,000 inhabitants, while there are only 24% of leaders from such areas.

Chart 8. Number of project leaders and partners broken down by the size of the town they come from



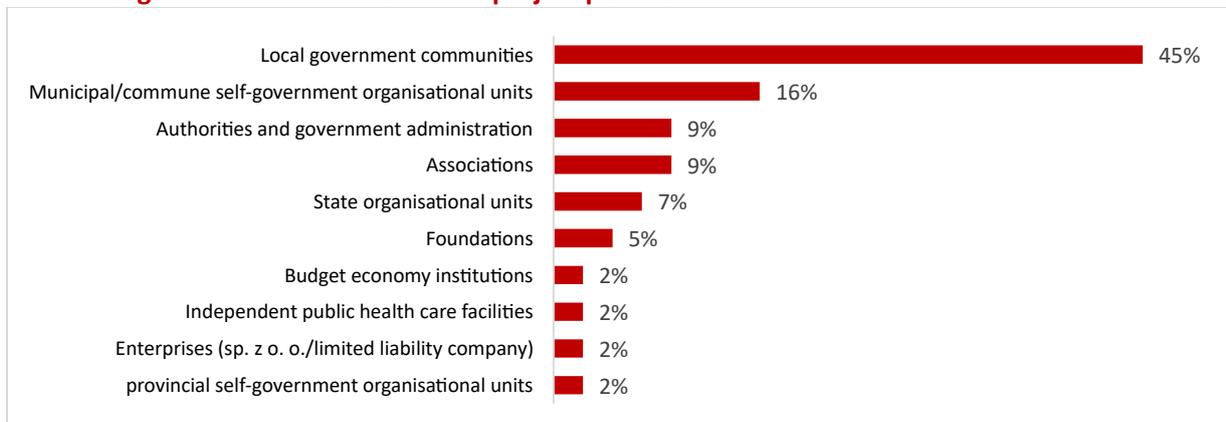
Source: own study based on the database of project partners.

When analysing the relationship between applying for support and the region's **GDP level**, no differences are observed. There was also no relationship observed between the distance from the border and the total value of the project.

However, it is interesting to look at the relationship between the activity of entities from a given region and the **level of population growth**. It was observed that the lower the population growth rate, the more projects were implemented in a given area. This may be justified by the fact that one of the challenges faced by the support area (which was also highlighted in the conducted case studies) is the aging of local communities and depopulation of the area.

Next, the activity of beneficiaries was examined, broken down by legal form. There is significant involvement of local government communities, which accounted for almost half (45%) of all leaders and partners. The second most active type of entity were municipal/commune organisational units, which accounted for 16% of the beneficiaries. Every tenth entity participating in the implementation of projects (9%) represented authorities and government administration. Associations were on par with them. Other entities were represented in a smaller percentage of projects.

Chart 9. Legal form of beneficiaries and project partners



Source: own study based on the database of project partners.

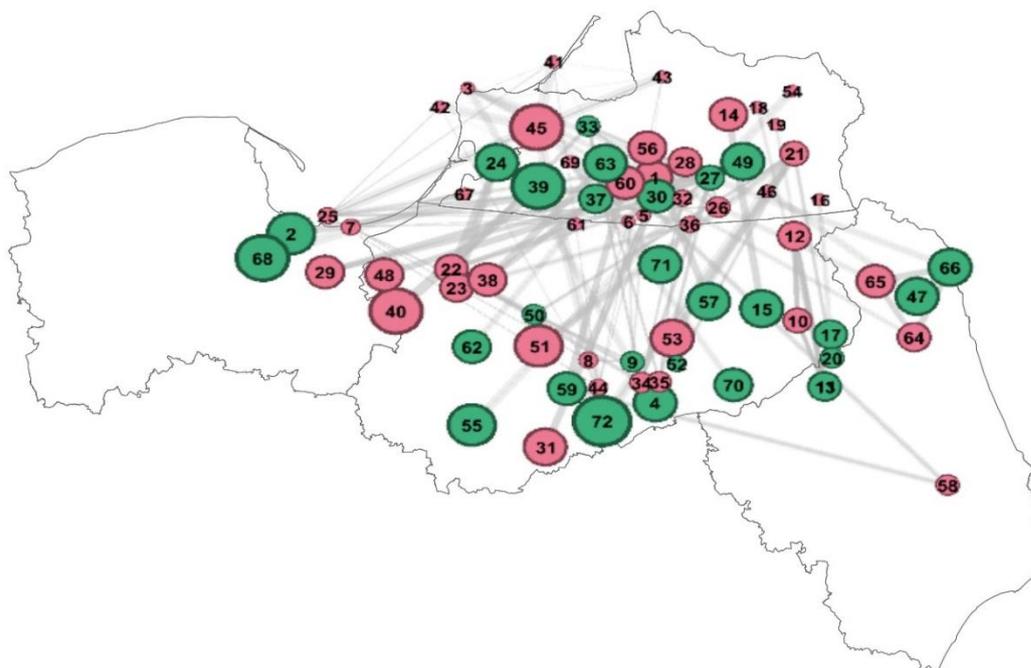


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The tables below present the activity of entities in the Programme before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the suspension of cooperation with Russia. It is noticeable at first glance that the network of partnerships has significantly decreased after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation. Cooperation took place only between Polish partners. If the partnership included only one entity from Poland, after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation, the project was completed independently.

On the maps below, project leaders are marked in green, and partners are marked in pink. It is noticeable that after the suspension of cooperation with Russia, the loss concerned mainly project partners – and, to a lesser extent, project leaders.

Map 2. Activity of beneficiaries in the Programme before the suspension of cooperation with Russia



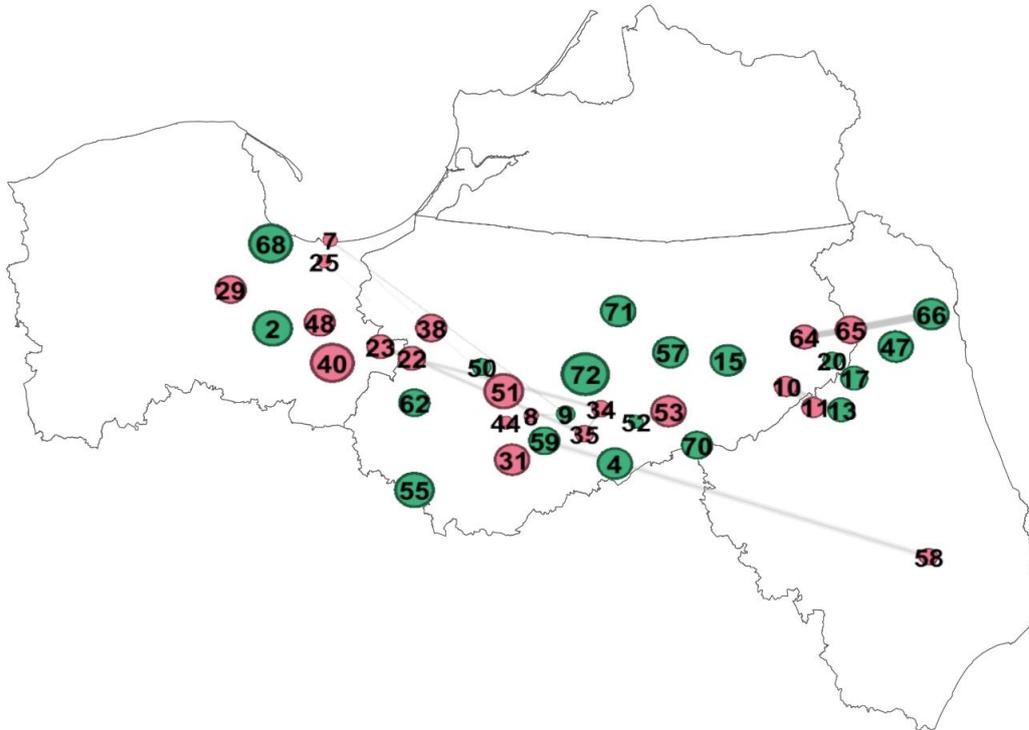
Legend:	Leader	Partner
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Source: own study based on the database of project partners.



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Map 3. Activity of beneficiaries in the Programme after the suspension of cooperation with Russia



Legend:	Leader	Partner
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Source: own study based on the database of project partners.

The cooperation network is created by isolated cooperation nodes – in this case it is a natural phenomenon, as the cooperation takes place as part of separate cross-border projects. Before the suspension of cooperation with entities from the Russian Federation, the network density was 0.081, and after the suspension of this cooperation – 0.046, which means that the number of connections decreased by almost half. It is worth pointing out that before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the suspension of cooperation with entities from the Russian Federation, cooperation originated from 72 nodes (which corresponded to the number of projects) and had a total of 206 connections between these nodes. The suspension of cooperation with Russia caused the number of nodes from which the cooperation originated to decrease to 39, and the number of connections amounted to 34 (the smaller number of connections than the number of nodes results from the fact that after the outbreak of the war, a large part of the isolated nodes were projects implemented independently, without the participation of partner). The number of isolated nodes after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation from which cooperation does not occur (i.e. projects implemented by one entity) is as many as 17, which constitutes almost half of all other projects implemented on the Polish side.

As part of the study, in-depth interviews were also conducted with representatives of institutions responsible for providing support. They indicated that the catalogue of beneficiaries in the Programme was defined correctly. They did not observe a situation in which any of the entities specified in the catalogue of entities eligible to apply for support remained passive. Moreover, it was



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pointed out that due to the proximity of the state border, the partnerships seemed natural, and the history of mutual relations goes back far before the project implementation period.

When describing the activity of beneficiaries in the Programme, representatives of institutions implementing support indicated that it was very large. They did not observe any differentiation of entities due to the specific features of the region they come from – both large towns with funds for project implementation and smaller towns applied for support. Interest was seen in the attractiveness of the Programme itself, which enabled the implementation of projects on favourable terms (advance payment, high 90% level of co-financing).

I don't really notice this difference (...). The applicants came from areas such as Gdańsk, which does not complain about the number of investments being implemented, (...) but there was also interest among smaller towns. This was also due to the fact that the Poland-Russia programme was very attractive in general, (...) it attracted applicants from both smaller and large towns. Everyone knew that it was a good programme, very attractive and worth using. And it enables the implementation of large investment projects, such as infrastructure, where it is not always possible to finance them under other programmes.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

Chapter Summary:

The project consortiums built under the Programme varied in size – they included from 2 to 7 entities. The main type of beneficiary were local government communities, constituting almost half of all entities active in the Programme. An important relationship is noticed – entities from areas with a decreasing population growth rate are more active in the programme. According to the study, the projects were intended to respond to the challenge of depopulation of the area and aging of the society. It is also important that project partners come from large towns (over 100,000 inhabitants) more often than lead beneficiaries.

2.3. STRUCTURE OF PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

Research question: What is the structure of project partnerships? Analysis based on location, distance between partners, beneficiary type, number of partners, project type (/regular project, large infrastructure project), theme, etc. Have there been any changes compared to the previous financial perspectives?

The partnerships varied in terms of the number of partners, the smallest consisted of two, and the largest of seven. The average number of partners in the project was 2.9. Variation was observed in the average number of partners per project depending on the thematic objectives. The highest average number of partners participating in the project was for the Thematic Objective HERITAGE and amounted to 3.25. The results for the remaining thematic objectives were similar and amounted to: 2.55 for the Thematic Objective Environment, and 2.4 for the Thematic Objective Accessibility.

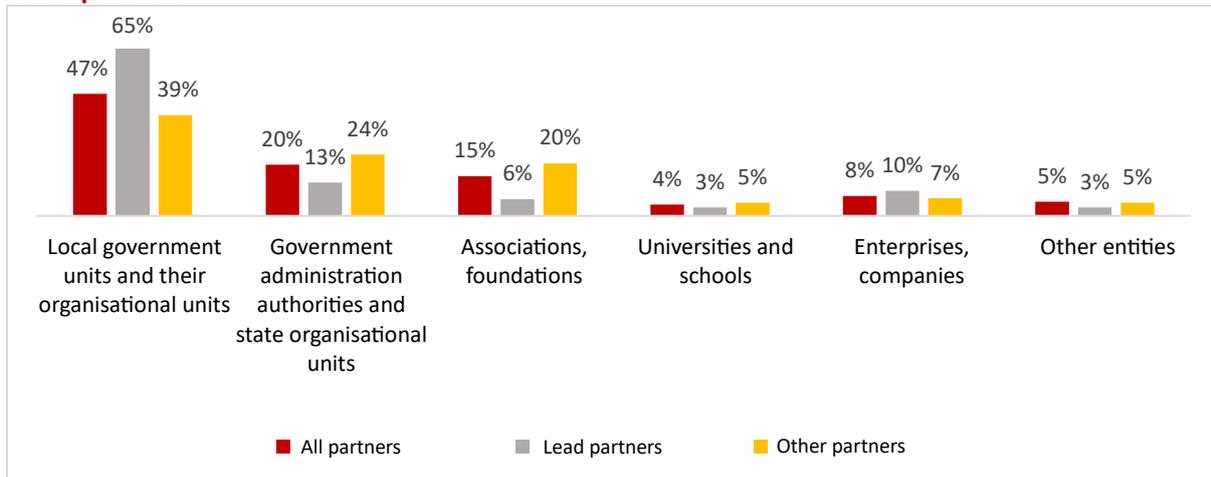
In each partnership, one of the partners assumed the role of the lead partner. This role was assumed by various entities, from local government units to associations and universities. The chart below



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shows the differences in the proportions of roles assumed in the partnership, depending on the type of entity.

Chart 10. Type of beneficiaries among the entire partner population, among lead partners and other partners



Source: own study based on the database of project partners.

Project partnerships consisted of lead partners and others involved in the implementation of the project. For the purpose of analysis in this chapter, the beneficiaries have been aggregated into several basic categories. **Among all the beneficiaries of the Programme, by far the largest percentage (47%) were local government units and their organisational units.** Importantly, the percentage of this type of partners was significantly dominant among leading partners and amounted to 65%, among other partners it was 39%. The second largest group of project partners were government administration bodies and state organisational units. They constituted 20% of all beneficiaries and slightly more among the partners of lead beneficiaries. Associations were also more likely to be non-leading partners. Among universities and schools, foreign representative offices and other types of partners, the division into leading or other partners was quite even.

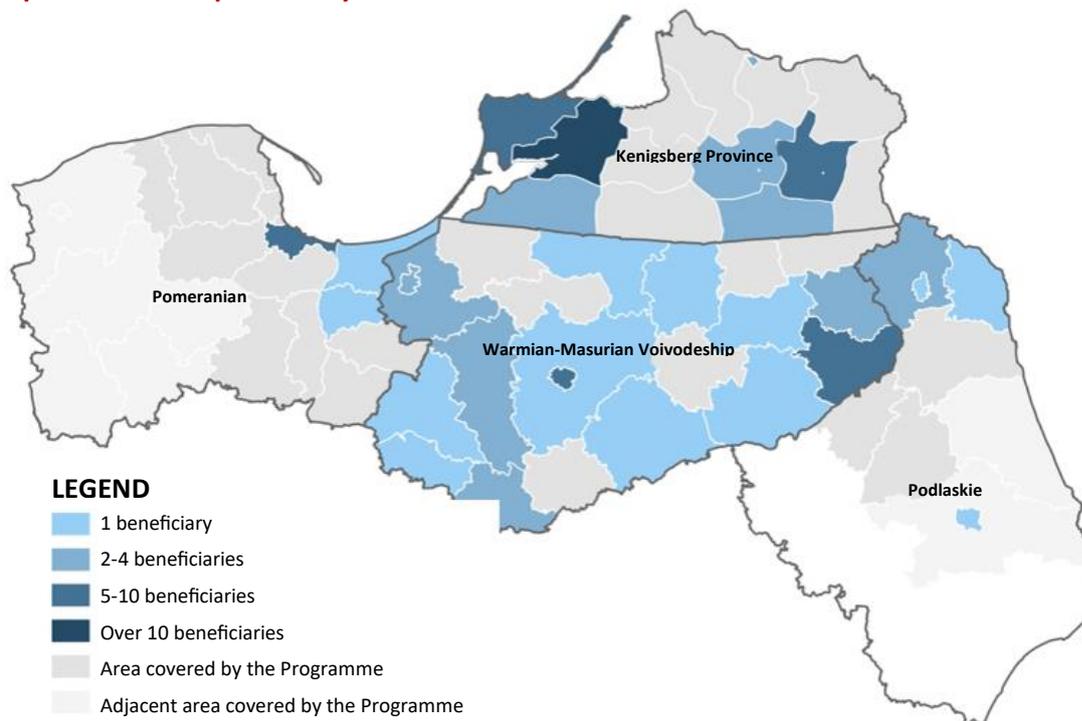
This information indicates that local government units and their organisational units are the group of beneficiaries most willing to show initiative and manage projects.

The Programme implemented 3 large infrastructure projects (2 under the HERITAGE Thematic Objective and 1 under the Accessibility Thematic Objective). The number of beneficiaries in these projects varies greatly and results from the specificity of the projects – the largest number of beneficiaries (seven) implemented a project regarding the development of a cross-border network of bicycle paths, the remaining two projects were implemented by two beneficiaries each. The leading partners in large infrastructure projects were local government units and their organisational units. The number and structure of beneficiaries in regular projects is similar to the number and structure of beneficiaries in the Programme in general – regular projects constitute the vast majority of projects in the Programme.



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Map 4. Number of partners by location of their seats⁷



Source: own study based on the database of project partners.

Cooperation within partnerships was based to a large extent on previous, successful cooperation experiences, knowledge of the partner, and receipt of cooperation proposals. Only 23.5% of beneficiaries participating in the quantitative study⁸ indicated that it was related to the closeness of individual partners. This is confirmed by the map above, which shows the number of beneficiaries implementing projects divided into administrative units in Poland and Russia. The local government units where the beneficiaries implementing the largest number of projects are based (Kenigsberg region, Gdańsk, Olsztyn, Ełk district, Gusev region) are not located directly at the state border. In turn, some administrative units bordering on another country, such as the Węgorzewo district or the Gołdap district in Poland or the Niestierów district in the Kenigsberg Province, did not have any of the project beneficiaries within their borders.

There is no difference between activity and specific features of the region. The beneficiaries were looking for partners similar to themselves – for example, a district city was looking for a partner that was a similar city on the other side of the border. There were exceptions (e.g. Kętrzyn-Kenigsberg), but they were rare.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

⁷ The map shows non-unique beneficiaries – e.g. if a beneficiary participated in the implementation of 2 projects, it was indicated twice, which allows to present the scale of involvement of beneficiaries from individual administrative units.

⁸ Based on a quantitative study with Programme beneficiaries (n=17).



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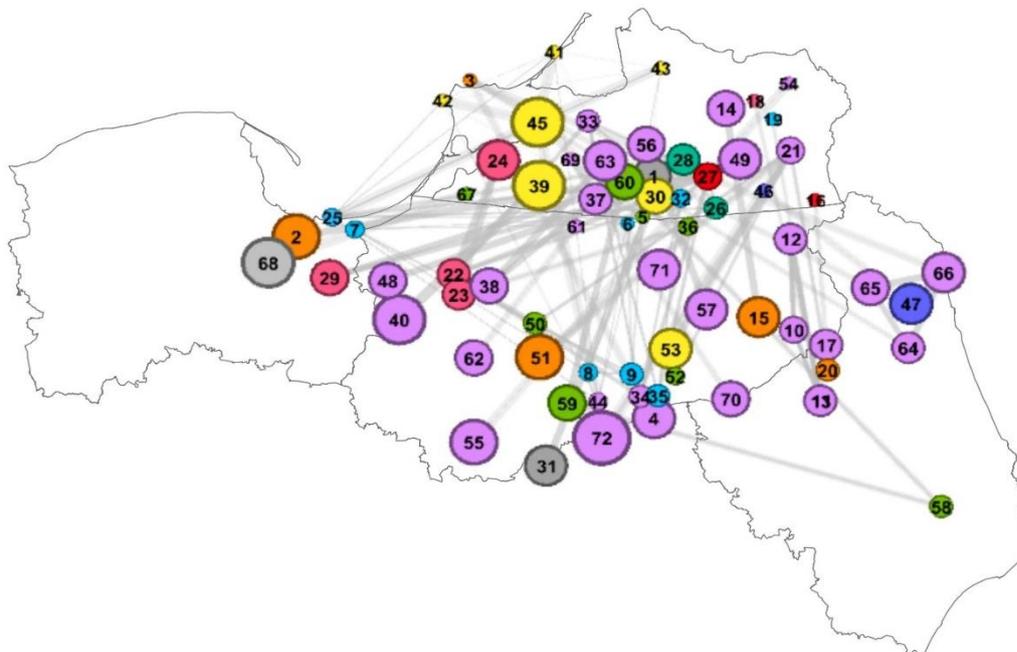
Greater interest in implementing projects as part of the evaluated intervention is visible in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship. Podlaskie and Pomeranian voivodeships more often decided to participate in programmes such as the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme or the South Baltic Sea.

Quantitative research conducted with Polish project partners shows that the language barrier was not a factor hindering project implementation, and cultural and/or organisational differences had a 'rather large impact' only for less than 12% of study participants.

In the previous financial perspective 2007-2013 in the Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme, the composition of partnerships was quite similar to the composition of partnerships in the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Programme in the 2014-2020 perspective. Local government units and their organisational units played a significant role (especially among the leading partners), but there were also many non-governmental organisations, government authorities and universities.

The rest of this chapter contains a network of connections taking into account differences in the legal form of partners. The density of the network makes the map difficult to read, which is why the Research Team decided not to provide the full names of the entities undertaking cooperation on the maps – the entities are marked with numbered nodes, and the list of these entities with assigned numbers constitutes Annex No. 1 to this report (this annex is located at the end of the document). The colours on the map symbolise the individual legal forms of the beneficiaries.

Map 5. Activity of beneficiaries in the Programme before the suspension of cooperation with Russia, broken down by the legal form of the partners



Legend:

Security and public order institutions	Foundations and associations	Museums	Local government communities	Municipal/commune organisational units	Cultural institutions	Health care units
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Source: own study based on the database of project partners.



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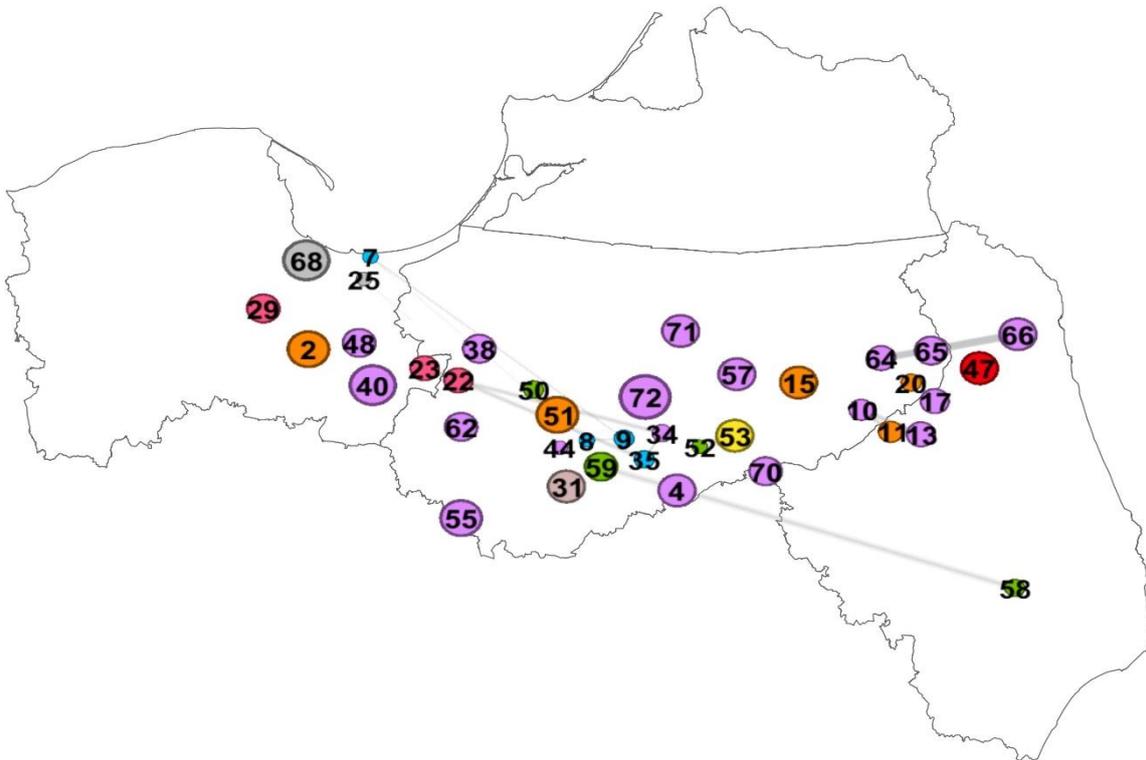
The edges of the network (lines connecting the nodes) show that the partnership is concluded primarily between entities with the same legal form: these are mainly local government communities (marked in pink). Secondly, we should mention associations (blue), which also – in terms of partnerships – constitute a rather hermetic environment. The different size of the node shows the value of the project.

It is noticeable that most projects are of a similar order of magnitude (measured by the total value of the project), but there are also – although less frequently – less expensive projects in the network.

After the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation, mainly local government communities (marked in pink on the map below) – the most active type of entities in the Programme – remained without partners.

Among other entities, i.e. cultural institutions (red), organisational units of local government units (orange), bodies responsible for ensuring public safety and order (green) or entities related to the tourism industry (blue), the problem was not so severe, which, however, results from the fact that there were fewer beneficiaries with such legal forms in the Programme.

Map 6. Activity of beneficiaries in the Programme after the suspension of cooperation with Russia, broken down by the legal form of partners



Legend:

Security and public order institutions	Foundations and associations	Museums	Local government communities	Municipal/commune organisational units	Cultural institutions	Health care units
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Source: own study based on the database of project partners.



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Chapter Summary:

Project partnerships varied in size depending on the needs of a given project. Partnerships consisted of an average of 2.9 partners; the average number of partnerships varied slightly depending on the thematic objective. Local government units and their organisational units were most often the leading partners. The geographical distribution of the beneficiaries' seats in local government units is to a small extent related to their geographical proximity. When selecting partners, the partners were guided mainly by previous, successful cooperation experiences.

2.4. THE QUALITY OF THE ESTABLISHED COOPERATION

Research question: What is/was the intensity and quality of cooperation between partners? What does the communication between the lead partner and project partners look like? What are the differences after the suspension of cooperation with Russia? Were project partnerships created for the purposes of the Programme or did they exist before? Have the partners previously applied for EU funds (from ETC cooperation programmes, INTERREG, PHARE, etc.)? How did obtaining funds under previously existing partnerships translate into continued cooperation? What projects were a continuation or extension of previous project collaborations? Is there a correlation, of what value, between the funds received in previous projects and those implemented in the 2014-2020 perspective?

This part of the report analyses the partnerships established for the implementation of the project. In terms of the number of project consortia, those composed of two entities (1 leader and 1 partner) dominated. They accounted for 58% of all partnerships. In this context, partnerships consisting of five or more entities stand out – such situations occurred three times.

When analysing the country of origin of the entities, it should be noted that the partners were dominated by Russian entities, which after 24 February 2022 – due to military aggression on the territory of independent Ukraine – were excluded from the possibility of participating in support.

Further analysis focused on whether the partners implementing the projects applied for support under previous cross-border cooperation programmes.

The contractor did not have sufficient data to verify whether the partnerships currently identified had their roots in the years 2004-2006 (it only had a list of project leaders, without indicating project partners). Nevertheless, the analysis carried out based on the available data allows us to conclude that 10 beneficiaries from the evaluated Programme (Puńsk commune, Malbork municipality, Giżycko municipality, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, Pomeranian Voivodeship, European Foundation for the Protection of Monuments, Centre for European Meetings 'Światowid' in Elbląg, Provincial Headquarters of the State Fire Service in Białystok, Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organisation, Association of Municipalities 'Polish Gothic Castles') applied for support already in the 2004-2006 financial perspective – at that time the INTERREG IIIA Poland-Lithuania-Kaliningrad Province Programme was used.

More detailed data was available for the 2007-2013 perspective, which made it possible to compare the leaders and partners of projects implemented then and in the 2014-2020 perspective. However,



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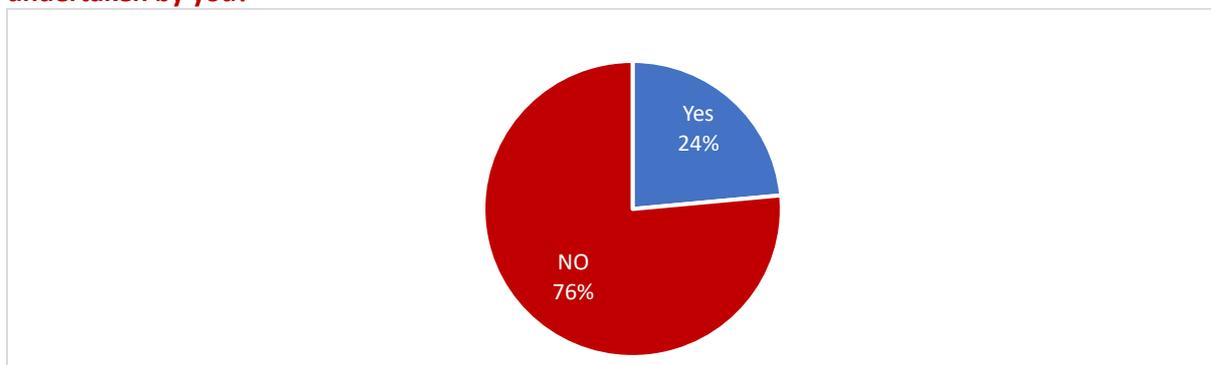
only two cases have been identified in which the partnership that was established earlier is continued in the 2014-2020 perspective – these cases are:

- **The municipality of Elk and the Russian municipality of Oziersk** (in this case, joint implementation concerned 3 projects: two in 2007-2013 under the INTERREG IIIA Poland-Lithuania-Russia Programme and one in the 2014-2020 perspective under the Poland-Russia Programme);
- **The municipality of Malbork and the Russian municipality of Svietly** (in this case, joint implementation concerned 2 projects: one in 2007-2013 under the INTERREG IIIA Poland-Lithuania-Russia Programme and one in the 2014-2020 perspective under the Poland-Russia Programme).

In the case of other projects and established partnerships, a high degree of ad hoc nature is noted.

The findings from the desk research analysis were verified as part of a quantitative study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners. As a result of this study, it was confirmed that **only every fourth project (24%) is a continuation of previous projects**. Respondents participating in the study pointed to inter-period complementarity (regarding different financing perspectives) and inter-programme complementarity (regarding various programmes from which activities were financed)⁹.

Chart 11. Beneficiaries' answer to the question: Is the project a continuation of previous projects undertaken by you?



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

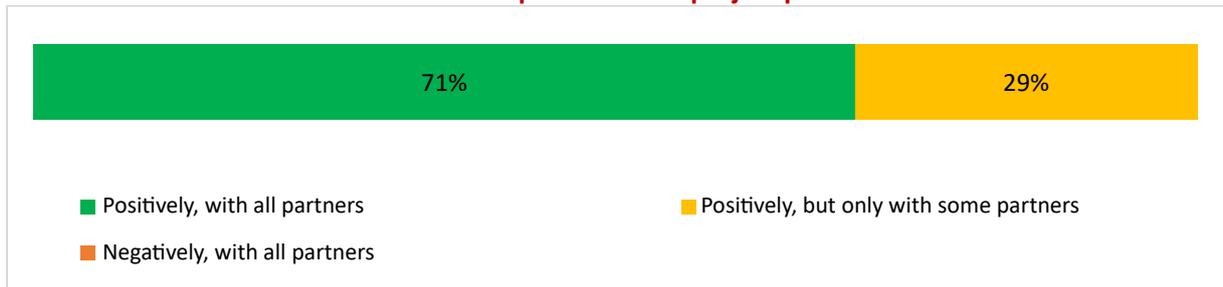
Additionally, beneficiaries and partners assessed the quality of cooperation with their partners with whom they implemented the project. Evaluations were positive, with 71% of respondents assessing cooperation with all partners positively. The rest (29%) assessed the cooperation positively, but only with some partners.

⁹ More on complementarity in chapter 2.9 of this report.



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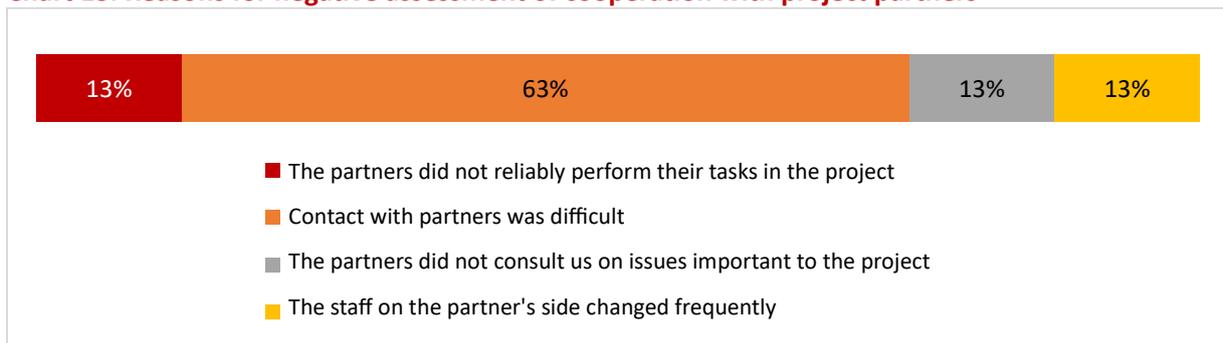
Chart 12. Beneficiaries' assessment of cooperation with project partners



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

When justifying negative assessments of cooperation, beneficiaries and project partners focused primarily on difficult contact with the partner (63% of responses), which could include, for example, the partner's lack of involvement in solving current difficulties in the project or failure to respond to e-mails from the lead beneficiary. 13% of responses concerned issues such as the failure of partners to reliably perform their tasks in the project, the partner's lack of consultation on issues important to the project, and high employee turnover on the partner's side, which made it difficult to establish long-term relationships conducive to efficient work on the project.

Chart 13. Reasons for negative assessment of cooperation with project partners



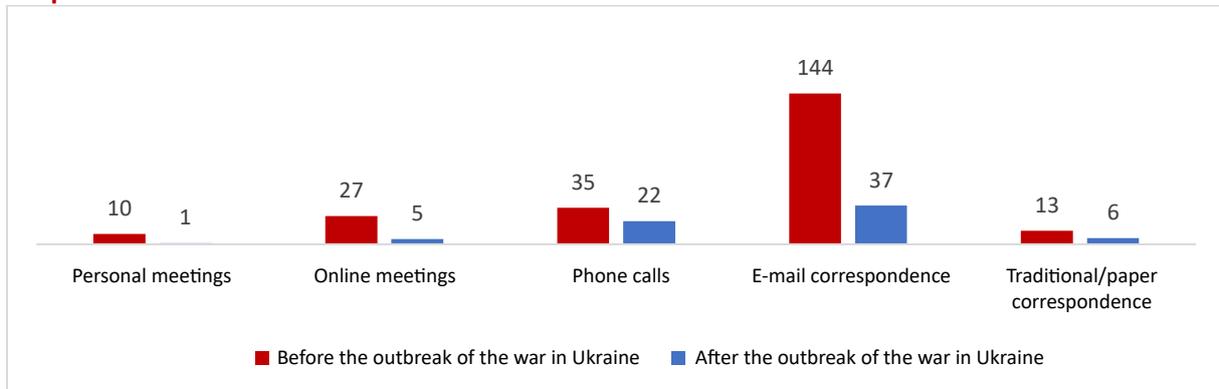
Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=8). Total value exceeds 100% due to rounding.

A separate issue that was examined was the frequency of contact with partners. **The average number of contacts per month changed after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the resulting suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation in almost all forms.** The number of face-to-face meetings decreased significantly – from an average of 10 per month to 1 per month. Online meetings, which were held almost every day, also decreased – after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation, there were only 5 meetings on average per month. The average monthly number of traditional correspondence decreased by more than half (from 13 to 6). However, the aspect with the greatest change was e-mail correspondence, which saw an almost five-fold decrease. The weakening scale of contacts may be related to the loss of partners. The smaller number of partners means that cooperation with other partners does not require such a degree of intensity, because it takes place in a smaller group. Moreover, what should be mentioned is that after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation, Polish project partners were given the opportunity to complete the projects on their own (unilaterally). Therefore, there could have been situations in which there was no cooperation at all after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.



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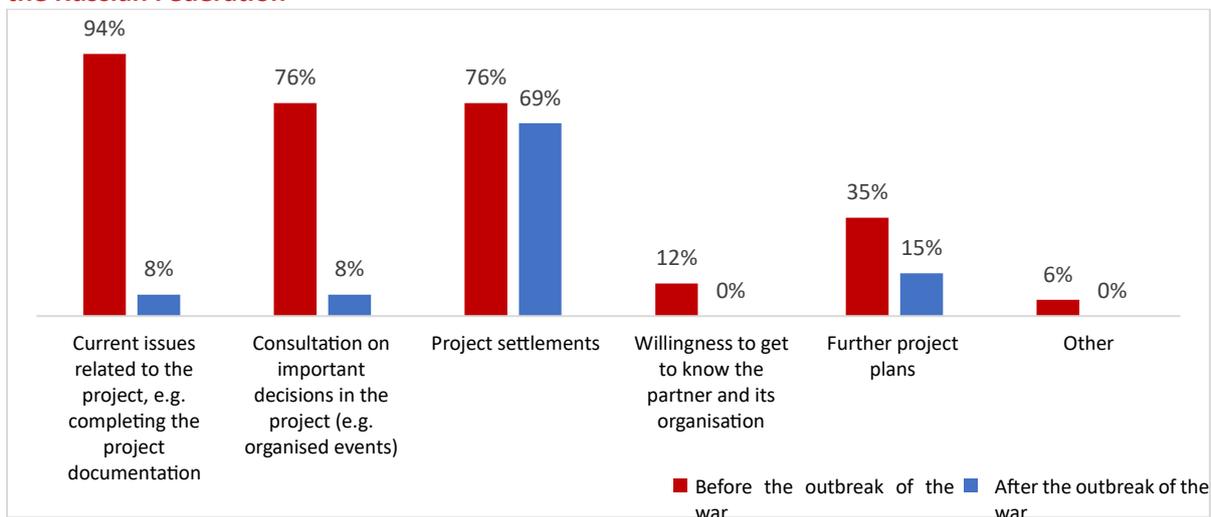
Chart 14. Average monthly frequency of contacts between partners before and after breaking cooperation with the Russian Federation



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Cooperation before the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine and before the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation concerned various issues, ranging from current issues regarding the project and working meetings related to it (the answer was 'other'), through mutual consultation of decisions, project settlement, ending with partners getting to know each other and making arrangements for further cooperation. After the conflict broke out, cooperation was limited to issues related to the settlement of joint projects. Incidental cooperation also concerned other issues, such as current project issues and further project plans), but it was limited cooperation, occurring on one side of the border, between Polish partners.

Chart 15. Topics of communication with a partner before and after terminating cooperation with the Russian Federation



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

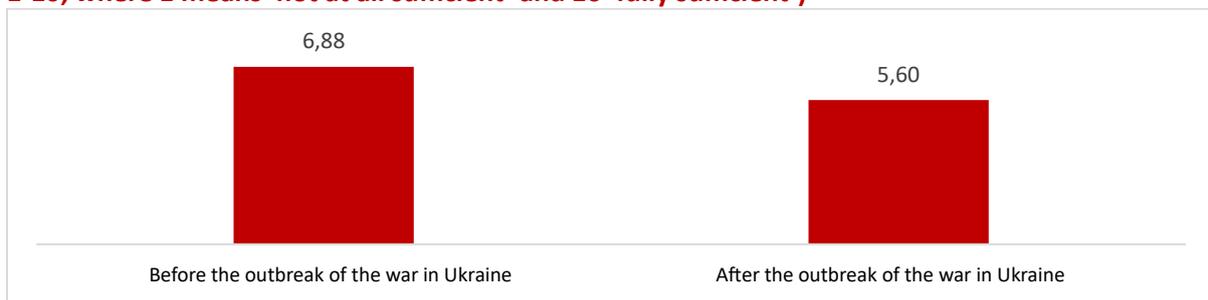
Another element assessed was the issue of the sufficiency of cooperation for the proper implementation of the project. It is noticeable that after the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation, this issue was rated lower, taking into account the average ratings of the beneficiaries and partners participating in the study, than before the suspension of cooperation. It should be borne in mind that the suspension of cooperation could cause numerous difficulties,



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including: with the need to cope with the independent implementation of the project by an entity that had previously only been a partner. The increased scope of responsibilities related to independent implementation of projects and the complete suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation – an aggressor state towards independent Ukraine – also resulted in the inability to consult with partners from the Russian Federation on important elements related to project implementation. All this could have influenced the assessment made by Polish beneficiaries and partners.

Chart 16. Average assessment of the sufficiency of meetings for the proper implementation of the project before and after terminating cooperation with the Russian Federation (rating on a scale of 1-10, where 1 means 'not at all sufficient' and 10 'fully sufficient')



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

As a rule, **cooperation should be assessed as good**. Despite the late acceptance of the Cooperation Programme by the Polish government (which took place only at the end of 2017), cooperation with partners was established and this cooperation was also positively received by the public¹⁰.

The findings related to positive cooperation between the parties are also confirmed by the Delphi method. The findings indicate that mutual cooperation was largely influenced by the instability caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the resulting suspension of cooperation with the Russian side. Nevertheless, the cooperation at the local community level itself brought measurable results and was assessed positively.

Chapter Summary:

The established cooperation should generally be assessed positively. Communication between partners took place mainly by e-mail.

There is no correlation between the receipt of funds under previous projects and the projects analysed as part of this evaluation. Nevertheless, some of the beneficiaries noted that the cooperation undertaken under the projects was a continuation of previous projects.

¹⁰ This is evidenced by 'likes' and comments under press articles and social media posts, which was determined as part of a media query conducted for the purposes of this report.



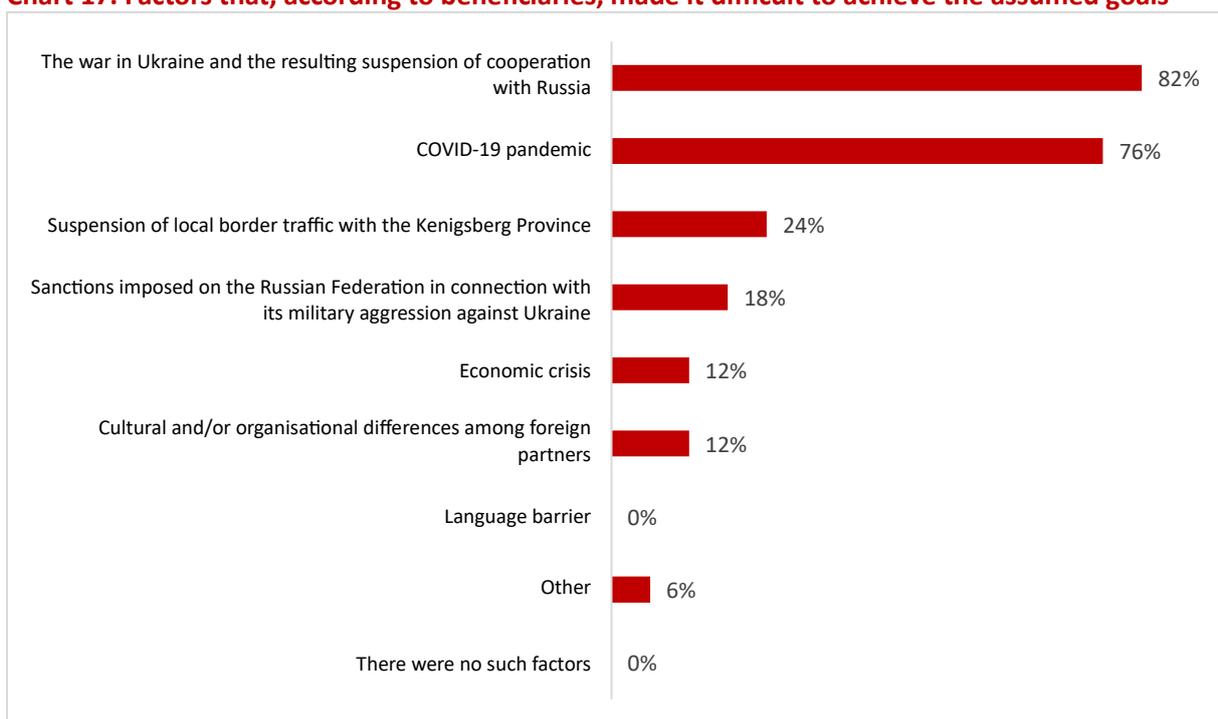
2.5. THE IMPACT OF CRISIS EVENTS ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Research question: To what extent have the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian military aggression, supported by Belarus, affected the implementation of projects (distinguishing between regular and LIP projects)? Despite the loss of connections with partners in Russia, was it possible to implement the project assumptions on the Polish side?

The implementation of projects could be influenced by various factors, including those beyond the beneficiary's control, caused by various crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the economic crisis, etc.

As part of the survey, the beneficiaries were asked which crisis situations influenced the projects they implemented. The summary of responses is presented in the chart below. It is noticeable that the beneficiaries mainly pointed to the significant impact of the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. To a large extent, the crisis events that affected the projects coincide with the unforeseen challenges that the Programme faced¹¹.

Chart 17. Factors that, according to beneficiaries, made it difficult to achieve the assumed goals



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

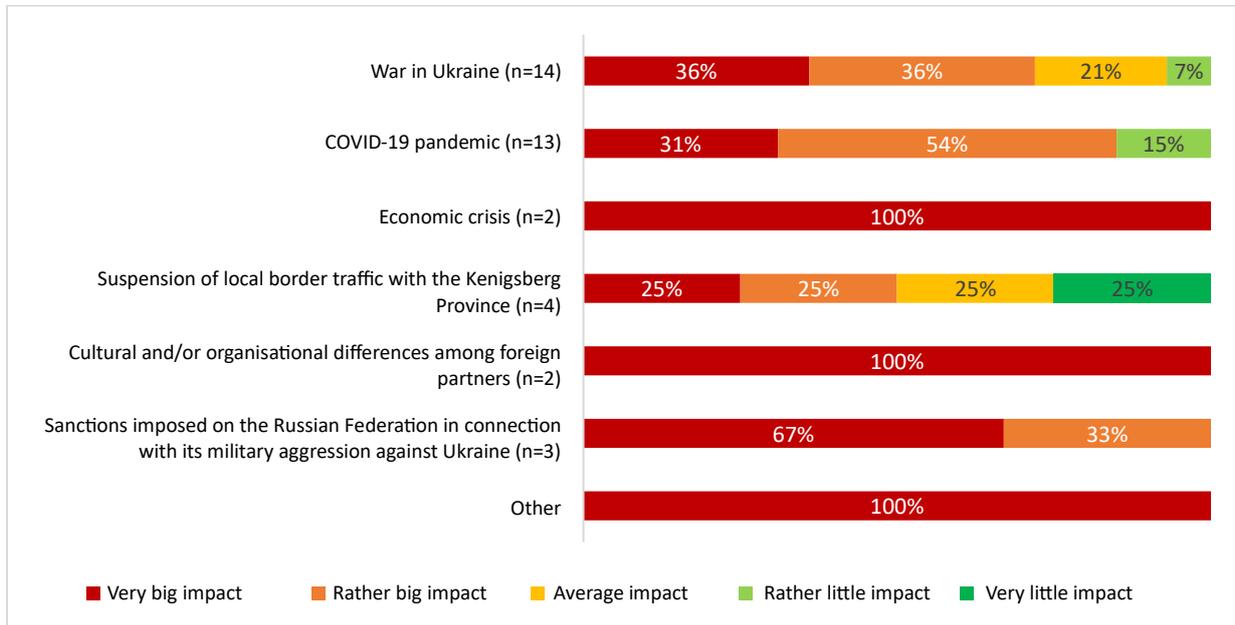
If the beneficiaries declared that a given factor influenced the project they were implementing, they were additionally asked, as part of the survey, to determine the degree of its influence.

¹¹ Crisis situations affecting the Programme in general are described in chapter 1.4 of this evaluation.



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Chart 18. Assessment of the impact of individual factors on projects implemented by Polish beneficiaries



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

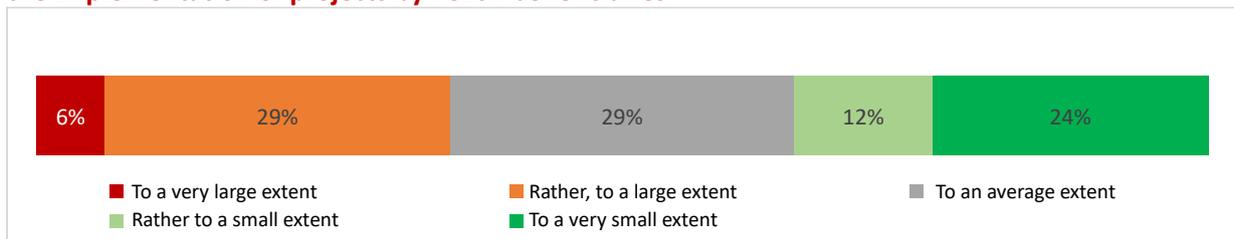
The results of the quantitative study show that the beneficiaries stated that the language barrier did not hinder them from achieving the planned project goals. However, cultural and/or organisational differences on the part of the foreign partner and the economic crisis were identified as the factors having the least impact on achieving project goals. However, the beneficiaries who stated in the survey that these factors influenced the achievement of their goals assessed this impact as considerable. However, when it comes to the issue of the economic crisis, it was indicated as an important factor by the beneficiaries during interviews as part of the case studies. One of the beneficiaries mentioned that the increase in prices of construction materials due to the economic crisis resulted in an increase in the total costs of implementing its project. According to the beneficiaries who participated in the survey, the suspension of border traffic with the Kenigsberg Province and the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation had a moderate impact on the projects they implemented. One of the beneficiaries pointed to the impact of another factor on its project, which was the fact that the project partner did not undertake to implement the project goals at all, which also influenced the degree of their implementation on the Polish side. At the initial stage of the study, a hypothesis could be developed which indicated that two external factors could have had the greatest impact on achieving the Programme objectives and, consequently, on the implementation of the projects: – Russian military aggression and the COVID-19 pandemic. This fact is confirmed by the above quantitative research results. **82% of respondents indicated that the war and the resulting suspension of cooperation with Russia influenced the achievement of their goals. 76% of respondents indicated that the war had a very large/large impact on their investment. The majority of respondents also indicated the impact of the pandemic: 76%, and the impact of this factor on the implemented project was described as very large/large by 85% of respondents.**



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The consequence of the military aggression initiated by Russia was the suspension of cooperation under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 with Russian partners. The Russian invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022, so Polish beneficiaries who were implementing projects and related project activities at that time were deprived of their Russian partners. This could have resulted in the inability to implement the planned activities on the Russian side. As indicated by the above research results, 82% of the beneficiaries indicated that the war in Ukraine and the resulting suspension of project implementation on the Russian side made it difficult for the beneficiaries to achieve the assumed project goals. Later in the survey, respondents were asked to what extent the suspension of cooperation with Russia affected the projects they implemented. The percentage distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below.

Chart 19. Assessment of the extent to which the suspension of cooperation with Russia influenced the implementation of projects by Polish beneficiaries



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

35% of respondents indicated that the suspension of cooperation with Russia had a very large or rather large impact on the projects they implemented. 29% of beneficiaries indicated an average impact of this factor. The remaining respondents, i.e. 36%, indicated a rather small or very small impact of this factor on the projects they implemented. The degree of impact of the suspension of cooperation with Russian partners assessed by the beneficiaries varies.

Beneficiaries who indicated an average or small impact of the suspension of cooperation with Russia on the projects they implemented were asked to justify their assessment. They pointed to individual aspects that, in their opinion, determined that this factor did not have a significant impact on their investments:

- **The project ended shortly after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine**, so problems, such as difficult communication with the Russian partner, appeared only at the final stage of the investment (at the reporting stage). Most or even all of the activities on the Russian and Polish sides have been implemented.
- **The infrastructure activities initiated by the Polish beneficiary were fully implemented.**
- **The suspension of cooperation with Russia did not affect the implementation of infrastructure activities on the Polish side; only soft activities**, e.g. planned Polish-Russian exchanges, were impossible to implement. However, the funds allocated for soft actions, which were to be implemented both on the Polish and Russian sides, were used to implement other soft actions only on the Polish side or were transferred to other purposes and enabled, for example, the expansion of infrastructure actions implemented in Poland.



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- **Problems related to the loss of the project partner** (e.g. difficult communication or problems with reporting the status of completed works on the Russian side) **extended the implementation of the project.**

The collected statements show that the assessment of the impact of the factor of suspending cooperation with Russia as average or small was influenced to the greatest extent by the fact that despite the difficulties, the projects (in particular infrastructure projects) on the Polish side were fully implemented. Of course, this assessment is subjective. On the other hand, as part of the case studies, the beneficiaries of two regular projects (Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality and the Pomeranian Voivodeship) pointed to similar aspects, i.e. the inability to take soft actions, extension of the project implementation time, difficult contact with the Russian partner at the reporting stage, while assessing the impact of the outbreak the war in Ukraine as the factor that had the greatest impact on the investment they made. The Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality pointed out that the suspension of cooperation with Russia resulted in the loss of a project partner, which, firstly, prevented it from implementing a soft measure, which was a conference on ecological education, which was to be held in Russia. Secondly, it affected the reporting of the status of achievement of project indicators: despite the implementation of all planned activities, the result indicator was only achieved at the level of 2%. This was influenced by the fact that the assumed value of this indicator also included activities on the Russian side. The project concerned the construction of a water and sewage system, and most of this infrastructure was to be built in Russia. Due to the loss of financing by the Russian partner, approx. 10,000 people could not be connected to the newly established water and sewage network. In the case of the Pomeranian Voivodeship project, the loss of a partner from Russia resulted in the break-off of contacts with the project partner, which resulted in, among other things, difficulty preparing a periodic report.

As mentioned above, the assessment of the impact of the factor of suspending cooperation with Russia as average or small was mainly influenced by the fact that the activities (in particular infrastructure) on the Polish side were fully implemented. Therefore, another important aspect verified as part of the quantitative study was whether, after the suspension of cooperation with partners from the Russian Federation, the Polish beneficiaries managed to complete the project in accordance with its assumptions. The results of the quantitative study carried out as part of the evaluation indicate that in the majority (76%) of cases, Polish beneficiaries managed to implement all activities assigned to them in accordance with the assumptions. 24% of beneficiaries indicated that they failed to complete some activities; Respondents who answered this way were asked what specific activities they had failed to complete. The answers obtained confirm what has already been said: the loss of Russian partners resulted in the inability to implement soft activities planned in the Kenigsberg Province, such as special events (festivals, concerts) and infrastructural activities on the Russian side, i.e. the construction of bicycle paths in the Kenigsberg Province. Respondents also indicated that the cessation of cooperation with Russian partners resulted in the inability to implement joint activities for which the Russian partner was mainly responsible, i.e. production of promotional films and creation of a mobile application. None of the respondents pointed out that infrastructure activities on the Polish side were not fully implemented as a result of the suspension of cooperation with Russia under the Programme.



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As part of individual interviews, institutions responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Programme (i.e. Monitoring Committee, Coordinating Institution, Joint Technical Secretariat) indicated that the cessation of cooperation with Russia under the Programme can be described as a **revolutionary, shocking change for Polish beneficiaries**. Suddenly they lost their project partners, with whom they had already cooperated on other projects or had just established contacts as part of the current investment. Some Polish beneficiaries were planning to implement a joint project in the future, which was prevented by the suspension of cooperation. The project control process was also modified and a new rule was adopted: if a given entity had any connections with the Russian market, it could not be awarded a public contract. Additionally, funds intended for the implementation of projects on the Russian side began to be released, were taken from the Russian side and were redirected to support Polish beneficiaries, so the project budgets of Polish beneficiaries suddenly increased. The institutions responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Programme also indicated that the outbreak of the war in Ukraine also affected the timeliness of project settlement, because the implementation of some projects was extended. Additionally, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine also influenced reporting and the degree to which the values of the assumed indicators were achieved. Despite the fact that project activities on the Polish side were achieved to a large extent, in some cases it was not possible to achieve 100% of the assumed indicator value, because it also assumed the implementation of activities on the Russian side. This fact was also confirmed by some Polish lead beneficiaries interviewed as part of the case studies. The analysis of indicators carried out as part of the evaluation also indicates gaps in the degree of achievement of some result indicators. According to interviews with institutions and beneficiaries of projects selected for case studies, one of the reasons for not achieving these indicators could have been the cessation of activities on the part of Russian partners, which extended the project implementation time (so not all indicators have already been reported) and made it impossible to implement activities on the part of the Russian partners. Interviews show that Russian military aggression had similar consequences for both regular and large infrastructure projects.

To sum up, it can be said that the factor that had a significant or even greatest impact on the implemented projects was the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. As a result of the military aggression launched by Russia, Russian partners were excluded from participation in the Programme, which resulted in their exclusion from financing under the Programme, the inability for Polish partners to contact them and the suspension of activities that were being implemented in Russia. In most cases, this resulted in an extension of the project duration, difficulties with reporting and difficulties in achieving project indicators, which also assumed the implementation of activities on the Russian side. In the vast majority of cases, the loss of a partner from Russia did not result in the inability to carry out any activities on the Polish side. In individual cases, the beneficiaries were unable to carry out some previously planned soft or infrastructure activities that were to be implemented in Russia or some joint activities for which the Russian partner was mainly responsible.

Another factor that was selected at the beginning of the study as having a hypothetically significant impact on the projects being implemented is **the COVID-19 pandemic**. The previously mentioned results of the quantitative survey indicate that 76% of respondents indicated that this factor had an impact on achieving the goals set by the beneficiaries. Therefore, the impact of the pandemic was indicated by 13 out of 17 respondents (i.e. one respondent less than in the case of indicating the



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impact of the war in Ukraine). It is also worth mentioning that 85% of beneficiaries who indicated that the pandemic influenced the achievement of the assumed goals indicated that this factor had a large or very large impact on the project they were implementing.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implemented projects was also indicated by the Lead Beneficiaries implementing projects selected for description as part of the case studies. During the implementation of a large infrastructure project called *Construction of a new route of provincial road No. 512 along with the construction of a bridge crossing over the Łyna River in Bartoszyce*. The border closure caused by the pandemic prevented the implementation of some tasks, including: activities related to the exchange of experiences, promotional activities. Additionally, as a result of the pandemic, in accordance with the newly applicable regulations, the number of employees working on the construction site at the same time had to be limited, which had a negative impact on the timely and scheduled implementation of the investment. Additionally, material delivery times have extended; the beneficiary had to wait about two months for them. The second project described in the case studies, a regular project implemented by **the Nowe Miasto Lubawskie municipality** regarding the construction of a water and sewage network, also encountered problems caused by the current COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. downtime in construction works and extension of the project implementation time.

During individual interviews, institutions responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Programme also indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of projects by its beneficiaries. Firstly, the sanitary regime prevailing during the pandemic and the related ban on large group meetings influenced the implementation of soft activities, i.e. events, conferences, etc. Events based on stationary meetings with large groups of people had to be postponed. Some infrastructure activities were also extended due to longer waiting times for construction/finishing materials or downtime in construction works. The above-mentioned difficulties meant that the implementation time of some projects had to be extended. Secondly, as a result of the pandemic, the form of contacts with project partners changed: online meetings were used more often. Meetings between partners that required personal presence, in some cases, had to be postponed.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the acceleration of some procedures. The specific nature of crisis operations requires that actions be taken much faster than usual. The pandemic caused many unexpected changes in projects that had to be implemented immediately, and the old procedures were very time-consuming.

To sum up, the COVID-19 pandemic also significantly impacted the implementation of projects. Difficulties caused by the pandemic, such as the ban on meetings involving a large number of people, border closures, delays in the delivery of construction materials and delays in the implementation of infrastructure activities, resulted in, among others, extension of project implementation time and caused many unexpected changes in projects. Additionally, during the pandemic, the form of contact with partners changed: online meetings were used instead. Due to the pandemic, it was also necessary to accelerate some procedures to improve, among others: effective acceptance of project changes.



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Chapter Summary:

The war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic can be considered factors that particularly influenced the implementation of projects.

The exclusion of Russian partners from participation in the Programme resulted in, among others, extension of the project duration, as well as difficulties reporting and achieving project indicators that assumed the implementation of activities on the Russian side. However, in the vast majority of cases, project beneficiaries indicated that the loss of a partner from Russia did not result in the inability to implement the planned activities on the Polish side.

The COVID-19 pandemic extended the implementation time of projects, changed the form of contact between partners and caused many unexpected changes in projects. As a result, some procedures were also improved and accelerated.

2.6. POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Research question: Do Polish partners see opportunities to meet their needs in cross-border cooperation under other INTERREG programmes Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027 and South Baltic 2021-2027, taking into account the planned expansion of these programmes to include the Łomża and Olsztyn subregions (LT-PL) and the Olsztyn subregion (PB), respectively) that they will not be able to meet in cooperation with Russian partners? What are these needs that could be met under other cross-border programmes but impossible to meet after Russia's aggression against Ukraine?

As a result of the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation due to its invasion of the territory of independent Ukraine, cross-border cooperation with this country was suspended. This means that in 2021-2027, programmes co-financed from EU funds, including partners from the Russian Federation, will not be continued. Therefore, the question remains about possible sources through which beneficiaries and partners who have so far undertaken cross-border cooperation projects will be able to compensate for the lost source of project financing. For this reason, both thematic and spatial possibilities of implementing cross-border projects should be analysed. Potential sources of support may be the following programmes that are planned for implementation in the 2021-2027 financial perspective:

INTERREG
Central Europe

INTERREG
Europe

INTERREG
Baltic Sea
Region

INTERREG
South Baltic

INTERREG
Lithuania-
Poland

These are Programmes that cover – in whole or in part – the eligible area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020. The first three Programmes (Central Europe, Europe and the Baltic Sea Region) cover the entire area of the evaluated intervention. The support area of the Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027 Programme and the South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 covers part of the area previously supported under the Poland-Russia Programme. Nevertheless, under these two Programmes, it is planned to expand the support area to include the Olsztyn subregion (in the case of the South Baltic



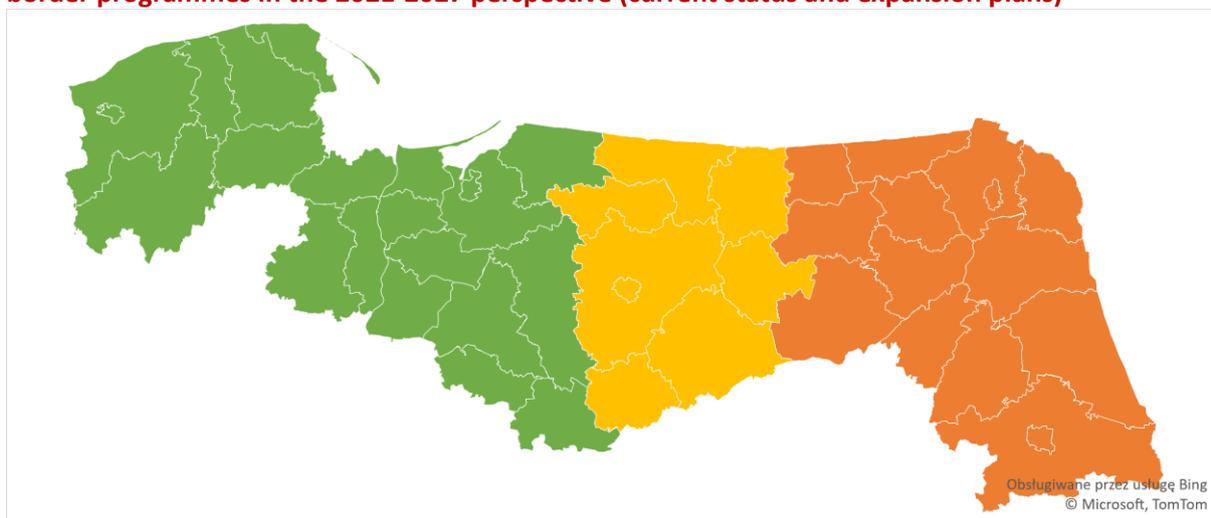
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Programme), and the Olsztyn and Łomża subregions (in the case of the Lithuania-Poland Programme). However, it should be mentioned that the Łomża subregion does not fall within the support area of the Poland-Russia Programme, therefore it will not be analysed further in this chapter.

Marked on the map below:

- **Orange** – the support area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 which is also covered by support from the Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027 Programme;
- **Green** – the support area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 which is also covered by support from the South Baltic Programme 2021-2027;
- **Yellow** – the support area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 which is planned to be covered by support from both the Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027 Programme and the South Baltic Programme 2021-2027.

Map 7. Support area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 supported under other cross-border programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective (current status and expansion plans)



Source: own study.

The following sections analysed the topics of projects that have been undertaken so far under the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 and those that could be undertaken in 2021-2027 under other (cross-border, transnational and interregional) Programmes covering the area of support for the current Poland-Russia 2014-2020 intervention.

Table 8. Thematic areas supported in the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 and other programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective

Supported topic areas	Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020	INTERREG Central Europe 2021-2027	INTERREG Europe 2021-2027	INTERREG Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027	INTERREG South Baltic 2021-2027	INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027
Cultural heritage	X					X
Environment, biodiversity	X	X	X	X		X
Transport accessibility, communication	X	X				
Innovation		X	X	X	X	
Competitiveness of SMEs		X	X	X	X	



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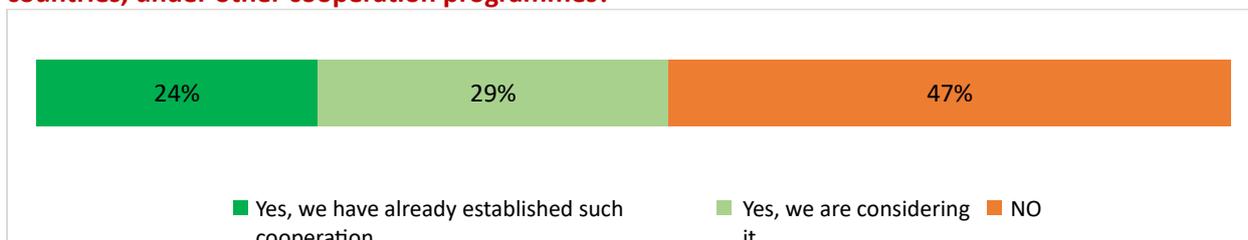
Supported topic areas	Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020	INTERREG Central Europe 2021-2027	INTERREG Europe 2021-2027	INTERREG Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027	INTERREG South Baltic 2021-2027	INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027
Interinstitutional cooperation		X		X	X	X
Low-emission economy, energy transformation			X	X		
Tourist attractiveness					X	

Source: own study.

As the table above shows, the **South Baltic Programme – if the support area currently outlined in this Programme is expanded – will provide the opportunity to implement projects in the field of innovation, economic competitiveness, inter-institutional cooperation and supporting the tourist attractiveness of the area on a broader scale than before.** In turn, the Lithuania-Poland Programme, in addition to supporting inter-institutional cooperation, will allow potential beneficiaries to compensate for the loss of project links with Russian partners in the areas of cultural heritage and environmental protection cooperation.

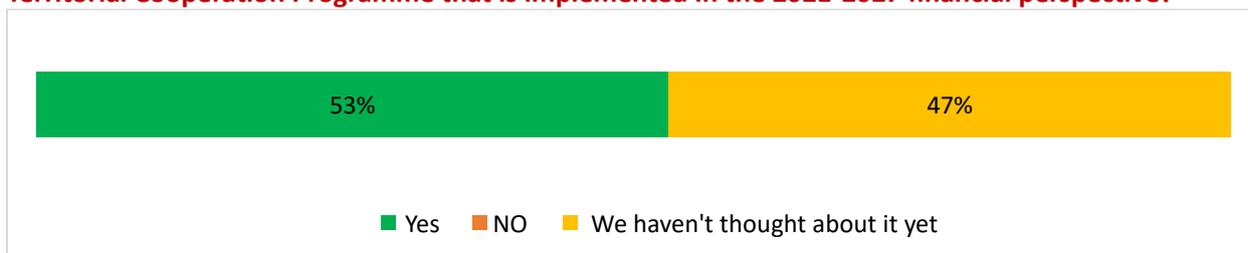
As part of the CAWI survey with Polish beneficiaries and project partners, it was confirmed that over half of the surveyed entities plan to cooperate with partners from countries other than Russia: 24% of respondents have already established such cooperation, while 29% are considering such a possibility. Most plan to base their cooperation on subsequent projects co-financed by the Territorial Cooperation Programmes implemented in the 2021-2027 perspective.

Chart 20. Beneficiaries' answer to the question: 'Do you plan to cooperate with partners from other countries, under other cooperation programmes?'



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Chart 21. Beneficiaries' answer to the question: 'Do you plan to implement a project under any Territorial Cooperation Programme that is implemented in the 2021-2027 financial perspective?'



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=9).

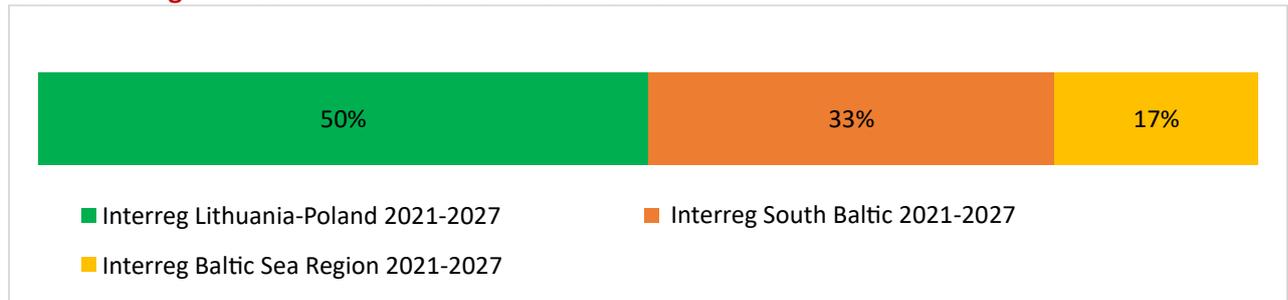
Due to the geographical location, the natural direction of cooperation is the area of support for the Lithuania-Poland Programme (for half of the beneficiaries), the South Baltic Programme (for every third respondent) or the Baltic Sea Region Programme. It is worth noting that two of the three



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Programmes that the beneficiaries are considering as directions for further cooperation are not cross-border, but interregional programmes with different dynamics of cooperation. Following the cooperation plans, the countries with which the beneficiaries have established or plan to establish cooperation should be listed. These are primarily: Lithuania, Germany, Croatia, France, Portugal, Romania, Ukraine and Hungary.

Chart 22. Programmes that beneficiaries intend to use



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=9).

It should be noted that there is a high percentage of responses concerning the INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027 Programme, from which beneficiaries and partners intend to apply for support. This may be due to the fact that cooperation on the Polish-Lithuanian border is developing dynamically. Its origins date back to the earlier financial perspectives, which was also confirmed during in-depth interviews with representatives of institutions implementing support under the Programme. Therefore, the idea of extending the Lithuania-Poland Programme to include the Łomża and Olsztyn subregions is justified. Moreover, in-depth interviews with representatives of institutions implementing support also indicate that it is justified to include the Elbląg subregion in the Lithuania-Poland Programme.

I hope that to some extent it will be possible to compensate for this loss of beneficiaries who can no longer benefit from the Poland-Russia programme, because in the Olsztyn subregion the demand for the implementation of cross-border projects is very, very high. I even regret that the Elbląg subregion cannot also benefit from INTERREG Lithuania-Poland, because one must also take into account the fact that during the programming period, in the 2007-2013 financial perspective, a trilateral Lithuania-Poland-Russia programme was being implemented. And the history of this cooperation in this area, both in the Elbląg and Olsztyn subregions, is also quite large and significant. Because there were many partnerships from both the Olsztyn and Elbląg subregions (...).

Source: individual in-depth interview.

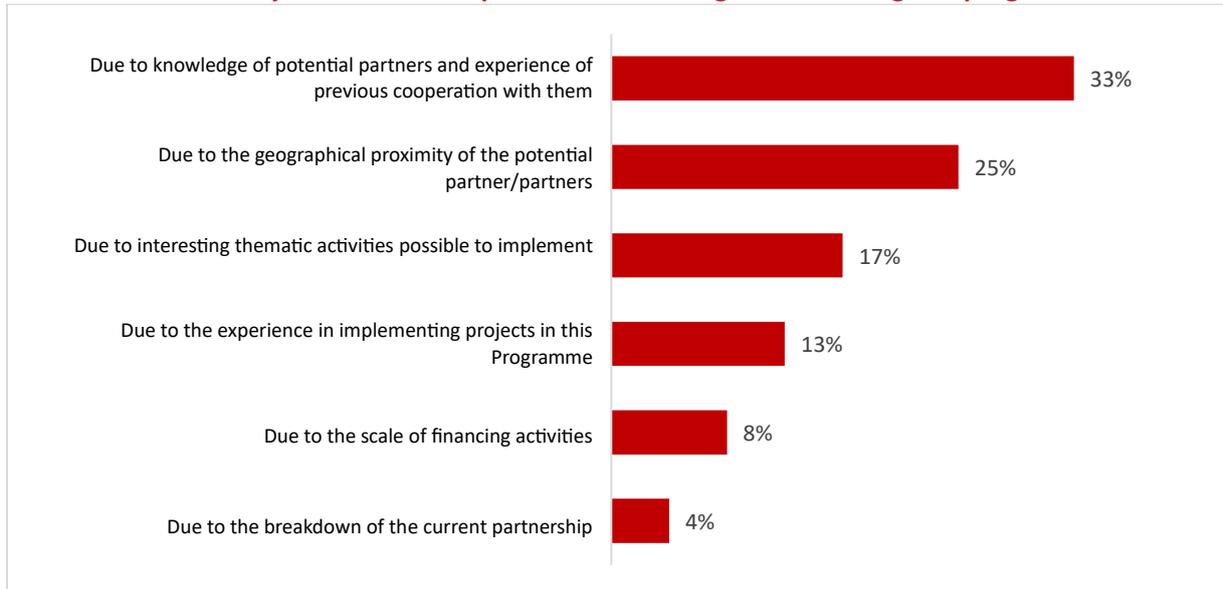
When justifying the choice of the direction of further cooperation, the beneficiaries pointed primarily to the knowledge of partners and previous implementation of other projects. Therefore, it should be noted that the experience of previous cooperation has a positive impact on the implementation of subsequent projects. Other reasons given for choosing this specific direction of cooperation were the geographical proximity of partners, as well as activities adequate to the needs – interesting to the beneficiaries – that could be implemented under individual Programmes. The cooperation planned by



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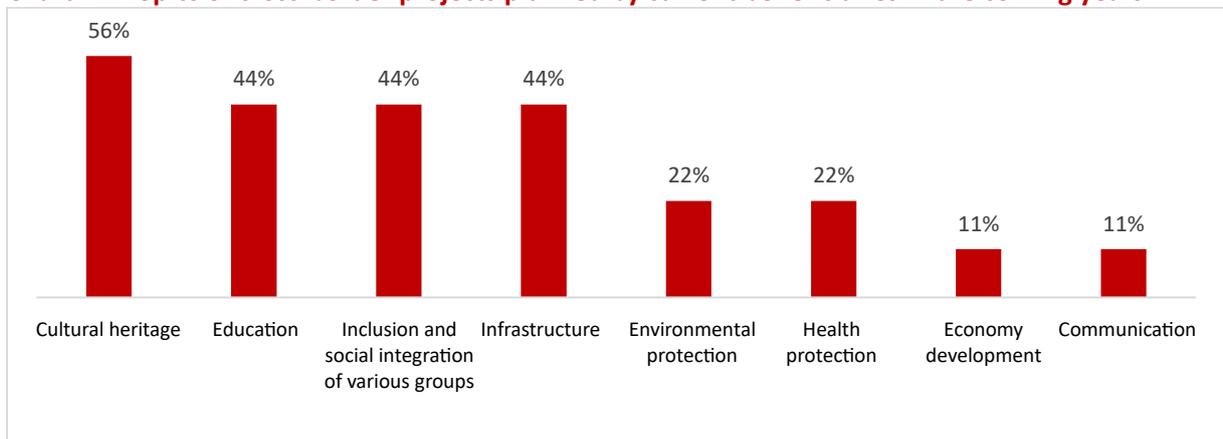
the beneficiaries will concern primarily cultural heritage, education, social inclusion and integration, and infrastructure development. To a lesser extent, emphasis was placed on environmental protection, health care, economic development and communication.

Chart 23. Reasons why beneficiaries expressed their willingness to use a given programme



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=9).

Chart 24. Topics of cross-border projects planned by current beneficiaries in the coming years



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=9).

It is worth noting that the thematic areas in which the beneficiaries intend to operate are part of the topics that can be supported in individual Programmes. This means that expanding the support area of the Poland-Lithuania and South Baltic Programmes may become an opportunity for the current beneficiaries of the Poland-Russia Programme to compensate for the lost partnership.

In the case of the Delphi method, experts emphasised that they moderately agree with the thesis that the inability to cooperate with entities from Russia will cause Polish entities to redirect their interest towards entities from other countries (average rating: 5.0 on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the lowest and 10 is the highest). It was emphasised that Lithuania is a natural partner if it is



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necessary to look for alternative partnerships. Geographical location is important here – proximity favours cooperation. Moreover, as experts pointed out, Lithuania and Poland may have similar development goals, social or economic challenges, which facilitates finding areas of common action and supporting each other in solving them. According to the study, earlier implementation of joint Polish-Lithuanian projects is also important.

If there are previous projects or cooperation with Lithuania, Polish entities may already have some experience in working with Lithuanian partners, which makes it easier to continue or expand the relationship.

Source: Delphi method.

On the other hand, it was pointed out that cooperation would be possible, but the already developed potential in the form of Europeanisation of Russian entities and teaching them democratic and equality standards, as well as in the form of established relationships, would be lost. It was also pointed out that in the 2014-2020 financial perspective there were programmes implemented in the Polish part of the support area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020. Willing entities had the opportunity to choose a partnership in the past that included partners from other countries. The choice of entities from Russia could therefore be dictated by specific needs and challenges. The loss of partners will therefore be difficult to compensate.

It is difficult to expect cooperation to be fully redirected to other entities. (...) other results will be achieved, including the loss of the unmeasurable result of Europeanisation of entities from Russia.

Source: Delphi method.

The findings resulting from the Delphi method were also confirmed during in-depth interviews with representatives of institutions implementing the support. It was pointed out that the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, which has the longest land border with the Russian Federation, is particularly affected by its border location. This border, especially considering the suspension of all cooperation with Russia, serves as a barrier. For this reason, in the opinion of representatives of the institutions implementing the Programme, it would be necessary to create support dedicated to the border area. Even in the absence of direct cooperation with partners from the Russian Federation, such a programme could facilitate coping with cross-border challenges and development barriers resulting from the border location of the voivodeship.

(...) it will be difficult to fill the hole left by the Poland-Russia programme. Because this programme was very well suited to the Warmian-Masurian region, which has the longest border with the Russian Federation and which strongly feels that it borders with Russia. This border is a wall, in fact, and it does not create many development opportunities, only these barriers. So, in fact, in my opinion, it would be best if there was a programme focused only on this area. Some kind of programme that would support this cross-border area with Russia, after all. Without cooperation with partners from Russia.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

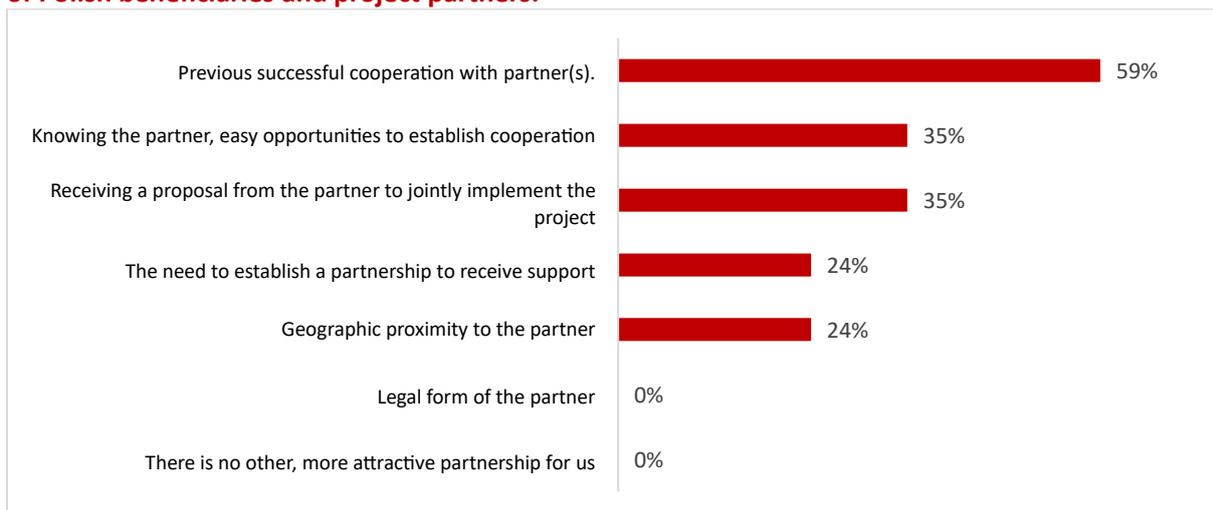


2.7. DURABILITY OF ESTABLISHED PARTNERSHIPS

Research question: What is the durability of project partnerships under the Cooperation Programme? Do the partners plan to continue cooperation? Do they plan to apply for EU funds together again? In what thematic areas (in relation to specific objectives for 2021-2027)? Do they plan to cooperate without EU support? Do they plan any changes in partnerships?

The analysis of partnerships that were created in the 2014-2020 perspective shows that they were, **to a large extent, a continuation of cooperation between entities that was established as part of the previous implementation of joint ventures.** It should be noted that the Poland Russia 2014-2020 Programme was a continuation of the previous cooperation schemes developed under the Lithuania-Poland-Kaliningrad Province 2004-2006 and Lithuania-Poland-Russia 2007-2013 Programmes. Contacts established between institutions in previous years during projects or other joint initiatives resulted in the desire to implement further projects. The survey conducted among Polish beneficiaries and project partners of the Programme shows that over 59% of respondents continued cooperation within the framework of a previously established partnership. When asked what determined the implementation of the project in a given partnership, the answer with the highest rating from respondents was successful previous cooperation with partners. The factors that also significantly determined the established partnership were **prior knowledge of the partner, which was associated with the easy possibility of establishing cooperation, receiving a cooperation proposal, and then the geographical proximity of the partner and the willingness to implement the project.** According to respondents, the partnerships concluded were not influenced by the partner's legal form or the lack of prospects for establishing another, more attractive partnership.

Chart 25. Factors determining the composition of the project partnership according to the opinions of Polish beneficiaries and project partners.



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

The analysis of the durability of established partnerships was also the subject of the Delphi study. Experts assessed that the type of entity, i.e. the search for an entity with a similar business profile, has the greatest impact on concluding cross-border partnerships, followed by factors such as the distance from the border, knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country, the size of the



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project planned by the partners, and the lack of historical events. The durability of cooperation is determined primarily by previous experience of cooperation between partners from both sides of the border. If it is positive, it builds mutual trust and favours the continuation of activities in the form of cross-border cooperation.

There are several reasons why previous experience of cooperation between partners from both sides of the border may have a very positive impact on the continuation of cross-border cooperation activities. Firstly, trust. (Partners who have already had the opportunity to cooperate usually have a better understanding of each other's strengths, potential difficulties and how to act effectively, and this builds trust and facilitates communication.) Secondly, the experience gained during previous projects. (Previous cross-border initiatives provide valuable lessons on what worked well and what could be improved, and partners themselves who have experienced such projects can use these experiences to better plan and implement new activities). Thirdly, creating a network of contacts and relationships. (Cooperation in previous projects often leads to building a network of contacts and relationships with other organisations, institutions and people from different sides of the border, which are a very valuable resource for further development of cooperation). Fourthly, support for local communities (If cooperation continues, partners have the opportunity to continue joint activities, which may be positively received by local communities and lead to greater involvement of residents and local institutions in subsequent projects). Fifthly, the creation of long-term effects (Cooperation based on previous experience may have more lasting and long-term effects). Therefore, continued cooperation builds on the foundations of previous experience, which can be a key success factor for new cross-border initiatives.

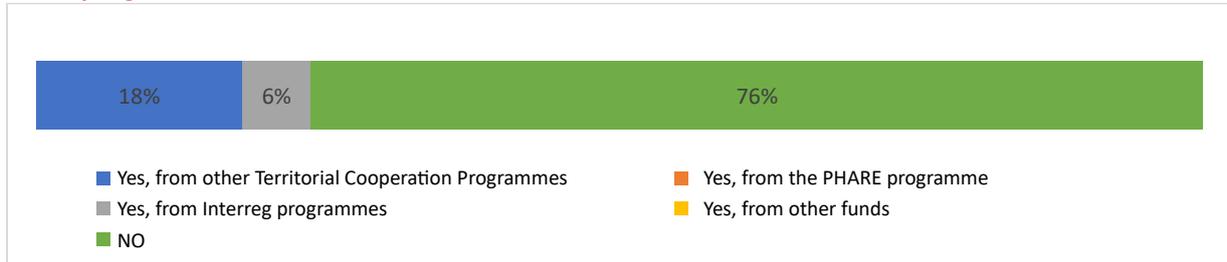
Source: Delphi study.

As part of the survey, Polish beneficiaries and project partners were asked whether, before the project implementation, they had already applied for financial support from other programmes with the same project partners. 76% of respondents answered negatively, 18% answered that they had applied under other Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes, and 6% applied together with a partner for support from INTERREG programmes. Four partners applying within the same partnership successfully received support from other programmes to implement their projects.



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Chart 26. Answers of surveyed beneficiaries and project partners to the question 'Before implementing the project, did you apply with the same project partners for financial support from other programmes?'



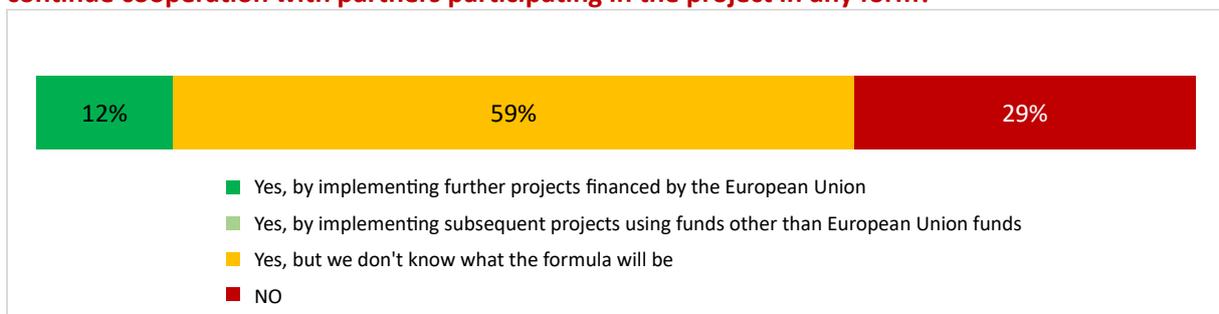
Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

The respondents were also asked whether they planned to continue cooperation with Polish or Russian partners participating in the joint implementation of the project in the 2014-2020 perspective. Over 70% of Polish beneficiaries and partners replied that they planned to implement projects in the same partnership, however, 59% of respondents do not yet know what the formula of the concluded partnerships will be. 29% of respondents indicated that they would not continue cooperation with their current partners. When asked why they intend to resign from partnership with existing partners, the answers concerned the fact that cooperation with Russian partners is not and will not be possible for a long time due to the geopolitical situation, suspension of cross-border cooperation with Russia, and breaking off contact with the partner. One of the respondents also indicated that cooperation with some partners from Russia was burdensome. It can therefore be assumed that since cross-border cooperation with Russia will not be the subject of any cross-border cooperation programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective, this will significantly weaken the relations that had been developed between the partners before the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine.

We had plans even earlier to implement another project in the future, i.e. now in the current financial perspective. However, life has changed, so now there will be no such cooperation.

Source: Individual in-depth interview with the project partner.

Chart 27. Answers of Polish beneficiaries and project partners to the question 'Do you plan to continue cooperation with partners participating in the project in any form?'



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

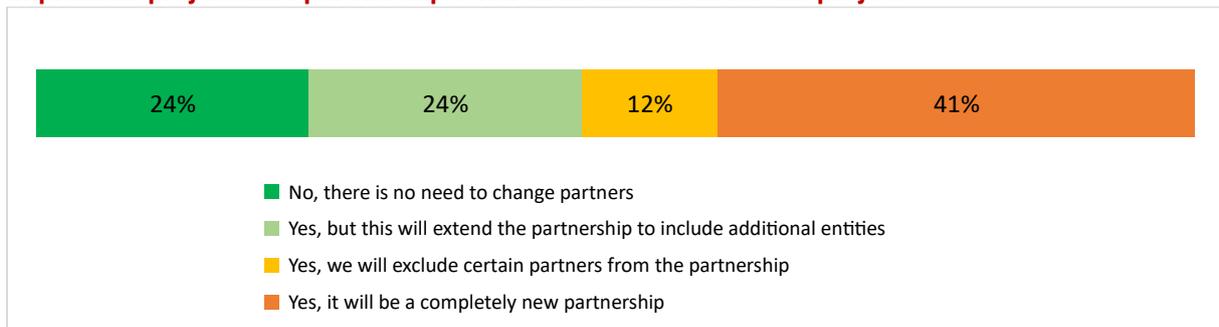
When asked about plans to implement new projects in a partnership other than the one established as part of the ongoing project, 41% of respondents said that they would create a completely new partnership, 24% did not see the need to change the partnership, and 24% planned to expand the



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partnership with new entities. Moreover, 52.94% of respondents answered that **they intended to apply for support from cross-border cooperation programmes in the financial perspective 2021-2027, mainly under the INTERREG Lithuania-Poland 2021-2027, INTERREG South Baltic Sea 2021-2027 and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027 Programmes.**

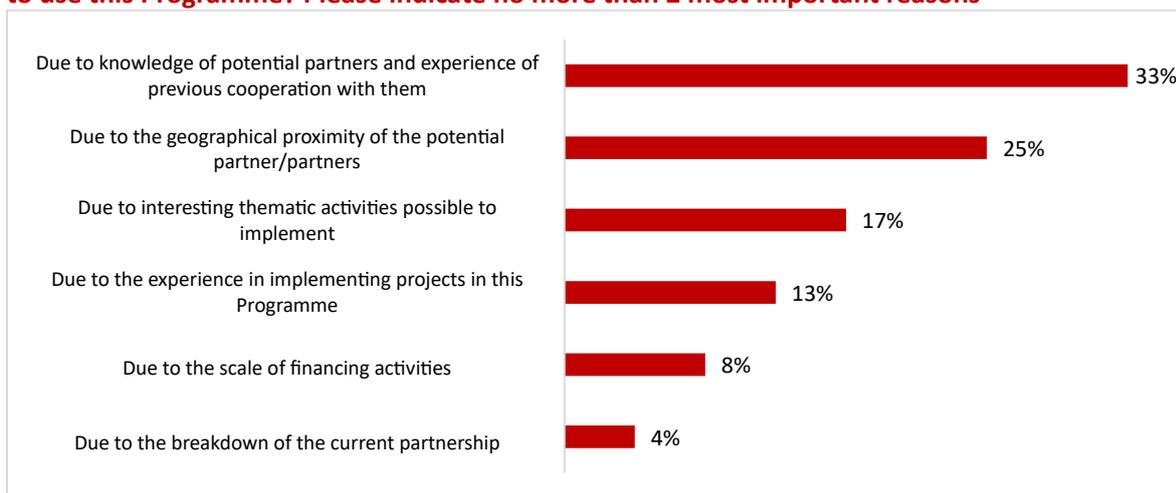
Chart 28. Answers of Polish beneficiaries and project partners to the question ‘Do you plan to implement projects in a partnership other than the one under the project?’



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

According to the surveyed beneficiaries, the most important factor that determines whether to apply under a given programme is knowledge of potential partners and experience of previous cooperation with them. Next, the geographical proximity of the potential partner(s) and the presence of thematic activities that can be implemented corresponding to current needs and interests are important. The experience gained in implementing projects in a given programme is also important, which significantly facilitates the implementation of projects from application through implementation

Chart 29. Answers of Polish beneficiaries and project partners to the question: ‘Why would you like to use this Programme? Please indicate no more than 2 most important reasons’



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

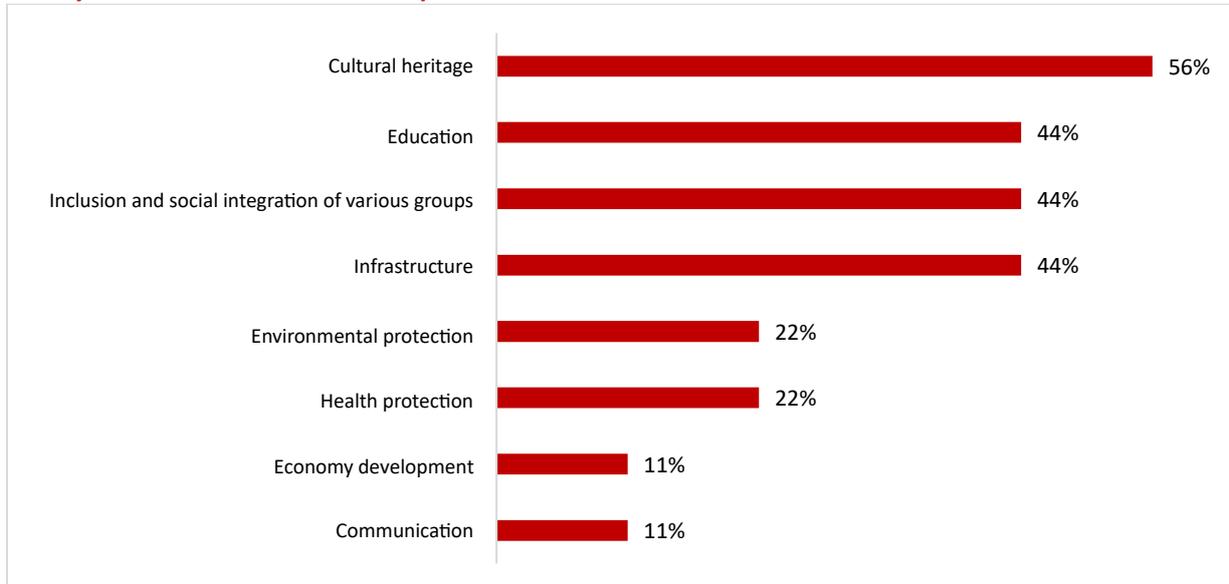
The evaluation also examined the thematic areas in which projects with foreign partners will be undertaken. Among the topics declared by Polish partners, cultural heritage came first, followed by education, social inclusion of various groups and infrastructure. Respondents were also asked whether they planned to cooperate with partners from other countries under other cooperation programmes. 47% of respondents declared that they did not plan to do so, 29% were considering it,



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and 24% of partners had already started such cooperation. The countries with which cooperation will be established include: Lithuania and Germany, but individual respondents also indicated other countries, i.e. Ukraine, Croatia, Serbia, France, Portugal, Romania and Hungary.

Chart 30. Thematic areas in which the implementation of projects with foreign partners by the surveyed Polish beneficiaries and partners will be undertaken



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Chapter Summary:

The implementation of projects in the Polish-Russian partnership in 2014-2020, before the suspension of cooperation, was effective, allowing for the implementation of the assumptions and the formation of lasting relations, which were a continuation of the cooperation established under the Lithuania-Poland-Kaliningrad Province 2004-2006 and Lithuania-Poland-Russia 2007-2013. Nevertheless, taking into account the current political context and the situation on Poland's eastern border, it is difficult to expect that the positive experiences from previous years could result in new projects in the near future and the willingness to undertake any joint initiatives of Polish and Russian partners.

2.8. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT EFFECTS

Research question: What is the durability of the effects of implemented projects and partnerships established within them? Are the effects of the projects still felt after their implementation? Is it possible to maintain the effects of individual projects without further EU funding?

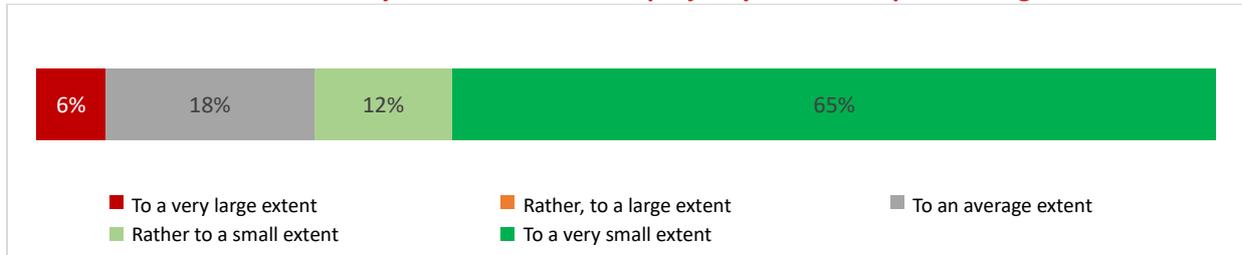
The vast majority of participants in the quantitative survey – project beneficiaries – stated that the effects of their project would last for a long time after its completion (over 88% of responses), and 12% of people said that the effects would last for some time, but will disappear without further implementation of ventures. It is worth noting that none of the beneficiaries clearly indicated that the project effects would not be maintained (response ‘The effects have stopped/will cease with the end of the project’). The respondents' answers allow us to conclude that the durability of the projects



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will be maintained, but some of them (12%) believe that the effects will disappear after some time without further support. Further in the quantitative study, the beneficiaries were asked about the impact of the suspension of cooperation with Russia on the durability of the projects.

Chart 31. Respondents' answers to the question: To what extent did the suspension of cooperation with Russia affect the durability of the effects of the project you were implementing?



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

As can be seen in the chart above, the suspension of cooperation with Russia did not have a significant impact on the durability of the projects in most projects. This may be partly due to the fact that some projects were ending or had been completed before the suspension of cooperation. Some projects were terminated after the cooperation was suspended and in such a situation they were implemented only by the Polish partner. Completion of the project only by the Polish side meant that the durability of the project was binding only on the Polish side. More than 75% of the beneficiaries participating in the quantitative survey stated that they managed to complete the project according to its assumptions despite the suspension of cooperation with the Russian side.

The Commission only issued a war regulation in which it exempted us by regulation, that is, it helped us a little, exempted us from it, in order to maintain this durability on the side of the Russian or Belarusian partner.

Source: Individual in-depth interview

Some of the projects included investment activities whose sustainability does not depend on further contact with a partner from outside the country.

The main result of the project is the constructed infrastructure component. The suspension of cooperation with the Partner had a negligible impact on the implementation of construction works.

Source: Quantitative survey participants' responses to open questions.

The durability of the project is based on the infrastructure that will be created, which will serve residents and tourists regardless of cooperation with Russia.

Source: Quantitative survey participants' responses to open questions.

The durability of the project's effects on the Polish side is unrelated to the suspension of cooperation.

Source: Quantitative survey participants' responses to open questions.

Experts who took part in the Delphi study were not convinced that the suspension of cooperation with Russia resulted in the loss of the results achieved at the level of local communities. There were voices indicating that the 'soft' effects achieved thanks to cooperation were preserved, because



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political activities (which resulted in the suspension of cooperation with Russian partners) should be distinguished from cooperation between people living on both sides of the border – good memories and bonds resulting from getting to know each other remain from this cooperation... Experts participating in the Delphi study pointed out that the effects depend on the type of activities implemented, but also on the communities themselves, which can often remain in good relations despite the unfavourable geopolitical situation.

Certainly, the greatest chance of preserving and sustaining the effects is provided by infrastructure projects that, even if their use is temporarily limited, retain their functionality. Cultural effects are more difficult to assess, where stopping cooperation with foreign partners may mean their expiration and, consequently, loss of effects.

Source: Delphi study.

(...) what is important are these relationships at the local level and how they can survive difficult circumstances. Cooperation between people and at the level of local and regional communities often has solid foundations that do not necessarily have to be solely dependent on international relations. People who work together on projects or initiatives often build lasting bonds and relationships based on shared goals and values. The fact that the effects achieved through cooperation at the local community level have been preserved may confirm the strength of these ties.

Source: Delphi study.

Chapter Summary:

According to the participants of the quantitative study, the durability of the effects of implemented projects should be maintained. The suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation took place at a time when a large number of projects were nearing completion, and some of them were completed independently by the Polish side thanks to the changes introduced. In the projects completed only by Polish partners, there was no requirement to maintain durability with the foreign partner, hence maintaining durability on the Polish side is not a major problem for the beneficiaries. It is worth mentioning that maintaining durability may also depend on the type of project being implemented – in infrastructure projects, according to the experts of the Delphi study, it is easier to maintain durability, and they do not require further cooperation and contact, as is the case with projects related to, among others, cultural activities.



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2.9. COMPLEMENTARITY OF PROJECTS

Research question: To what extent were the projects complementary with other projects implemented under operational programmes implemented under the cohesion policy in Poland, and what were the relationships between various cooperation programmes?

The analysis of the Programme document¹² showed that the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, in terms of connections with other cohesion policy programmes in Poland, assumed complementarity with:

- Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020;
- INTERREG Lithuania-Poland Programme;
- INTERREG Poland-Slovakia Programme;
- INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme;
- INTERREG Central Europe Programme;
- INTERREG South Baltic Programme;
- Operational Programmes implemented in Poland, in particular the Eastern Poland Operational Programme and Regional Operational Programmes.

The competition documentation does not include competition criteria that would oblige applicants to demonstrate complementarity with other programmes¹³. The application form included a section titled 'Linking the project with other initiatives,' in which applicants were obliged to describe the correlation with other projects. However, the evaluation criteria only include a provision to determine whether a given project overlaps with other projects, i.e. it is not double-financed. Applicants did not receive additional points for the complementarity of the projects with other projects. Based on the analysis of existing data, no other mechanisms have been identified that would ensure the connection of projects implemented under the Programme with other projects under the cohesion policy in Poland.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of additional motivation in the form of points rewarding complementarity, the beneficiaries implemented projects that complemented each other. This is confirmed by the results of in-depth interviews with representatives of institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme. Representatives of the JTS and the JMC recognise the complementarity of projects in their regions. The interviews highlighted primarily complementary bicycle paths and infrastructure renovations. These examples are reflected in the analysis of existing data performed for the purposes of this study.

As part of the analysis of existing data, it was checked which beneficiaries (both leaders and partners) of projects on the Polish side used other cohesion policy programmes, including cross-border cooperation programmes¹⁴. All programmes listed at the beginning of this chapter, and therefore

¹²Poland-Russia CBC Programme 2014-2020, 06.11.2020.

¹³ Based on competition documentation: evaluation criteria, application templates, manual for applicants.

¹⁴ Based on the list of projects implemented with the EF available on the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy website and data provided by the Ordering Party, as well as data from programme websites: INTERREG Central Europe and INTERREG Baltic Sea.



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corresponding to the assumptions of the programme documents, were included in the analysis. Moreover, it was decided to include the Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme in the analysis, due to similar goals as the evaluated intervention. The next step was to assess whether and to what extent projects implemented by the same beneficiary under more than one programme are related to each other. For this purpose, short descriptions of the projects were analysed and, if the descriptions did not allow for the assessment of the relationship, also the websites of the projects and/or beneficiaries and other Internet sources. The deadline for implementing two or more potentially complementary projects and the area of their implementation were also taken into account. During the analysis, two basic configurations were distinguished, in which projects of the same beneficiary were related to each other:

- I. **Complementarity of project objectives**, i.e. the projects were aimed at the same goal, e.g. environmental protection, preservation of cultural heritage, increase in tourism potential, etc.
- II. **Complementarity of project activities**, i.e. the activities complemented each other, e.g. activities within one project took place on infrastructure renovated with other EU funds, training and preventive activities were complemented by the purchase of additional equipment, projects were aimed at modernising the same space, etc.

It is worth noting that the above categories were not always separable; this means that some projects were aimed at the same goal and their activities complemented each other.

Out of 40 unique beneficiaries implementing projects under the Programme, 24 were (in the 2014-2020 financial perspective) beneficiaries of at least one other programme from the following list: Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment, Operational Programme Eastern Poland, Regional Operational Programme for the Pomeranian Voivodeship, Regional Operational Programme for the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, INTERREG South Baltic, INTERREG Poland-Lithuania, INTERREG Central Europe. Only the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region programme did not involve any beneficiary benefiting from support under the Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020. Nevertheless, 42% of beneficiaries implementing projects under the above-mentioned programmes and Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020 implemented projects complementary to the Programme projects. Almost all beneficiaries of complementary projects (9 out of 10) implemented projects from other funds that had the same goal as the projects of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. In turn, in 5 out of 10 cases, these projects were related to the Programme's initiatives through activities. Three beneficiaries of complementary projects are implementers of undertakings related to the Programme projects, both in terms of objectives and activities.

The convergent goals of complementary projects are: protection and promotion of cultural heritage, development of tourism and environmental protection. Examples of complementarity of project activities include:

- **complementary activities aimed at developing bicycle infrastructure**, e.g. the Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organisation, as part of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, implemented the *Tourism beyond the boundaries – tourism routes of the cross-border regions of Russia and North-East Poland* project. In turn, using the funds of the INTERREG South Baltic Programme, the same entity implemented the Baltic Sea Cycle



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Route project – *Development of Baltic Sea Cycle Route (EuroVelo 10) by supporting Small&Medium-Sized Enterprises providing services in the area of cycle tourism, Biking South Baltic! Promotion and development of the Baltic Sea Cycle Route (Route No. 10) in Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.* The activities of Szczytno district complemented each other in a similar way, but in this case a different cohesion policy programme was used. As part of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, the beneficiary implemented *the Development of cross-border tourism in Szczytno District and Svetlogorsk City District* project, under which over 22 km of bicycle path was built. In turn, the ROP funds were used to implement the project *Construction of a bicycle path on the area of the closed Szczytno – Biskupiec railway line in the Szczytno Municipality and the Szczytno Municipality*

- **modernisation of various elements of the same infrastructure**, e.g. the ‘Światowid’ European Meetings Centre in Elbląg implemented three projects co-financed from RPO funds, consisting in the expansion and conversion of the Centre and the modernisation of the facility¹⁵. As part of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, the entity implemented a project under which a multimedia centre was created as part of the ‘Światowid’ European Meetings Centre¹⁶. In turn, the Młynary municipality implemented two projects involving the modernisation of water purification infrastructure¹⁷. The Elk Cultural Centre used the funds of the Regional Operational Programme to implement the project: *Expansion of the building and development of the area of the Elk Cultural Centre*. As part of the project, a chamber hall was built and a music park was created at the Elk Cultural Centre. In turn, from the funds of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 the so-called Artistic Basement was created where educational workshops were held as part of the project¹⁸.

Projects implemented under the Poland-Russia Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 were most often complementary to projects implemented from ROP funds. This is probably due to the relatively wide scale of use of these funds by entities that also benefit from the Cooperation Programme funds. Almost all beneficiaries (except one) of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 who implemented projects using other funds used the ROP. It is worth noting that ROPs enable a slightly broader scope of activities than other programmes, e.g. those aimed only at the ERDF, such as Operational Programme Eastern Poland, or those with specific objectives, such as Infrastructure and Environment Programme. In turn, cooperation programmes require the implementation of the project in partnership. Moreover, the territorial scope of support for

¹⁵ Expansion, conversion and renovation of the ŚWIATOWID European Meetings Centre in Elbląg, ‘Creation and extension of the CSE Światowid offer corresponding to the challenges of the 21st century,’ ‘Creation and extension of the CSE Światowid offer corresponding to the challenges of the 21st century – stage II.’

¹⁶ Museums over the borders. Stage II.

¹⁷ The RPO funds included the implementation of the project ‘Construction of raw and treated sewage retention tanks along with the modernisation of TBR-TOG reactors and accompanying infrastructure,’ while the project ‘Modernisation of water management in Gurievsk and Młynary’ was implemented under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme.

¹⁸ Together – cultural cooperation in the Polish-Russian borderland.

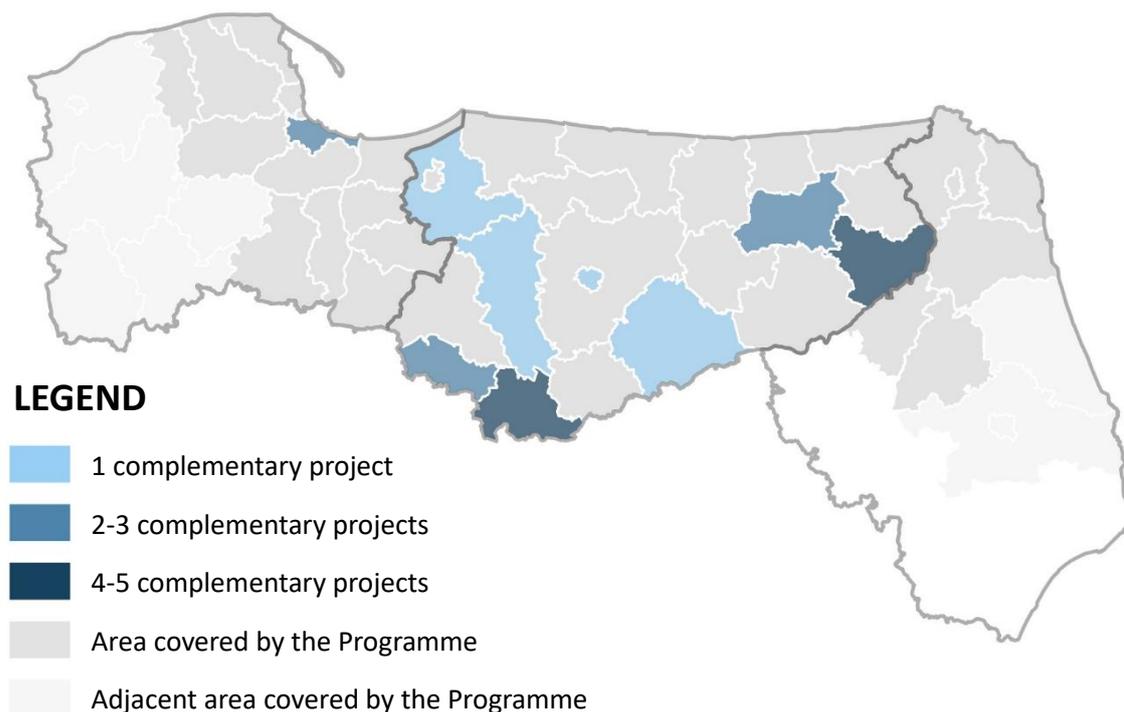


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cooperation programmes other than the evaluated intervention (e.g. Lithuania-Poland, Poland-Belarus-Ukraine) included only some of the entities implementing projects under the Poland-Russia Programme. RPO funds were available to each entity implementing the project under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Therefore, the degree and scale of complementarity between projects and cooperation programmes is naturally lower.

Only 8 beneficiaries of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 implemented projects under other cooperation programmes, i.e. Poland-Belarus-Ukraine CBCP and INTERREG Lithuania-Poland and INTERREG South Baltic. However, only one project implemented under other cooperation programmes was related to the evaluated intervention. It can therefore be said that there were practically no relations between cooperation programmes, i.e. the projects were not related to each other. In turn, only one beneficiary of the evaluated intervention benefited from the OP EP, but its projects were not complementary. Three beneficiaries from the studied group used OPI&E, but in this case there was no connection. The geographical distribution of the beneficiaries of complementary projects is presented in the map below.

Map 8. Projects complementary to projects implemented in the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 by district



Source: own study based on the list of projects implemented from European Funds in the 2014-2020 financial perspective.

No significant regularities were noticed in terms of the type of entities that implemented complementary projects or their geographical location. Complementary projects were mostly implemented by local government units, which also dominate the structure of the Programme beneficiaries.



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Importantly, another type of complementarity was also observed: intertemporal complementarity. Projects implemented under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 were a continuation of projects implemented from other or the same funds (both in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 financial perspectives). This type of complementarity is difficult to capture in the analysis of existing data, but information on this subject was provided by the beneficiaries themselves. 24% of project implementers on the Polish side declared in the CAWI survey that the project from the 2014-2020 perspective is a continuation of previous projects¹⁹. Previous projects were implemented primarily from the funds of cooperation programmes from 2007-2013.

To sum up, although the scale of connections between the projects of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 and projects co-financed by other cohesion policy programmes was small, these connections can be considered strong.

¹⁹ n=17.



III. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

3.1. THE METHOD AND DEGREE OF INCLUSION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Research question: How and to what extent horizontal policies are taken into account in the implementation of the Programme and how is this reflected in the implemented projects: the principle of promoting equality between men and women; the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities; principle of sustainable development? What actions were taken in the projects in response to the requirements set by the horizontal principles?

In accordance with the guidelines of the Minister of Investment and Development,²⁰ the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 is consistent with EU policies, implementing the principle of promoting equality between men and women, the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities, and the principle of sustainable development. The need to respect and implement horizontal principles within the Programme was presented in part II of the Beneficiary's Manual. When applying for funding, the beneficiaries were obliged to present the impact of the project on individual horizontal policies. Only projects having a positive or neutral impact on aspects related to the implementation of the above-mentioned rules could receive funding from the Programme funds.

The funding application included cross-cutting issues: sustainable development of the natural environment, human rights, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, democracy, equal treatment of people with disabilities. The beneficiaries' task was to present in a descriptive way the extent to which the implementation of the project would affect specific issues. According to the opinions of institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme, the beneficiaries had no problems with applying appropriate solutions that respected horizontal principles. Before the start of the call for projects, the Joint Technical Secretariat conducted training to help beneficiaries understand the possibility of respecting the rules in individual projects.

In my opinion, this was not a problem, because even before the call for projects was announced, even for large infrastructure projects, we were preparing special training on these horizontal principles, how to take into account the needs of people with disabilities in these projects, for example, in architectural designs, in these investment and infrastructure tasks. So it seems that, in general, the beneficiaries had no problem with ensuring that all the tasks carried out in the projects took into account... the needs of people with disabilities, or issues related to environmental protection or gender equality. So we didn't encounter any major problems in this regard.

²⁰ Guidelines for the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equal opportunities for women and men under EU funds for 2014-2020 of 11 April 2018. MR/2014-2020/16(02).

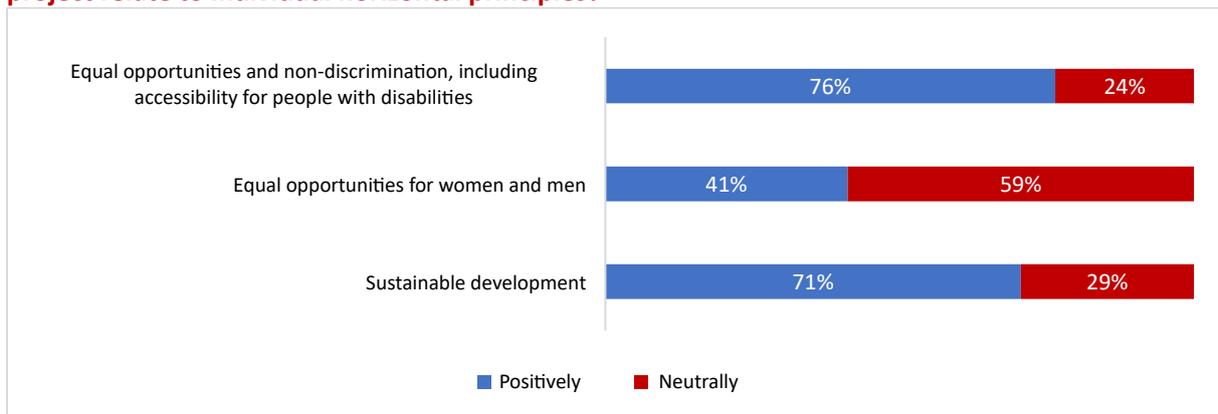


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Source: individual in-depth interview.

The impact of projects on the fulfilment of horizontal principles was examined on the basis of a CAWI survey conducted among Polish beneficiaries and project partners. The study shows that the projects mostly had a positive impact on fulfilling the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and sustainable development. In the case of the principle of equal opportunities between women and men, the impact of the projects was mainly neutral.

Chart 32. Answers of surveyed beneficiaries and project partners to the question 'How did your project relate to individual horizontal principles?'



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Sustainable development

According to the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled 'Our common future,' sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Analysing the activities undertaken by project partners to implement the principle of sustainable development, it should be noted that 29% of surveyed partners indicated that the project promoted electronic correspondence instead of printed correspondence to reduce paper consumption, while 24% indicated that energy-saving solutions were promoted in place of project implementation. The answers also included ecological education of project participants (6%), the use of the so-called 'environmental clauses'²¹ in public procurement (6%) and promoting collective transport instead of individual transport (6%). Additionally, the beneficiaries indicated that the project involved the development of cycling tourism and therefore contributed to the protection of the natural environment, while another respondent indicated that excavations were carried out as part of the project in a way that took into account limiting permanent interference with the environment. It is also worth emphasising that all projects implemented by the beneficiaries under TO Environment concerned aspects of environmental protection, therefore the project assumptions themselves were

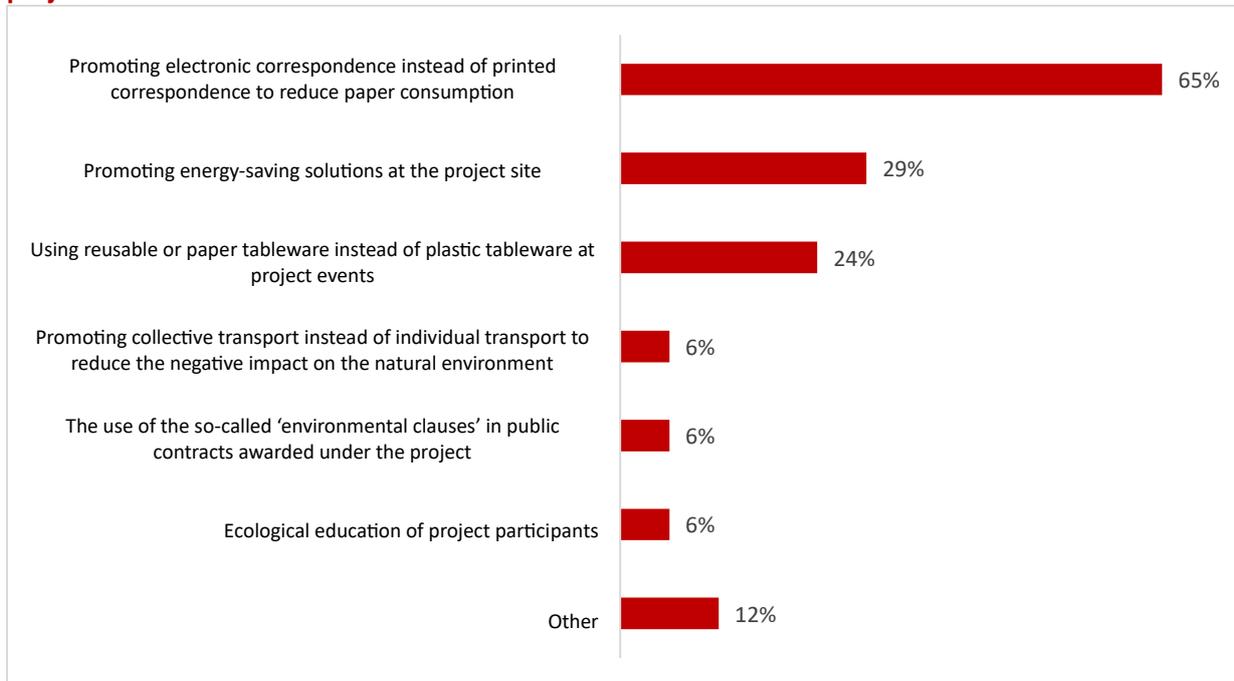
²¹ Environmental clauses are appropriate provisions in the description of the subject of a public procurement, conditioning the provision of appropriate pro-environmental solutions aimed at limiting the negative impact on the environment.



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in line with the principle of sustainable development due to the reduction of pressure on the natural environment.

Chart 33. Activities undertaken by Polish beneficiaries and partners in sustainable development projects



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Generally, the survey shows that the beneficiaries had no difficulties in implementing the horizontal principle in the projects. One of the respondents emphasised that they encountered the greatest difficulty in applying the principle of sustainable development in the social sphere, pointing out that the residents' awareness of the concept of sustainable development and the need to protect the natural environment is quite low. It should be emphasised that before the implementation of the Programme, the JTS organised training sessions dedicated to the implementation of horizontal principles, which made it much easier for the beneficiaries to understand and implement appropriate solutions in the projects. The opinions of institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme show that there were no reports from beneficiaries with greater difficulties in implementing horizontal principles.

Examples of the positive impact of projects on the principle of sustainable development are also described in case studies of selected projects. The solutions used by the beneficiaries included: construction of a sewage network in cultural heritage sites, construction of a sewage network discharging traffic sewage and the use of modern certified equipment that meets environmental standards.

Equal opportunities for women and men

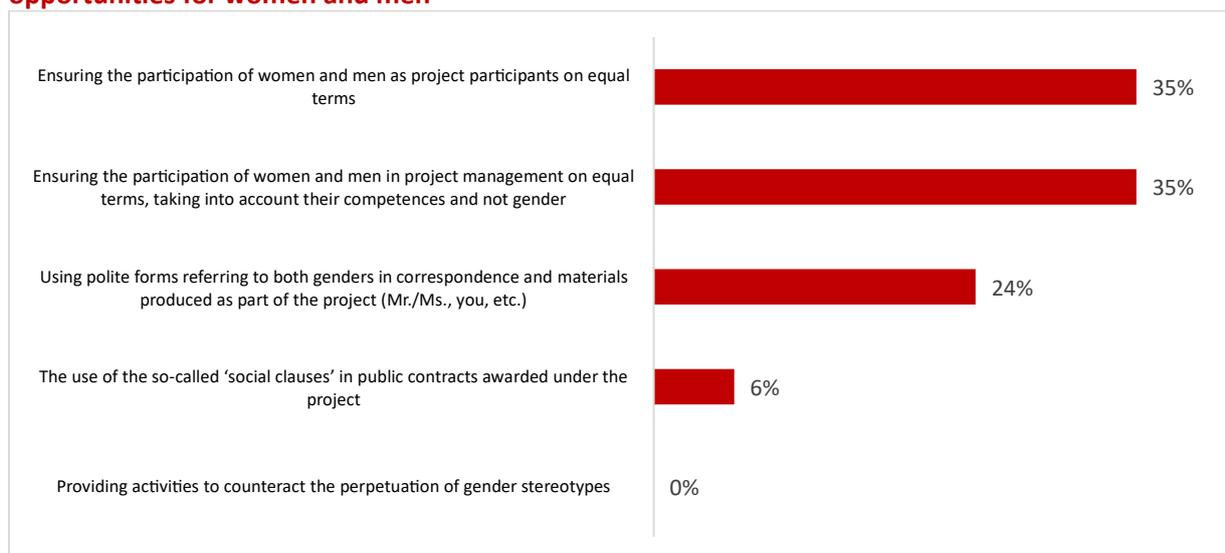
The principle of equal opportunities for women and men, which means taking actions to achieve a state in which women and men, regardless of their gender, are assigned the same social value, equal



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rights and obligations,²² was indicated by the respondents as the principle on which the majority of projects had a neutral effect. The solutions that have a positive impact on the implementation of the above-mentioned assumptions: policies that were most frequently used in projects include ensuring the participation of women and men in project management on equal terms, taking into account their competences, not gender (35% of responses) and ensuring the participation of women and men as project participants on equal terms (35% responses). At the same time, 24% of the beneficiaries indicated that polite forms referring to both genders were used in correspondence and materials produced as part of the project (Mr./Ms., participant, etc.). One of the respondents indicated that they used the so-called 'social clauses' in public contracts awarded under the project²³. Generally, the beneficiaries' responses show that they did not notice any difficulties related to the implementation of solutions regarding the principle of equal opportunities for women and men. During an interview with one of the representatives of the institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme, information emerged that the beneficiaries sometimes asked how to take into account the issue of equal treatment of all. Examples of the application of horizontal policy are presented in greater detail in case studies.

Chart 34. Activities undertaken by Polish beneficiaries and partners in projects regarding equal opportunities for women and men



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

Generally, the analysis of applications for funding shows that most beneficiaries expected a neutral impact of the project on the implementation of equality between women and men, but despite this, solutions proving a positive impact were sometimes cited in the justifications. There were also cases

²² Guidelines for the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equal opportunities for women and men under EU funds for the years 2014-2020, Warsaw, 5 April 2018.

²³ In public proceedings, the Ordering Party may specify additional social requirements, the so-called 'social clauses,' including by obliging contractors to employ people from specific groups to carry out the contract or by specifying the form of employment of people performing the indicated activities as part of the contract.



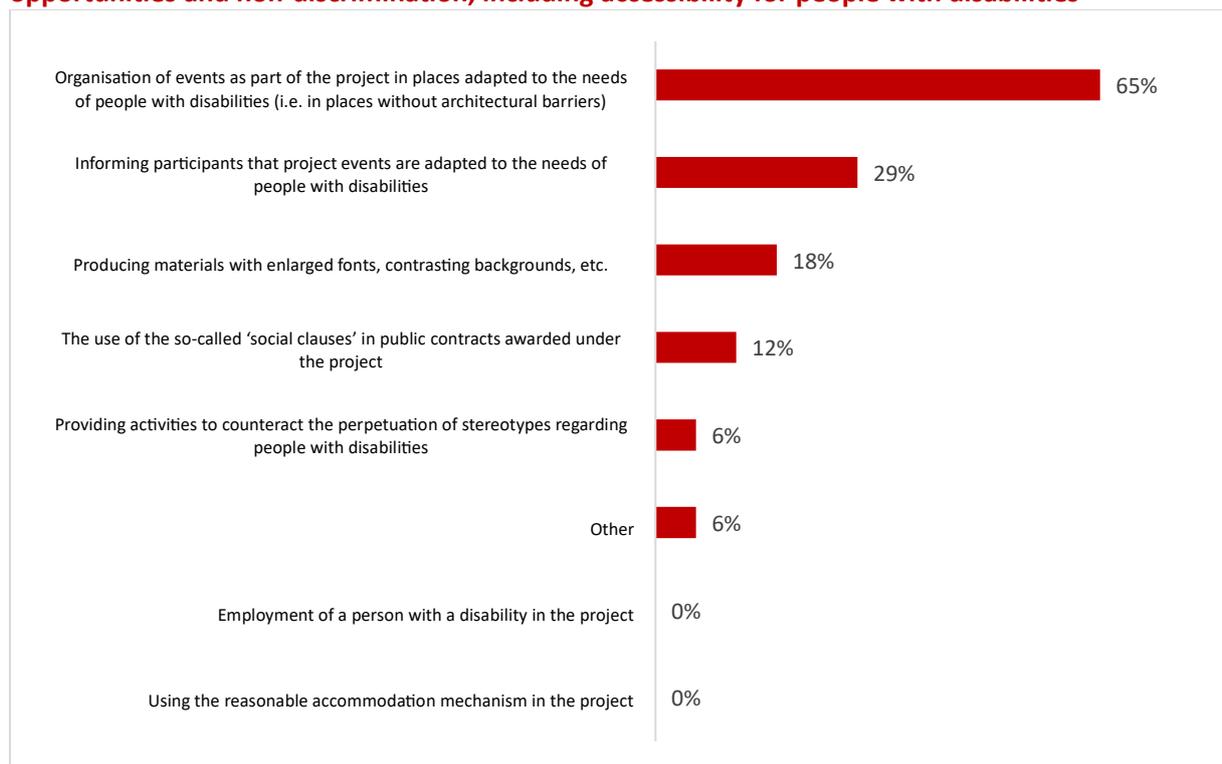
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in which beneficiaries indicated a positive impact, but the justification may be considered an over-interpretation, not necessarily in line with the principle. An example may be a project regarding the construction of a sanitary sewage system, the justification includes a statement that the project implements the above-mentioned principle allowing equal access to purified water for both men and women, which does not necessarily implement the idea of the principle.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities

The principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities, meaning enabling all people without discrimination on the basis of gender, race or origin, to participate fairly and fully in all areas of life on equal terms, was positively reflected in the projects. It was implemented in particular by organising events that took into account the needs of people with disabilities (68% of responses), by informing participants that the events in the project were adapted to the needs of people with disabilities (29% of responses), as well as by producing materials with appropriate accessibility containing enlarged font, contrasting background, etc., using the so-called 'social clauses' in public contracts awarded under the project.

Chart 35. Actions taken by Polish beneficiaries and partners in projects in the field of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

The principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities, is usually most applicable in cross-border cooperation projects (European cooperation), because much attention is paid to accessibility criteria both at the programme level, as well as in aspects related to the promotion of projects and their implementation. Infrastructure projects, in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines, must ensure the possibility of using the



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infrastructure by people with disabilities, therefore providing appropriate infrastructural and architectural solutions (especially on the Polish side of the support area) becomes a basic and superior requirement. The above thesis is confirmed by the opinions of the institutions implementing the Programme. Implementation of appropriate solutions dedicated to people with disabilities during the implementation of soft projects (trainings, conferences, etc.), also nowadays it is treated as a necessity.

I think there's a bigger focus on accessibility for people with different needs. But this resulted from the fact that the beneficiaries had specific construction works and this was directly related to these works, planning construction works and then buildings that were to serve either the education of children and young people, or even other aspects. (...) for example, in Malbork, we had a playground built under the grant and at the embankment of the Nogat River, there was revitalisation, construction works to strengthen the river, but also a new playground was built, so these aspects of accessibility and safety were very important, and the principles concerning such works are always included in the law in Poland.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

An important issue that concerns the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination is the problem of anti-LGBT resolutions adopted²⁴ by some entities. According to the position of the European Commission, entities that undertake discriminatory activities in any way cannot obtain financing from EU funds. In the 2021-2027 financial perspective, in accordance with the EC guidelines regarding the implementation of equality principles within EU funds, only entities that have not undertaken any discriminatory actions (e.g. anti-LGBT resolutions) will be able to apply for funding. In the financial perspective 2014-2020, the issues of anti-LGBT resolutions were publicised in Poland, however, no such problems were identified in the projects of the evaluated Programme.

Chapter Summary:

To sum up, it should be emphasised that the projects implemented under the Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020 respected and were in line with the assumptions of horizontal policies. The applied requirements regarding compliance with horizontal principles result in examples of practical solutions in projects. The principle that the projects had the greatest (positive) impact on was the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities, and then the principle of sustainable development.

²⁴ Resolutions against LGBT ideology in Poland were adopted by a total of 90 local governments (commune/municipality, district, voivodeship). They express disapproval of 'activities appearing in the public sphere aimed at promoting the ideology of LGBT movements.'



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3.2. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Research question: Did the designed Programme implementation system, including the procedures and solutions used, ensure the implementation of horizontal principles?

Respect and implementation of horizontal principles resulted directly from the provisions of the Programme and the Beneficiary's Manual (PROGRAMME MANUAL part II – Project Implementation). In these documents, these principles are described as cross-cutting issues. The application was also designed to describe 'cross-cutting issues,' such as: sustainable development (of the natural environment), human rights, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, democracy, equal treatment of people with disabilities²⁵. The beneficiaries were to indicate in the application whether the impact of the project on the implementation of each issue was negative, neutral or positive, and in the descriptive part provide a justification for the choice.

In order to ensure the correct implementation of horizontal principles, the Joint Technical Secretariat organised training before the first call for projects on the importance and possible ways of taking into account horizontal principles during project implementation. The benefits of these trainings were emphasised by the Programme stakeholders interviewed, including primarily the beneficiaries themselves. In their opinion:

(...) due to the fact that there was training in this area from the very beginning, it was not a problematic issue. It was explained, so there was no need to consult this topic so much later.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

Based on the analysis of programme documents, as well as taking into account the organised training, it can be concluded that **the designed Programme implementation system, including the procedures and solutions used, ensured the implementation of horizontal principles.**

The Mid-Term Evaluation of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020 conducted in 2020 confirmed that the majority of projects (69%) included the principles of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination. However, the authors of the evaluation pointed out the risk that this aspect 'has become only a slogan, without any deeper meaning.'²⁶

As for the principle of sustainable development, the vast majority of projects analysed during the 2020 evaluation (75% of projects) declared a positive impact on the principle of sustainable development. The remaining 25% of projects assumed a neutral attitude towards the indicated horizontal principle. Also here, as with the previous rule, the evaluator pointed out that in the vast

²⁵ It should be noted that currently there are three horizontal principles: the principle of promoting equality between men and women, the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities, and the principle of sustainable development.

²⁶ Mid-term evaluation of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, Gdańsk 2020.



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majority of cases, activities related to meeting the rule 'do not contain innovative solutions, but focus only on meeting the requirement'²⁷.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter – the CAWI survey among the Programme beneficiaries carried out on the occasion of this study showed that over 70% of them believe that their projects have a positive impact on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle sustainable development (76% and 71%, respectively), while the beneficiaries of other projects declared that the impact of their projects on the implementation of these principles is neutral. In the case of the principle of equal opportunities for women and men, the proportions were opposite – 41% of respondents declared a positive impact, and 59% a neutral one.

Experts participating in the Delphi study also stated that the implementation of the principle of sustainable development is important or very important in cross-border cooperation. The issues of non-discrimination and accessibility for people with disabilities were rated slightly lower as average or not very important. Issues related to equal opportunities for women and men were rated as least important.

It can therefore be concluded that the designed Programme implementation system made its beneficiaries attach importance to the implementation of horizontal principles. According to one of our interlocutors:

Beneficiaries are also socially sensitive and take into account the needs of certain groups. In some cases, the need to take into account the rules is imposed by legal regulations (e.g. construction law determines the width of passages, etc.).

Source: individual in-depth interview.

After analysing the fiches of infrastructure projects, it should be stated that the requirements of construction law and good construction practice were additional arguments for applying the horizontal principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as sustainable development. According to one of the interlocutors:

When it comes to the issue of disability, there is certainly a lot of progress compared to what it used to be.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

The previously carried out mid-term evaluation also indicated the opinion of the JMC members that the principle of equality between men and women and non-discrimination 'is generally well interpreted and respected by the Programme beneficiaries. The rule is accepted as natural, and a significant portion of the implemented investments has a neutral impact on it'²⁸. However, according to the representatives of the WKM, with whom in 2020 in-depth interviews were conducted, 'some beneficiaries do not clearly understand the essence of the principle of sustainable development, but

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Mid-term evaluation of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, Gdańsk 2020.



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due to the nature of the implemented projects, most of them actually have a positive impact on this principle²⁹.

The JMC representatives interviewed now claimed that the beneficiaries were aware and knew that the programme would require knowledge and respect of horizontal principles:

(...) to a greater extent than in historical times. These horizontal issues are receiving more and more attention in Interact programmes and are scored (...). It is no longer enough to tick the box, you need to treat it descriptively, and you often need to have some evidence for it.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

At the same time, there were cases in which the descriptions of the implementation of horizontal principles in the application forms were not fully correct, but were nevertheless approved by the monitoring committee. In such a situation, the people controlling the project had no opportunity to question its implementation due to failure to meet the horizontal principle. During the interview it was claimed:

(...) if someone described it incorrectly in the application, even if we see that perhaps someone did not meet this horizontal principle, we have no way of demonstrating it, because the monitoring committee approved the application for funding in this way.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

One of the reasons for this situation could be the lack of indicators regarding the implementation of horizontal principles among the required project indicators.

Some of the problems indicated in the chapter have already been eliminated while preparing documents regarding the implementation of aid programmes in the next programming period, i.e. 2027+. According to the information provided to us during interviews:

(...) now we have described each principle. There is no longer anything like it was in the 2014-2020 perspective, where beneficiaries wrote that the impact on some policy was neutral (...). Now (beneficiaries) will have to describe whether it is a negative or positive impact. If positive, what kind and indicate exactly how (their projects influence each of the principles). The indicators will now be separated in such a way to indicate what they do and how they do it. The principle of accessibility – a special manual is already prepared (indicating) how it is to be done.

Source: individual in-depth interview.

Chapter Summary:

Based on the analysis of programme documents, the mid-term evaluation, as well as the research – surveys and interviews – it can be concluded that the Programme implementation system was

²⁹ Ibidem.



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designed appropriately and ensured the implementation of horizontal principles. However, some shortcomings were found, mainly due to the problem of the approach to the description and subsequent implementation of horizontal principles.

As stated earlier, attempts to solve a number of problems regarding the application of horizontal principles have already been made in the programmes of the current financial perspective 2027+. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor the implementation of these solutions and make any corrections, if necessary.

3.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Research question: What solutions could be used in the context of implementing horizontal principles in the new programming period?

In the 2014-2020 perspective, the JTS conducted training activities among potential beneficiaries in the field of solutions related to the fulfilment of horizontal rules. As it was emphasised during interviews with the institutions responsible for the implementation of the Programme, the training meant that the beneficiaries did not have any major difficulties in implementing horizontal principles. Therefore, in the next edition of the programme (if implemented), it is recommended to continue training activities aimed at increasing the beneficiaries' knowledge of exemplary solutions guaranteeing respect for the principles of horizontal policies in projects.

Due to the fact that the Programme implements the assumptions of all horizontal policies, all projects should also demonstrate a positive impact. Therefore, it will be justified to develop the so-called manual of good practices, which will present interesting solutions regarding the implementation of horizontal policies, so that in the next editions of the programme all types of projects can not only neutrally, but positively fit into the assumptions of the above-mentioned policies.



IV. INFORMATION AND PROMOTION

4.1. ACHIEVING INFORMATION AND PROMOTION GOALS

Research question: Did the tools and activities included in the Programme Communication Strategy effectively and efficiently implement the information and promotional objectives of the Programme?

The basis for developing conclusions regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of information and promotion activities was the analysis of existing data and in-depth interviews with representatives of the institutions responsible for implementing the Programme. The starting point was the provisions of the Programme content (part 4.11 *Communication Strategy*), which contain descriptions of the main objectives of information and promotion activities, target groups, identification of the institutions responsible for conducting this type of activities, main assumptions of the communication strategy, logo, main communication channels and sources of financing. This part also contains a short description of information activities planned to be undertaken in the first year of Programme implementation, i.e. in 2017. It should be noted here that the assumptions for information and promotion activities carried out in subsequent years were specified in annual *Information and Communication Plans*, and the effects of these activities were described in the *Annual Reports*. These documents were also analysed to determine which of the assumptions formulated in the programme were actually implemented.

During the 2014-2020 perspective, no separate document was created entitled: *Programme Communication Strategy*, although the content of the programme itself included the following provision: *'The MA is responsible for creating and implementing the Programme Communication Strategy (approved by the JMC), strengthening public awareness and ensuring the widest possible participation and visibility of activities. The Programme Communication Strategy will be developed to define the goals and target groups, as well as to define a plan of specific actions (...).'* The lack of a Strategy was replaced by annual Action Plans, the scope and structure of which have changed over the years. In the first years of intervention implementation (2017 and 2018), these were quite general studies containing a list of planned information and promotion activities with an assigned place of implementation and an estimated date. From 2019, individual actions began to be assigned a more detailed goal (message) of the action and a target group, as well as a corresponding body and an estimated budget. In the following years, the Plans became more and more extensive, as descriptive parts were added and product and result indicators were assigned to activities. **Failure to develop a Communication Strategy is a certain deficit, which means that the provisions contained in the content of the Programme are not implemented.** Defining long-term goals, including planned activities in a longer time perspective, including linking activities with the advancement of the Programme implementation process and assigning even basic indicators allows for better management of the process of implementing information and promotion activities. **Nevertheless, it is estimated that the lack of the Strategy did not prevent or have a negative impact (although it potentially could) on the effectiveness and efficiency of this type of activities carried out in the 2014-2020 perspective.** Defining general goals and directions in the content of the Programme and then applying specific and detailed provisions in the Annual Plans allowed for adapting current



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activities to progress in implementing interventions, to current needs and, above all, to changes in the Programme related to external factors, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian aggression against Ukraine. It is estimated that the **Annual Plans enable monitoring of activities carried out only after indicators have been assigned to individual activities. Earlier versions of the Plans were too general.**

The provisions of the Programme say that *'the main goal of all communication activities is to provide potential applicants, beneficiaries, interested parties, as well as the general public with broad access to information about the Programme and its financing sources.'* To assess whether this goal was achieved, the list of planned and implemented information and promotional activities was analysed.

The first activities in this area were carried out in 2016, when a conference summarising the Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme 2007-2013 was organised and on this occasion information was provided about the possibilities of support under the future Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020. This was a well-assessed activity that made it possible to reach current beneficiaries with information about the possibilities of further support on the Polish-Russian border, as well as to present the actual results of implemented projects. Including threads related to the continuation of support opportunities under the new perspective into the agenda of this event should be assessed as increasing the effectiveness and usefulness of information and promotion activities.

The year 2017 was primarily focused on activities aimed at potential beneficiaries – training for beneficiaries of large infrastructure projects, the Partner Search Forum aimed at networking potential partnerships and discussing initial project concepts, Open Days, as well as the participation of representatives of programme institutions in external events during which the information about the Programme was presented. During this period, focusing on activities addressed to potential beneficiaries and providing the widest possible information about the possibilities of using support under the Programme is assessed positively. The aim of the institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme in the first years should be, first of all, to ensure that entities that can implement projects receive appropriate information on this subject.

In 2018, intensive work began with entities interested in submitting applications for funding. Therefore, 8 training sessions combined with practical workshops were conducted, during which future applicants were familiarised with the requirements for completing application forms. 6 meetings of this type were held in Poland and 2 in Russia. Additionally, two large events were organised – a bicycle rally as part of the European Cooperation Day (on both sides of the border) and the Annual Event of the Poland-Russia Programme 'Full speed ahead!' (in Mikołajki). In 2019, another bicycle rally was organised, an annual event was held in the Kenigsberg Province and an event was prepared related to the signing of a contract for the implementation of a large infrastructure project. At the same time, in 2018-2019, the participation of representatives of institutions related to the implementation of the Programme in external events continued, during which funding opportunities were presented. During this period, the target groups changed significantly – they were no longer mainly potential beneficiaries, but more and more activities were directed towards residents, as well as experts and representatives of other institutions participating in conferences, forums, congresses, etc. The communicated message also concerned to a greater extent the projects being implemented (or planned to be implemented) and progress in implementation. Activities related to informing the



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broadly understood society about the Programme and sources of project financing played an increasingly important role.

In the first half of the programming period, an internet portal dedicated to the Programme was created and updated, social media accounts were maintained, articles were published in the press, information about events was broadcast on the radio, a newsletter was sent, and a Programme Manual was developed (in two parts: with information regarding the application process and with useful information at the project implementation stage), e-mail and telephone consultations were constantly carried out.

In 2020, **restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic** were introduced, therefore it was necessary to transfer the planned information and promotional activities to the online sphere. It is estimated that the process of modifying plans and assumptions went smoothly and did not negatively affect the implementation of the objectives for communication activities specified in the Programme. Training for beneficiaries and auditors began to be conducted remotely using an application for interactive online meetings. The exhibition of drawings was organised in a hybrid formula, as they could be viewed both at the stationary exhibition and on the website. Interestingly, we managed to continue organising bicycle rallies, but this time the participants took part in them individually.

Participants received packages (IDs and T-shirts) by post. You had to travel a certain number of kilometres, save it using the application, take a photo or printscreen and attach a selfie promoting the programme in some way or the cooperation of the European Union. I received a lot of applications, the beneficiaries received ID badges and T-shirts from us. There was really a lot of interest in it.

Source: Individual in-depth interview.

Due to the necessity related to COVID-19, the importance of modern communication channels has increased – online events, information distributed via social media, while the importance of traditional forms, including ‘live’ meetings, has decreased. The inability to organise events addressed to the general public in a stationary format, including outdoor events and the Annual Event, had a moderate negative impact on the usefulness of information and promotion activities. It was not possible to attract various groups of message recipients who came to the events due to their attractive nature and, at the same time, learned about the effects of the Programme, e.g. children, nearby residents, people who do not use social media, etc. Nevertheless, it should be assessed that the transfer of communication activities to the online sphere (temporarily entirely, and later to a greater extent than originally) required considerable creativity and flexibility from the people responsible for this type of activities. It also influenced the effectiveness of activities, in particular activities addressed to beneficiaries – a similar number of people participated in online training and workshops, but the cost of organising them was much lower (both for the beneficiaries themselves and representatives of the institutions implementing the Programme).

Another key factor influencing the implementation of information and promotion activities was **Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine in 2022**. Cooperation with the Russian side was immediately suspended, and the situation required a change in the methods of communication, as well as the principles of project visualisation (e.g. the Russian flag was withdrawn from the logos and



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the names of the projects were changed). However, the beneficiaries relatively quickly received information on what to modify in this situation and what further steps to take related to the implementation of the projects. Also in this situation, it is estimated that the institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme – although this factor was completely independent of them – enabled the efficient continuation of the projects and relatively quickly modified the planned information and promotion activities.

Referring to the provisions of the Programme (part 4.11 of the Programme document) and the methods of achieving the information and promotion objectives contained therein, it should be assessed that they have been achieved in the 2014-2020 perspective. Activities described as *'constant provision of extensive information about the possibilities of obtaining funding, including the thematic objectives and priorities of the Programme, as well as the steps to be taken to apply for funds and the project selection criteria'* were implemented mainly in the first half of the programming period. This type of activities were partially linked to the summary of the 2007-2013 perspective, also by showing the positive effects of implemented projects. Initially, messages related to the possibilities of obtaining funding for project implementation were sent relatively widely. As the implementation of the Programme progressed and call for projects began, the focus was on more targeted activities (e.g. workshops on writing applications for funding, development of manuals for applicants and beneficiaries). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these activities were efficiently and effectively transferred to the online sphere, which increased their effectiveness.

Activities related to *'regularly informing the public about the status of the Programme implementation, in particular about the results of projects implemented under the Programme'* were largely determined by the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was impossible to conduct activities that, in the opinion of representatives of institutions related to the implementation of the Programme, were the most useful, i.e. open meetings for residents. During this period, online activities played an important role (social media, Programme portal, newsletter, CPE quarterly, online press information and radio). The outbreak of the war in Ukraine meant that activities aimed at public opinion were limited only to the Polish side, but this is fully justified and understandable.

The type of activities described in the Programme as *creating a coherent image of EU co-financing and the role played by participating countries, for example at the level of their co-financing*, was constantly implemented in all types of activities, through appropriate information clauses, logos, visualisation rules both in materials developed and published by implementing institutions Programme and by the beneficiaries. Information boards placed at the project implementation site play an important role in this type of activities.

The last two types of activities mentioned in the Programme, i.e. *emphasising the importance of cooperation between all parties involved in the implementation of the Programme and all communication activities on the territory of the Russian Federation should be carried out based on the principle of equal visibility of the parties co-financing the Programme, the applicable regulations of the Russian Federation, and the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Action* has lost its relevance in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022. Then, cooperation with the Russian side was broken off, and in the field of information and promotional activities, the cross-border nature of activities and cooperation between the parties ceased to be important. The rules for



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visualising projects on the Polish side limit the message to informing that the project is co-financed from EU funds, only the EU flag is placed, and the description uses 'the project is co-financed by the European Union under the European Neighbourhood Instrument.'³⁰. Instead of the current project names containing the names of Russian cities, regions, etc., only project numbers are used.

Chapter Summary:

To sum up, it should be stated that the effectiveness and efficiency of information and promotion activities carried out in 2014-2020 were relatively high. These activities were influenced by two key factors of an external nature, i.e. independent of the institutions responsible for implementing the Programme: the Covid-19 pandemic and Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting termination of cooperation with the Russian side. In the case of activities addressed to applicants and beneficiaries, the change in the nature and form of information and promotional activities did not reduce their effectiveness (extensive activities were still carried out to inform about support possibilities, as well as training, workshops, communication channels were maintained to answer questions, doubts, etc.). In the case of this target group, transferring activities to the online sphere increased efficiency (by reducing costs while maintaining the same effects). In the case of activities aimed at society, external factors reduced their effectiveness, although not to as great an extent as might have been feared. The effect of disseminating the effects of the Programme implementation was smaller because the online format temporarily limited the number of message recipients. For obvious reasons, the suspension of cooperation with the Russian side also reduced the scope of information and promotional activities. The effectiveness of this type of activities remained at the current level (lower costs of activities related to the online formula and with a smaller territorial scope, but also lower effects).

4.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF INFORMATION AND PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

Research question: Which information and promotional activities and tools were the most effective and visibly reached applicants and beneficiaries? Which ones did not bring the intended effect?

The conclusions presented in the case of the previous research question concern primarily the assessment of effectiveness (to what extent they achieve the objectives, in this case specified in the Programme and Annual Plans) and effectiveness (the ratio of costs incurred to effects), but they also partly refer to usability (to what extent information and promotional activities are consistent with the needs of their recipients). To deepen the assessment of this last criterion, it is necessary to reach for the opinions of recipients of activities carried out by institutions involved in the Programme implementation process. The research techniques used make it possible to present the opinions of the Programme partners (for obvious reasons only representatives of the Polish side) and this data constitutes the basis for deepening the issue of the effectiveness and usefulness of information and promotion activities.

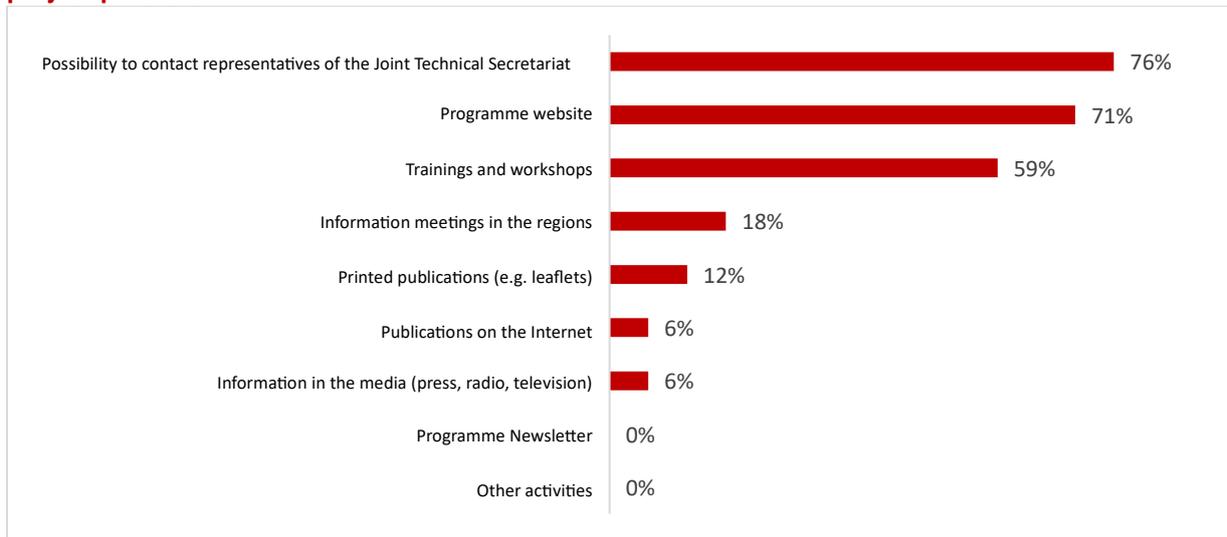
³⁰ In accordance with the document Supplement to the Programme Manuals related to suspension of the Financing Agreement.



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In the quantitative survey, Polish project partners were asked which information and promotional activities were most helpful to them. Each respondent could indicate a maximum of three types of activities. The distribution of responses is presented in the chart below.

Chart 36. The usefulness of information and promotion activities in the opinion of beneficiaries and project partners



Source: own study based on the CAWI study with Polish beneficiaries and project partners (n=17).

The highest percentage of respondents (76%) indicated that the most helpful thing was the opportunity to contact representatives of the Joint Technical Secretariat. In support of this assessment, respondents indicated that they received quick and factual answers to important questions, also at the stage of applying for funds. Other statements include:

Open and friendly secretariat employees always provided advice and support.

This institution has the greatest necessary knowledge, is always available to help and is available without restrictions.

Contact with the representatives was invaluable. All issues regarding the project could be discussed.

Source: answers to open questions in the CAWI survey with Polish beneficiaries and project partners.

This is a very important result, because JTS representatives (who are the persons designated for first contact with applicants and beneficiaries) were also surprised by the consequences of two external factors having a key impact on the Programme implementation process, i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The great anxiety of project beneficiaries and partners related to the possibilities and rules of continuation of projects in this situation resulted in a heavy burden on the JTS representatives. Entities implementing the projects had many ongoing questions and expectations towards the Joint Secretariat, therefore they maintained intensive contact by phone and e-mail. In order to provide the most reliable and precise answers possible, JTS representatives often had to contact other institutions (mainly the MA). Therefore, taking into account external factors, such a high percentage of respondents assessing the usefulness of JTS activities related to contact with project partners should be assessed very positively.



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The next most effective communication tool was the Programme website (71%). The justification stated that it provided full information on the application process and project implementation (including guidelines and document templates), was transparent and easy to access. One of the respondents indicated:

The website is a handy collection of knowledge – information about the programme, documents, guidelines, etc., always available.

Source: answers to open questions in the CAWI survey with Polish project partners.

And again, in the event of factors significantly affecting the current implementation of projects, it was important to immediately post current information on the portal for applicants, beneficiaries and partners. A response rate above 70% indicates that this communication tool has been effectively used.

The next place was taken by training and workshops (59%). Among the advantages of this form of communication, respondents indicated the high effectiveness of the knowledge and information transferred, the opportunity to discuss practical issues, listen to other beneficiaries, exchange experiences and find solutions together. This result proves high effectiveness, because thanks to training and workshops it was possible to achieve the goal of info-promo activities related to *'constant provision of extensive information about the possibilities of obtaining funding, including the thematic goals and priorities of the Programme, as well as about the steps to be taken in order to apply for funds and project selection criteria.'* This also reflects well on the people preparing the training programme (good recognition of the current needs of the participants) and the trainers (effective use of time).

The usefulness of other communication tools was not rated as highly, but it should be remembered that respondents could only indicate the three highest-rated answers. These included information meetings conducted in the regions (18%), printed publications (12%), publications on the Internet and in the media (6% each). None of the respondents indicated the usefulness of the newsletter, and no one indicated other activities.

The above results of the quantitative study are consistent with the opinions of representatives of institutions implementing the Programme participating in in-depth interviews. High effectiveness and usefulness of direct contact with applicants and beneficiaries conducted by JTS representatives was pointed out, also in crisis situations. There was also talk about workshops that were tailored to the current needs of participants and related to the stages of Programme implementation. It should be noted that there were relatively many activities of this type, e.g. in 2018, as many as 8 workshops were conducted for potential applicants on how to complete applications for funding. In the area of tools used for the entire society, the most effective were meetings open to residents (due to the attractions accompanying these events) and initiatives involving participants (e.g. bicycle rallies, art competitions for children, quizzes for the elderly). Such activities should continue to be implemented if the cross-border cooperation programme is continued in any form in the future.



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Chapter Summary:

The effectiveness of information and promotion activities understood as the level of achievement of the assumed goals should be assessed as high. The activities carried out by the institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme fully responded to the objectives related to informing potential and actual applicants and beneficiaries. In particular, the activities carried out by the Joint Technical Secretariat were highly appreciated, including the ongoing provision of answers to questions and the website maintained. This was important, especially in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Restrictions related to the pandemic temporarily limited the possibility of organising open meetings with residents, and they were assessed as best achieving the goals set for promotional activities and dissemination of knowledge about the Programme. If cross-border cooperation is continued in the future, the types of activities that have been assessed as the most effective should be implemented.

The high assessment of the activities carried out by JTS employees leads to the conclusion that it is worth using their extensive experience and knowledge related to the implementation of cross-border programmes. Due to the lack of continuation of cooperation with the Russian side, the involvement of JTS employees in other cross-border cooperation programmes should be considered.

4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Research question: What information and promotion activities should be continued in the context of their effectiveness and usefulness? What tools should be used to consolidate the effects of information and promotion activities?

The conclusions presented as a response to the previous two research questions relating to the effectiveness, efficiency and usefulness of information and promotion activities undertaken under the Programme in 2014-2020 constitute the basis for formulating recommendations regarding this type of activities undertaken in the future. Due to the ongoing war in Ukraine resulting from Russian military aggression, these recommendations cannot be applied to the new Programme implemented in the 2021-2027 financial perspective, as it is not being implemented. However, recommendations can be made related to consolidating the effects of information and promotion activities carried out in 2014-2020 or regarding possible cross-border cooperation implemented in the distant future or other such programmes.

In relation to the assessment of tools used in communication with potential applicants and beneficiaries, considerable attention should be paid to showing the effects of completed projects. From the point of view of local government units, entities subordinated to them, public entities, non-governmental organisations and other potential beneficiaries, it is important to show that the effects achieved have resulted in specific changes. Therefore, good practices should be widely disseminated and the factors that determined success should be indicated. This is confirmed by the opinion of one of the experts participating in the Delphi study:



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It seems necessary to promote the achievements and results of previous cross-border projects through publications, reports, case studies, videos and social media. This may convince potential partners of the benefits of such cooperation.

Source: Delphi method.

In connection with these activities, information should be added that there are new possibilities of support, e.g. for some beneficiaries from the support area of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, in the 2021-2027 perspective there is a possibility of support under the INTERREG South Baltic Programme.

In ongoing communication with beneficiaries, it is crucial to provide certain and reliable information both at the stage of call for projects (informing and answering applicants' questions) and during project implementation. It is important to have ongoing contact with representatives of the institutions responsible for implementing the Programme, and in the case of cross-border cooperation programmes – with representatives of the JTS. Direct contact is still important, so in addition to the option of asking questions by e-mail, you should maintain the possibility of telephone contact and stationary meetings. At the same time, the high level of the website should be maintained, in particular the speed of posting current information important from the point of view of applicants and beneficiaries, as well as its readability and ease of access. On this occasion, it is worth noting that the employees of the JTS of the Poland-Russia Programme, due to their extensive knowledge and experience, constitute a valuable resource and it is worth using their potential when implementing other cross-border cooperation programmes.

The effectiveness and usefulness of training activities and workshops are also highly rated. Polish project partners from the 2014-2020 perspective indicated that they are adapted to current needs, in particular resulting from a given stage of Programme implementation. The following opinion was expressed in the Delphi study:

We must not forget to organise training on the principles of cross-border cooperation, application procedures for support programmes and skills necessary to implement cross-border projects, such as project management, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. (...) it seems indispensable to promote the achievements and results of previous cross-border projects through publications, reports, case studies, video materials and social media. This may convince potential partners of the benefits of such cooperation.

Source: Delphi method.

It is recommended to conduct training remotely, which will have a positive impact on their effectiveness and increase interest from entities distant from the JTS seat. In the case of workshops, you need to consider each time whether the remote or on-site form will be more effective.

In the case of activities aimed at communicating to the general public, open meetings for residents combined with attractions for specific groups: children, the elderly, sports-active people, etc. are recommended as the most useful and effective. Additionally, it is worth introducing elements of competition: competitions, quizzes, competitions with prizes. One of the experts expressed this opinion:



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Information and promotional campaigns should be carried out both in new media (the Internet, including FB, X, etc.) and in the local press. You can involve schools in educational campaigns by encouraging them to organise days devoted to cooperation with a selected partner. Beneficiaries of previously implemented projects and experts, e.g. the Team Europe network or representatives of EU institutions (e.g. from the EC representative office in Warsaw or the EP office), can participate in such events.

Source: Delphi method.

Chapter Summary:

If cross-border cooperation is continued in the future, the type of activities that have been assessed as the most effective, useful and efficient should be implemented. The effects of completed projects and good practices should be shown. In particular, the possibility of direct contact between beneficiaries and JTS representatives should be maintained, and the high quality of the website should be maintained. Training and workshops should be organised to meet the current needs of participants. The most effective form (remote or stationary) of this type of activities remains to be considered. Activities aimed at residents include organising open meetings and attractive events addressed to specific groups of recipients, combined with elements of competition and prizes. Social media should be widely used.

The high assessment of the activities carried out by JTS employees leads to the conclusion that it is worth using their extensive experience and knowledge related to the implementation of cross-border programmes. Due to the lack of continuation of cooperation with the Russian side, the involvement of JTS employees in the implementation of other cross-border cooperation programmes should be considered.



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SUMMARY PART

RECOMMENDATION TABLE

No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
1	High level of territorial concentration of support	5	In the Programme – at every level of analysis, a high level of concentration of support is observed. The support is focused primarily on the territory of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, which has the longest land border with the Russian Federation. It is also concentrated in large towns – over 100,000 inhabitants. Moreover, in the support area, even in the case of border towns, there are so-called ‘white spots,’ i.e. places where not a single	In case of continuation of support in any form, it is recommended to introduce mechanisms that will result in 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 represent an entity based in a border district, e.g. in the form of additional points if this condition is met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increasing the representativeness of districts and municipalities/comunes, which currently constitute the so-called ‘white spots.’Increasing the proportionality of the distribution of support throughout the area.	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Undefined due to the lack of implementation of the Programme in the financial perspective 2021-2027.	Vol. 1.5

³¹ On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest.



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No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
			project under the Programme has been implemented.						
2	Loss of connections with partners from the Russian Federation	5	The loss of connections with partners from the Russian Federation has created a vacuum that will be difficult to fill in terms of projects and cross-border cooperation. Polish support beneficiaries have experience in implementing other cross-border and interregional programmes, but cooperation with entities from Russia was the result of unique common challenges and problems. The study confirmed that a kind of compensation for the lost connections could be the inclusion of the border area in the scope of other programmes (the EC agreed to this during the	It is recommended to maintain the Olsztyn subregion as included in the eligible area of the INTERREG South Baltic and INTERREG Lithuania-Poland Programmes, and the Łomża subregion in the INTERREG Lithuania-Poland Programme.	It is recommended to maintain the current eligible area of the INTERREG South Baltic and INTERREG Lithuania-Poland Programmes.	Inclusion of beneficiaries from subregions that have lost partners from Russia in other cross-border, transregional and interregional programmes.	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Q1 2024	Vol. 2.6



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No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
			work on this evaluation), but these plans do not take into account the entire area that has lost connections with Russia.						
3	Loss of connections with partners from the Russian Federation and discontinuation of the Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020	5	The Polish-Russian borderland is characterised by significant specificity compared to other borderlands in the country. The neighbourhood with a country with an apparently unfriendly and hostile policy means that the border area on the Polish side is largely exposed to marginalisation, depopulation and the occurrence of negative development processes. Including the area in the scope of other cross-border programmes cannot fully compensate for the negative effects of the loss of partnership.	Even though the plans to include the area of the current Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020 in the scope of other cross-border programmes should be assessed positively, it is recommended to establish a special mechanism allowing for the development of the border area due to its specificity.	It is recommended to consider a special, unilateral support mechanism – a programme dedicated only to entities from the Polish side of the border, which would respond to cross-border challenges (e.g. the need to counteract the negative effects of natural threats and environmental pollution). These challenges, even if they are implemented only on one side of the border, without partnership, will have a cross-border impact and react on a feedback basis to threats emerging on the other side of the border.	Effective response to cross-border challenges and threats in the absence of a partner from the other side of the border.	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Q1 2028	Vol. 2.6



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No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
4	It is not possible to fully assess the degree of achievement of the specific objectives of the Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020 as part of this study	5	The lack of assessment of the degree of achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme (due to the lack of information on the achieved values of indicators), including the inability to assess the impact of LIP on achieving the objectives, hinder the proper planning of the objectives of subsequent programmes and the optimal division of the available allocation between their thematic objectives.	It is recommended to carry out research on the degree of achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme and the impact of LIP on the degree of achievement of the objectives after the completion of the implementation of all projects.	Estimation of the degree of achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme after completion of implementation and settlement of all projects.	Better adjustment of the potential programme after 2027 to the needs of support areas.	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Q4 2024	Vol. 1.1
5	Different descriptions of indicators describing the implementation of the same TO in the Programme, Programme	2	The lack of a proper description or different descriptions of indicators and/or their measures makes it difficult to assess the degree of Programme implementation and to assess the degree of achievement of the	It is recommended to strictly use indicator fiches and the descriptions (and requirements) contained therein in the descriptions of indicators in all Programme documents.	It is recommended to use previously prepared (and agreed) indicator index fiches.	Better and faster assessment of the degree of implementation of the Programme and its thematic objectives, if the Programme is implemented in any form.	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Undefined due to the lack of implementation of the Programme in the financial perspective 2021-2027.	Vol. 1.1



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No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
	Manual and monitoring tables		Programme's specific objectives.						
6	Relatively low awareness of beneficiaries regarding the importance and scope of horizontal principles, lack of sufficient descriptions of the principles in the Programme Manual and examples of their implementation	3	Beneficiaries usually indicate the neutrality of the project with respect to horizontal principles or use typical, schematic solutions aimed at meeting the requirement to implement the project in accordance with the principles. In most cases, the implemented projects do not contain innovative solutions, but focus only on meeting the requirement to apply the principle.	It is recommended (in relation to other INTERREG programmes being implemented) to supplement the Programme Manuals with descriptions of suggested methods of implementing horizontal principles and to develop publications on good practices in the application of the principles in projects.	It is recommended to supplement the Programme Manual in the field of horizontal principles and to develop a publication on good practices and make this publication available on the Programme website. Due to the advanced stage of implementation of the Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020, the recommendation may apply to subsequent editions of the programmes in the event of resumption of cooperation with Russia.	Raising the awareness of beneficiaries about the importance and scope of horizontal principles, and thus improving the way of implementing horizontal principles in projects and achieving better results thanks to their proper application, if the Programme is implemented in any form.	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Undefined due to the lack of implementation of the Programme in the financial perspective 2021-2027.	Vol. 3.2 and 3.3
7	Insufficiently thorough assessment of the way in which horizontal	2	The study observed insufficient understanding of the importance of horizontal principles by project evaluators, which consequently leads to the	It is recommended to emphasise during training for assessors assessing projects the importance of meeting horizontal principles and	It is recommended to discuss more broadly the importance of implementing horizontal principles during training for assessors. It would be advisable to	Improving the assessment of the way in which the horizontal principles planned by the beneficiaries are implemented (as well as	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Undefined due to the lack of implementation of the 2021-2027 financial	Vol. 3.2



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No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
	principles are implemented by assessors when verifying application/project applications		acceptance of projects that do not best implement these principles. This translates into the inability to enforce proper compliance with horizontal principles during project implementation.	the need for a more detailed verification of this issue. It is justified to increase the time limit devoted to checking submitted application/project applications. Due to the advanced stage of implementation of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, the recommendation may apply to subsequent editions of the programmes in the event of resumption of cooperation with Russia.	provide assessors with publications on good practices in the application of the principles in projects.	improving the quality of the assessment of the entire application/project application), if the Programme is implemented in any form.		perspective programme.	
8	There are no indicators showing the implementation of horizontal principles among the	4	The lack of indicators showing the implementation of horizontal principles allows beneficiaries to implement these principles incompletely, and prevents	It is recommended to introduce indicators showing the implementation of horizontal principles in each project and to monitor the	It is recommended to introduce a set of indicators monitoring the implementation of horizontal principles. Due to the advanced stage of implementation of the	Improving the way horizontal principles are implemented in projects of currently implemented programmes – Introduction of new	MA for INTERREG Programmes in the 2021-2027 perspective	Undefined due to the lack of implementation of the 2021-2027 financial	Vol. 3.2



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No.	Problem identified	The seriousness of the problem ³¹	Application	Recommendation	Method of implementing the recommendations	Expected effect of implementing the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Deadline for implementing the recommendation	Place in the report
	project indicators		persons controlling project implementation from properly controlling them and indicating possible non-performance of this scope of the project.	implementation of these indicators during project implementation. It is also suggested to introduce appropriate provisions on this subject in the Programme Manual.	Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020, the recommendation may apply to subsequent editions of the programmes in the event of resumption of cooperation with Russia.	(improved solutions) before the start of the implementation of the 2027+ perspective programmes.		perspective programme	

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Recommendation	Description of the effects of introducing the recommendation along with justification
1	In case of continuation of support in any form, it is recommended to introduce mechanisms that will result in a more even distribution of support.	<p>The implementation of the recommendations will contribute to the even distribution of support and increased concentration in the areas closest to the state border.</p> <p>However, the implementation of the recommendations may pose a threat in the form of <i>ad hoc</i> partnerships built for the purpose of receiving support. Nevertheless, even then the distribution of funds in the eligible area will be balanced.</p> <p>The implementation of the recommendation requires changes to the future competition documentation, e.g. to the call for projects regulations, where geographical location or partnership with an entity from a border commune/district will be an additional scoring criterion for the evaluation of the application.</p>
2	It is recommended to maintain the Olsztyn subregion as included in the eligible area of the INTERREG South Baltic and INTERREG Lithuania-Poland Programmes, and	The implementation of the recommendations will involve extending the territorial scope of the two programmes to new areas. This will increase the possibilities of building partnership both in the current area of support for these programmes and in the area newly included in the programmes.



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No.	Recommendation	Description of the effects of introducing the recommendation along with justification
	the Łomża subregion in the INTERREG Lithuania-Poland Programme.	However, the implementation of the recommendations will require the beneficiaries to be active in establishing new partnerships for the purposes of project implementation – it is possible that potential beneficiaries will need support in this respect.
3	Even though the plans to include the area of the current Poland-Russia CBCP 2014-2020 in the scope of other cross-border programmes should be assessed positively, it is recommended to establish a special mechanism allowing for the development of the border area due to its specificity.	The implementation of the recommendation will require allocating a special, dedicated pool of funds for purposes related to supporting the Polish-Russian border area on the Polish side. It will also require the implementation of a procedure for adopting a support programme.
4	It is recommended to carry out research on the degree of achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme and the impact of LIP on the degree of achievement of the objectives after the completion of the implementation of all projects.	<p>The implementation of the recommendations will enable better planning of tasks and resources of subsequent aid programmes, and thus better adjustment of programmes to the needs of support areas.</p> <p>Thanks to the introduction of this recommendation, the preparation of new programmes will be able to be based more on facts and experience from previous programmes and less on the estimation of statistical indicators.</p>
5	It is recommended to strictly use indicator fiches and the descriptions (and requirements) contained therein in the descriptions of indicators in all Programme documents.	<p>The implementation of the recommendations will make it easier to assess the degree of implementation of individual Programme TOs, prepare the necessary implementation reports, and finally make comparisons between programmes.</p> <p>The lack of uniform descriptions causes chaos, and often by 'matching' one indicator to another, it may generate errors in the process of preparing result statements.</p>
6	It is recommended (in relation to other INTERREG programmes being implemented) to supplement the Programme Manuals with descriptions of suggested methods of implementing horizontal principles and to develop publications on good practices in the application of the principles in projects.	<p>The implementation of the recommendations will make it easier for beneficiaries to choose how to implement horizontal principles and then, during the project implementation, how to best implement them.</p> <p>Applying this recommendation will probably result in identifying more innovative solutions than replacing light bulbs with energy-saving ones. It will also enable the selection of solutions that will make the project have a positive impact on the implementation of horizontal principles instead of a neutral impact.</p>



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No.	Recommendation	Description of the effects of introducing the recommendation along with justification
7	<p>It is recommended to emphasise during training for assessors assessing projects the importance of meeting horizontal principles and the need for a more detailed verification of this issue. It is justified to increase the time limit devoted to checking submitted application/project applications.</p> <p>Due to the advanced stage of implementation of the Poland-Russia Programme 2014-2020, the recommendation may apply to subsequent editions of the programmes in the event of resumption of cooperation with Russia.</p>	<p>Increasing the knowledge of assessors in this area should result in a better assessment of application forms and thus the selection of projects that have a positive impact on the implementation of horizontal principles.</p>
8	<p>It is recommended to introduce indicators showing the implementation of horizontal principles in each project and to monitor the implementation of these indicators during project implementation. It is also suggested to introduce appropriate provisions on this subject in the Programme Manual.</p>	<p>The implementation of the recommendations will enable a better assessment of the degree of project implementation in relation to the application of horizontal principles. It will also enable comparison of the implementation of various projects in this respect.</p> <p>It will enable people controlling project implementation to respond faster to emerging problems. As a consequence, this will result in better implementation of entire programmes.</p>



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ANNEX NO. 1 – LIST OF ENTITIES INCLUDED IN THE NETWORK ANALYSIS

ID	Beneficiary name	Role in the project	Thematic objective	Country	Region	City/Town
1	MUSEUM OF THE WORLD OCEAN	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad
2	GDAŃSK MUSEUM	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	POMERANIAN	Gdańsk
3	SVETLOGORSK CITY DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY ADMINISTRATION	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Svetlogorsk
4	SZCZYTNO DISTRICT	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Szczytno
5	MINISTRY FOR CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE KALININGRAD REGION	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad
6	ANO 'MUSEUM OF URBAN LIFESTYLE'	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad
7	POMERANIAN REGIONAL TOURIST ORGANISATION	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	POMERANIAN	Gdańsk
8	WARMIAN-MASURIAN REGIONAL TOURIST ORGANISATION	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn
9	ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES 'POLISH GOTHIC CASTLES'	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn
10	STARE JUCHY COMMUNE	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Stare Juchy
11	EŁK CULTURAL CENTRE	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Ełk
12	ADMINISTRATION OF OZERSK TOWN DISTRICT	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Oziorsk
13	EŁK MUNICIPALITY	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Ełk
14	ADMINISTRATION OF SOVETSK DISTRICT	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Sovetsk
15	GIŻYCKO MUNICIPALITY	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Giżycko
16	COLLEGE OF AGROTECHNOLOGIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Gusev
17	OLECKO DISTRICT	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olecko
18	KALININGRAD REGION YOUTH THEATRE 'MOLODOZHNYJ'	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Sovetsk
19	KALININGRAD REGIONAL YOUTH PUBLIC ORGANISATION 'CENTRE OF YOUTH INITIATIVES'	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Sovetsk
20	REGIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE IN OLECKO 'MAZURY GARBATE'	Leader	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olecko
21	ADMINISTRATION OF MUNICIPALITY GUSEV CITY DISTRICT	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Gusev
22	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL MUSEUM IN ELBLĄG	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Elbląg
23	ŚWIATOWID EUROPEAN MEETINGS CENTRE IN ELBLĄG	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Elbląg
24	'THE FRIEDLAND GATE' MUSEUM	Leader	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad
25	EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF MONUMENTS	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	POMERANIAN	Gdańsk
26	KALININGRAD REGIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ARTS	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad



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ID	Beneficiary name	Role in the project	Thematic objective	Country	Region	City/Town
27	IMMANUEL KANT BALTIC FEDERAL UNIVERSITY	Leader	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Kaliningrad
28	STATE AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATION OF THE KALININGRAD REGION 'CATHEDRAL'	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Kaliningrad
29	NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM IN GDAŃSK	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	POMERANIAN	Gdańsk
30	THE MUNICIPAL AUTONOMOUS CULTURAL INSTITUTION «THE KALININGRAD ZOO»	Leader	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Kaliningrad
31	MUSEUM OF FOLK CONSTRUCTION – ETHNOGRAPHICAL PARK IN OLSZTYNEK	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztynek
32	KALININGRAD PUBLIC ORGANISATION 'HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION CENTER KAUP'	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Kaliningrad
33	ADMINISTRATION OF ZELENOGRADSK TOWN DISTRICT AUTHORITY	Leader	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Zelenogradsk
34	OLSZTYN MUNICIPALITY	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn
35	SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY 'PRUTHENIA'	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn
36	MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE KALININGRAD REGION	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Kaliningrad
37	ADMINISTRATION OF LADUSHKIN TOWN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY	Leader	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Ladushkin
38	MŁYŃNARY COMMUNE	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Młynary
39	ADMINISTRATION OF SVETLY URBAN DISTRICT	Leader	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Svetly
40	MALBORK MUNICIPALITY	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	POMERANIAN	Malbork
41	ADMINISTRATION OF PIONERSKY MUNICIPALITY	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Pionersky
42	ADMINISTRATION OF SVETLOGORSK MUNICIPALITY	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Svetlogorsk
43	ADMINISTRATION OF ZELENOGRADSK MUNICIPALITY	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Zelenogradsk
44	WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP	Partner	HERITAGE	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn
45	STATE PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF THE KALININGRAD REGION 'ADMINISTRATION OF ROAD FACILITIES OF THE KALININGRAD REGION'	Partner	HERITAGE	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Kaliningrad
46	CHERNYAKHOVSK CENTRAL DISTRICT HOSPITAL	Partner	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Chernyakhovsk
47	DR LUDWIK RYDYGIER PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL IN SUWAŁKI	Leader	Environment	Poland	PODLASKIE	Suwałki
48	OSTASZEWO COMMUNE	Partner	Environment	Poland	POMERANIAN	Ostaszewo
49	ADMINISTRATION OF CHERNYAKHOVSK TOWN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBURG	Chernyakhovsk
50	MILAKOWO MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Miłakowo
51	MIEJSKIE PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWO GOSPODARKI KOMUNALNEJ SP. Z O.O. IN MILAKOWO	Partner	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Miłakowo



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ID	Beneficiary name	Role in the project	Thematic objective	Country	Region	City/Town
52	RYBNO COMMUNE	Leader	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Rybno
53	ZAKŁAD GOSPODARKI KOMUNALNEJ W RYBNIE SP. Z O.O.	Partner	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Rybno
54	ADMINISTRATION OF THE SOVETSK CITY DISTRICT	Partner	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Sovetsk
55	NOWE MIASTO LUBAWSKIE MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Mszanowo
56	ADMINISTRATION OF CITY COUNTY 'KALININGRAD CITY'	Partner	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad
57	KĘTRZYN MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Kętrzyn
58	PROVINCE HEADQUARTERS OF THE STATE FIRE SERVICE IN BIAŁYSTOK	Partner	Environment	Poland	PODLASKIE	Białystok
59	PROVINCE HEADQUARTERS OF THE STATE FIRE SERVICE IN OLSZTYN	Leader	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn
60	GBU KO 'DETACHMENT OF THE STATE FIRE SERVICE AND PROVISION OF CIVIL DEFENCE MEASURES'	Partner	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Kaliningrad
61	ADMINISTRATION OF THE MUNICIPAL FORMATION 'BAGRATIONOVSKY URBAN DISTRICT'	Partner	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Bagrationovsk
62	ZALEWO MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Environment	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Zalewo
63	ADMINISTRATION OF GURIEVSK TOWN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Environment	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Gurievsk
64	BAKAŁARZEWO COMMUNE	Partner	Accessibility	Poland	PODLASKIE	Bakałarzewo
65	FILIPÓW COMMUNE	Partner	Accessibility	Poland	PODLASKIE	Filipów
66	GMINA PUŃSK	Leader	Accessibility	Poland	PODLASKIE	Puńsk
67	BALTIJSK URBAN DISTRICT	Partner	Accessibility	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Baltijsk
68	POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP	Leader	Accessibility	Poland	POMERANIAN	Gdańsk
69	ROAD MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT DIRECTORATE OF ADMINISTRATION OF GURIEVSK URBAN DISTRICT	Partner	Accessibility	Russia	KENIGSBERG	Gurievsk
70	RUCIANE-NIDA MUNICIPALITY	Leader	Accessibility	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Ruciane-Nida
71	MUNICIPALITY OF SĘPOPOL	Leader	Accessibility	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Sępól
72	WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP (VOIVODESHIP ROAD ADMINISTRATION IN OLSZTYN)	Leader	Accessibility	Poland	WARMIAN-MASURIAN	Olsztyn



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