



Cohesion policy implementation, performance and communication – Pomorskie Voivodship (Poland)



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Introduction

The Pomorskie Voivodship is a NUTS2 region with a population of 2,319,000, covering an area of approximately 18,300 km², situated in northern Poland and bordering on the Kaliningrad Oblast, an enclave of the Russian Federation. The voivodship is partly self-governing, i.e. it is ruled by the local (regional) and central governmental authorities, which means it has a regional government elected in a popular vote, headed by the marshal (marszałek), and the governmental (state) administration, represented in the region by the voivod (wojewoda). The competences of the Marshal's Office (Urząd Marszałkowski) include carrying out the region's development policy and implementing the Regional Operational Programme financed from the EU's Cohesion policy funds.

The aim of the report is to present the findings from the field research conducted in Pomorskie Voivodship as part of regional comparative analyses carried out under the Cohesify project. In particular, the study sets out to assess how the Cohesion policy affects the perception of the European Union by the local residents and looks at the effectiveness of its communication strategies. As a result, it offers tentative recommendations on shaping the relationships between the Cohesion policy of the European Union and its evaluation by the residents and the local elites in a given regional context.

The Pomorskie Voivodship was selected for the study due to a number of reasons, including the following:

- The region's average level of development compared to the rest of the country, but with a high level of Cohesion policy funding,
- Positive perception of the European Union by the residents, which has not changed for the worse after the 2008 financial crisis, contrary to most of Poland's regions,
- High absorption level of the EU funds in the financing perspective 2007-2013,
- The 2014 local government elections won by a party with a strong pro-European orientation.

Other than the data from regional and national planning documents and statistics, and the following papers prepared as part of the Cohesify project:

- Capello R., Perucca G. (2017). Regional Implementation Settings for Cohesion Policy: A Definition and Measurement. Cohesify Research Paper 2,
- Debus M., Gross M. (2017). Position On and Issue Emphasis of European Integration and EU Cohesion Policy: Analysing (Sub-) National Party Manifestos. Cohesify Research Paper 4,
- Dąbrowski M., Stead D., Mashhoodi B. (2017). Towards a Regional Typology of EU Identification. Cohesify Research Paper 6,
- Smętkowski M., Płoszaj A., Rok J. (2017). Multidimensionality of Implementation and Performance of Cohesion Policy in EU regions. Cohesify Research Paper 8.

A number of primary data were used, including:

- stakeholder online survey
- stakeholder interviews
- focus groups
- citizens survey

The online survey of stakeholders was carried out in May-October 2017 in all COHESIFY case study regions. It referred to stakeholders' perception of implementation and effects of cohesion policy and the impact of cohesion policy on the perception of the European Union by the citizens. . In Pomorskie, a total of 233 respondents had been identified, mostly representatives of local governments, and members of the Regional Operational Programme Monitoring Committee. The response rate (full responses only) was 22.7%, and the share of Monitoring Committee members among the

respondents equalled 15.1%. Along the survey, a set of 15 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders has been carried out in the region. It has been further complemented by data gathered from citizens. Three focus group interviews were organised in various cities in the Pomorskie Voivodship, and the quantitative survey carried out by an external contractor with a representative sample of 500 residents of the Pomorskie Voivodship.

The structure of the case study report covers, firstly, a summary of the regional background for the implementation of the Cohesion policy and communicating its results, and presenting the findings from the empirical research relating to: a) the Cohesion policy's implementation process and evaluation of its performance by the local and regional stakeholders, b) mode of communicating the effects of the Cohesion policy, and c) evaluation of the European Union and the Cohesion policy by the region's residents.

Context and background

2.1 EU attitudes and identity

According to the typology developed by M. Dąbrowski (et al. 2017), the Pomorskie Voivodship is classified as “positive” both in terms of the EU image as viewed by the residents and the EU attachment. The category in question groups most of the Polish regions except Lubuskie, Świętokrzyskie and Podlaskie, whose residents were found in the Eurobarometer surveys to be more neutral in their opinions about the EU image and EU attachment.

In a dynamic approach, looking only at the category of the EU image in 2008-2016, only a slight change of the residents’ opinions for the worse could be observed in the Pomorskie Voivodship. In 2008, the average opinion (expressed on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 – very negative, and 5 – very positive) was 3.55, which ranked the voivodship 6th in Poland. However, in 2016 that value, despite a drop to 3.48, placed the region 1st in a total of 16 Poland’s voivodships. These findings may indicate a relative consolidation of the pro-European stance of Pomorskie’s residents with regard to the results of the 2003 accession referendum, in which support to Poland’s EU membership reached 80.2% in the region, which rendered it 7th in Poland (compared to the national average of 77.4%).

According to opinion polls (CBOS 2015), Poland’s residents first and foremost were attached to the local community/place of residence (51%) and, as the second choice, identified themselves with the whole country/Poland (25%). In this context, the regional identity was clearly weaker, and declared by 14% respondents, while the European identity was listed as the first one only occasionally (4% of the respondents). In the question about the second major place of attachment, both these identities were quoted, by 33% and 8% respondents, respectively. At the same time, Pomorskie is regarded as one of Poland’s few regions with a relatively strong regional identity. This is mainly due to the presence of the Kashubian minority in the region, whose population is estimated at ca. 230,000 according to the 2011 national census (ca. 10% of the region’s total population).

2.2 Political context

An analysis of the political manifestoes of Poland’s main political parties conducted for the years 2006, 2010 and 2014 reveals a relatively distinct polarisation of the Polish political scene in respect of their attitude to European integration (Debus M., Gross M., 2017). Among the major parties, there are those with a strong pro-European orientation such as Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska - PO) (6.53), Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej - SLD) (6.59) and, though to a lesser extent, Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - PSL) (5.47), and those which are more sceptical approach to the European Union such as Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - PiS) (3.82). It should be noted, however, that few differences could be observed between the major parties as regards their attitude to the Cohesion policy, which is definitely positive and, in quantitative terms, ranges from 6.38 (PiS) to 6.88 (PO). Moreover, all Poland’s main political parties softened their stance in the recent years, which was manifested by a positive coverage of the Cohesion policy in their political agendas. Such a shift was particularly well visible in the case of Law and Justice (from 5.0 in 2006 to 6.4 in 2014).

The 2014 elections to the regional parliament were won by Civic Platform with 40.7% of votes, which was the party’s best result in Poland. It rules in a coalition with the Polish People’s Party on the basis of a national coalition agreement between the two parties, despite PSL’s relatively poor electoral result in Pomorskie (17.4% compared to the national average of 23.9%). Law and Justice also won less votes in Pomorskie than elsewhere in Poland (23.4% compared to 26.9% across the country). The last of the major parties, the Democratic Left Alliance, won 7.8% of votes in the region.

The comparison of these results with the attitude of the major political parties to European integration and the Cohesion policy may point to a potentially enthusiastic approach to the Cohesion policy on the part of the regional government in the Pomorskie Voivodship. One manifestation of such an approach may be placing an emphasis on the relationship between the idea of European

integration and the benefits derived by Poland from its EU membership, also thanks to the Cohesion policy funds.

2.3. Socio-economic context

The Pomorskie Voivodship is among the Polish regions with an average level of development. Due to the low overall level of per capita GDP in Poland, Pomorskie can be regarded as a poorly developed region of the European Union. In real terms, its GDP per capita (EUR) reaches 37.5% of the EU average, rising to 64.0% if the purchasing power parity is included. The voivodship is highly urbanised compared to the rest of the country, with a highly polycentric settlement system. Other than Tricity, the voivodship's large cities include e.g. Słupsk (91,000 population), Tczew (60,000) and Wejherowo (50,000).

The region's average development level (95% of the national average in GDP per capita terms) largely results from its significant internal disparities at the level of the NUTS₃ subregions, expressed by a ratio of 1:1.52. This can be explained by the presence of a dominant urban centre, Tricity, comprising Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot, which, with its metropolitan area, has ca. 1.1 million residents, i.e. nearly a half of the region's population. On the other hand, the most peripheral parts of the voivodship, the subregions of Chojnice and Słupsk, are still struggling with agrarian and industrial restructuring, processes that began with the systemic transition in Poland in the 1990s.

Other characteristic socio-economic features of the region include the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea coast for settlement, the Tricity metropolitan area representing a major transport and logistics hub (sea harbours and an airport) of Poland and the Baltic Sea basin, and a relatively robust regional enterprise, further improved by a favourable demographic situation.

As regards the determinants of Cohesion policy implementation (Capello, Perucca 2017), it can be pointed out that Pomorskie, just as the majority of the Polish regions, is an example of an area where the implementation of the Cohesion policy may be regarded as potentially ineffective (inefficient institutional context). This is due to the poor assessment of the quality of governance in the Polish regions (Charon et al. 2014), which takes into account such parameters as corruption, rule of law, bureaucratic effectiveness and strength of democratic and electoral institutions.

Cohesion policy implementation and performance

3.1 EU Cohesion policy strategic and implementation framework

Since 2004, i.e. after Poland's accession to the European Union, three stages of Cohesion Policy have been implemented in the Pomorskie Voivodship:

- 2004-2006, as part of the Integrated Regional Development Programme (IRDOP) and national sectoral programmes. This initial period largely involved gaining experiences in the implementation of Cohesion Policy programmes;
- 2007-2013, as part of the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) and national sectoral programmes;
- in 2014 - Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 and national sectoral programmes.

Below is a detailed presentation of the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2007-2013, which was of crucial importance for the Cohesify research as well Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 with special focus on adopted changes in comparison to previous programming period.

3.1.1 *Operational Programme for Pomorskie Voivodship 2007-2013*

The Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Voivodship 2007-2013 (ROP PV 2007-2013) was one of the implementation instruments of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, a national-level document that defined the policies of using EU funds for the country's development. The preparation and delivery of the Programme rested with the Managing Authority, i.e. the Board of the Pomorskie Voivodship.

The strategic goal of the Pomorskie ROP was to improve the competitiveness of the economy, increase social inclusion and spatial accessibility of the region while ensuring a balanced use of the unique features of the region's economic and cultural potential and nurturing its natural environment assets.

The above goal was to be attained by improving the competitiveness and innovation of the economy, increasing the attractiveness of cities for investment and improving the connections between them, increasing the region's attractiveness for settlement and tourism activity and overcoming structural barriers in areas with a lower potential for growth.

Measures aimed to improve the competitiveness and innovation of the economy and the competences of the local residents focused on direct and indirect SME support. Grants were awarded both to investment projects submitted by enterprises to create new jobs and to innovative projects in firms with a robust development potential and considerable competitive advantage. Indirect support provided to SMEs involved setting up and reinforcing specialised loan and guarantee funds alongside other forms of capital funding. In addition, an innovation network was developed, comprising institutions which generated and transferred innovative solutions from the R&D sector to the economy.

The competences of the region's residents were improved through providing support to the development of the research and teaching infrastructure in higher education institutions. Access to knowledge and information was also enhanced by providing a better infrastructure for the dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICT) and continuous development of electronic services for business and the general public, especially in areas lying far from the region's main urban centres.

The attractiveness of cities for investment and the connections between them were enhanced by investments aimed to boost the development potential of the biggest cities: improving the transport systems (including public transportation) and complex projects involving revitalisation of degraded

areas and modernisation of public space. In effect, this strengthened the metropolitan and supralocal functions in the cities being the region's major drivers of growth. Road and railway network projects and improvements in the main transport hubs considerably increased the region's spatial cohesion, created better links between the regional system and the national and European transport systems and helped to make a more effective use of the economic potential of individual areas.

The region's attractiveness for tourism and settlement activity was enhanced thanks to investment projects relating to environmental protection, tourism capacity and health protection, which guaranteed a sustainable use of the natural and cultural assets of the region. Other implemented projects were aimed to improve the region's accessibility and quality of healthcare provision, particularly regarding prevention, diagnostics and treatment of cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, as well as projects focused on the integration of the regional emergency services.

The structural barriers in areas with a lower potential for growth were addressed through investment projects which helped to reduce spatial disparities in the development of basic infrastructure (road, business and tourism infrastructure), particularly in the relation of urban to rural areas. Other activities were aimed to reinforce the social fabric in those areas by improving the quality of, and access to, education, health and sport infrastructure and small-scale projects aimed to activate and integrate the region's local communities.

ROP PV was implemented via 10 priority axes. An indicative ERDF allocation broken down by specific Priority Axes is shown below.

Table 1. Priority axes and allocations in 2007-2013 – ROP Pomorskie Voivodship

<i>Pomorskie voivodship ROP 2007-2013</i>		
Priority axes	ERDF allocation (%)	ERDF allocation (EUR)
1. SME development and innovation	19.1	179,195,202
2. Knowledge society	5.5	51,524,282
3. Urban and metropolitan functions	17.4	163,295,176
4. Regional transport system	23.7	222,224,998
5. Environment and environmentally friendly energy	6.0	56,620,300
6. Tourism and cultural heritage	4.7	44,253,288
7. Health protection and emergency system	3.8	35,402,630
8. Local basic infrastructure	13.2	123,909,207
9. Local social infrastructure and civil initiatives	3.8	35,402,630
10. Technical assistance	2.8	26,551,973
Total	100.0	938,379,686

Source: own elaboration. based on *RPO WP 2007-13*, 2017.

As shown above, ROP PV 2007-2013 received a total funding of ca. EUR 1 billion (ca. EUR 430 per capita).

The sources of financing for ROP PV included the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the accompanying national co-financing. The ERDF allocation for the financing of the Programme totalled **EUR 885,065,762**, which accounted for **1.33%** of the total ROP allocation as part of the

Convergence Objective and **5.35%** of the aggregate ERDF allocation to Poland's 16 Regional Operational Programmes. Taking into account the additional ERDF funding allocated to the Pomorskie ROP in 2011 from the National Performance Reserve and the Technical Adjustment in the amount of **EUR 53,313,924**, the overall value of ERDF funding invested in the Programme totals **EUR 938,379,686**.

In line with the assumptions of the indicative financial plan for the Pomorskie ROP, the aggregate value of funds committed for ROP PV (both European and national) totalled ca. **EUR 1.3 billion**, including the national contribution (public and private) of over **EUR 350 million**. The estimated national public contribution is at a level of over **EUR 250 million**, and the private contribution – over **EUR 100 million**.

ROP VP 2007-2013 addressed **the major problems** that the Pomorskie Voivodship faced in 2007, that is:

- 1) mediocre potential for investment, compounded by poor transport accessibility and a low level of public safety,
- 2) wide spatial disparities in the potential for growth (e.g. unemployment), as a result of which various measures needed to be launched for metropolitan, rural and coastal areas and areas situated along the transport corridors,
- 3) health condition of the region's residents, high air pollution and the condition of the energy infrastructure.

3.1.2 Operational Programme for Pomorskie Voivodship 2014-2020

In 2007-2013, the region's situation was substantially improved, also thanks to ROP interventions. It should be born in mind that the ROP 2007-2013 interventions covered only ERDF-funded assistance, whereas social issues were addressed as part of the Human Capital OP ESF-funded, managed nationally¹. The ROP 2014-2020 is more comprehensive as it comprises development of 'hard' infrastructure alongside social issues such as education, employment or assistance to those threatened with poverty and social exclusion.

New issues also need to be addressed. Today's challenges in the socio-economic sphere are unlike those from 10 or even 4 years ago, and include shortages of staff or aligning qualifications with the changing needs of the economy.

The major **changes** can be observed in comparison to the 2007-2013 programming period; they involved the strengthening or weakening of the former areas of intervention or the emergence of new ones, i.e.:

- focus on the region's periphery, driven by the assumption that its main centre and infrastructure having regional and national significance will be aided from sectoral programmes,
- development of R&D and innovation of enterprises,
- new investments in the economy – mainly in sectors with the biggest potential for growth – subordinating R&D financing to smart specialisation policies,
- launching an export support system,
- establishing cooperation between academia and business,
- improved consistency of teaching at individual stages of education,
- lesser intraregional disparities in students' competences,
- increased employment rate of the residents,
- improved access to specialised healthcare services,

¹The ROP implemented in 2007-2013 could only be financed from one fund; funds for social projects came from the centrally managed HR OP sectoral programme.

- enhanced quality of public space,
- improved transport and energy infrastructure, development of public transportation,
- revitalisation of degraded urban systems, which also includes measures aimed to boost their attractiveness for tourism,
- improved condition of the environment and an operational flood prevention system,
- limited expenditure on local roads and tourism development.

The Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Voivodship (ROP PV) 2014-2020 offers grant and assistance opportunities in the following priority axes.

Table 2. Priority axes and allocations in 2014-20 – ROP Pomorskie Voivodship

<i>Pomorskie Voivodship ROP 2014-2020</i>			
Priority allocation	Source of financing	ERDF allocation (EUR)	ERDF allocation (%)
1. Commercialisation of knowledge	ERDF	161,213,250	8.65
2. Enterprises	ERDF	174,647,688	9.37
3. Education	ESF	116,385,257	6.25
4. Vocational education and training	ERDF	67,172,188	3.61
5. Employment	ESF	223,677,915	12.01
6. Inclusion	ESF	114,306,948	6.14
7. Health	ERDF	107,475,500	5.77
8. Conversion	ERDF	161,213,250	8.65
9. Mobility	ERDF	335,860,939	18.03
10. Energy	ERDF	214,951,001	11.54
11. Environment	ERDF	120,909,938	6.49
12. Technical assistance	ESF	65,206,918	3.50

Source: own elaboration. based on *RPO WP 20014-20*, 2017.

ROP PV 2014-2020 is funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The EU allocation for the Programme totals EUR 1.86 billion, including EUR 1.34 billion from the ERDF and EUR 524.6 million from the ESF. The value of EU funding in the new programming period is higher than the allocation in ROP PV 2007-2013. Therefore, this is the largest ever investment programme in the history of the Pomorskie Voivodship which offers huge opportunities for the grant beneficiaries.

3.1.3 Implementation framework and partnership structures

Implementation framework

The management system in ROP PV 2014-2020 is essentially based on specific pragmatism drawing on extensive experience gained in the years 2007-2013. The management system both in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 was similar in a way that it offered the same instruments and funds to regional institutions (and all institutions in general). However, the share of EU funds allocated to regional level have increased from 25% to 40% as a result of transfer of part of ESF funds focused on human capital development to Regional Operational Programmes.

The contemporary system provides information which arrangements are effective and which should be avoided. The management system is designed in such a way as to ensure that all the complicated EU requirements are fulfilled in the most effective and least cumbersome manner. Being practically devoid of any superfluous red tape, it is not exactly straightforward because it needs to address all the European and national regulations and guidelines, as well as the whole diverse scope of the Programme's interventions. Significant difference is that the most important regulation was published six months before the start of the 2007-2013 period, while the earliest day of publishing key regulations for 2014-2020 period was just two weeks before the start of the programming period.

In comparison with the previous financing perspective (2007-2013), the following changes have been made in the Programme's management system:

- First, the Regional programmes (ROP) were established in 16 NUTS 2 regions (voivodships) with 25 % of share in total Polish Cohesion policy budget allocation 2007-2013, while currently the share have increased up to 40%.
- It is important to note that the funding for all the ROPs was done till 2013 through one fund (EFRR), while currently the Programme is a two-fund one, which means that it has the sign on of both the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. This solution helped to avoid the situation in which only one fund was operating in the regions and could spend only up to 10% for the needs that normally were difficult to justify. These two are to some extent 'worlds apart', which, however, have been quite effectively integrated.
- While in the 2007-2013 perspective ROP in some cases mattered more than the voivodship development strategy, while in the current financial perspective ROP is subordinated to the regional development strategy. The reason is probably simple: the budget of the EU was larger than the Polish budget. A characteristic feature is linking the management system of ROP PV 2014-2020 with the implementation system of the Development Strategy for the Pomorskie Voivodship 2020 (SRWP 2020), in operation at the Marshal Office. Many strategic projects arising from the Strategy are being implemented as part of ROP PV 2014-2020 on a competitive and non-competitive basis. One example of the synergy between the two systems is the participation of officials in charge of strategic projects in the evaluation of projects submitted under ROP 2014-2020.
- Despite the fact that in 2010 the Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted, the beneficiaries pretended not to know about it and not to use it in daily life till the end of 2013. As a result all parties (beneficiaries, management authorities and Brussels services) turned out to accept some displacement, such as urban regeneration instead of renovation, etc.
- An important change has been the implementation of parts of the Programme using the ITI formula in case of functional urban areas of larger cities.
- A special role has been assigned to the selection of regional policies concerning smart specialisation; this was done in an elaborate procedure aimed to eliminate initial proposals – with the participation of external experts, also from abroad. These policies, although not always written down in the Regional innovation strategy till 2020, are linked to the leading sectors of the region's economy with major enterprises of at least national significance, well-developed R&D; activity and ties with the local science and academic centres. It is based on the triple helix formula.
- To sum up, thanks to changes in regulations for 2014-2020 period, and not only thanks to significant increase of ROP financing (from 25% in the period of 2007-2013 to 40% on the country level for ROPs in 2014-2020) and strict utilization of rules there is a good chance that the funds for the contemporary period will be used even more effectively.

System of project selection

The adopted implementation system facilitates effective and efficient management and helps to **select good projects** owing to the following features:

- At the present, relatively early stage of the ROP implementation the **effectiveness of the system** is measured by the degree to which project selection, evaluation and contracting is advanced. In this respect, the Pomorskie Voivodship is unsurpassed in Poland, with a remarkable 55% of the Programme's budget already committed. Therefore, the system's effectiveness can be viewed as very high.
- The system in place also **helps to select good projects**. A considerable number of projects funded from the Programme are selected in a non-competitive process. These are projects pursuing the ITI strategy or the SRWP 2020, and therefore are by definition good, viable projects which in a comprehensive and cohesive way address the main problems and challenges identified during the multifaceted process of formulating each of these strategies. In turn, the quality of projects selected in a competitive procedure (calls for proposals) is ensured by the selection criteria which warrant their high standard and give priority to projects which best meet the Programme's objectives. The higher priority given to on-going evaluation of project evaluation also is in favour of their successful realisation. It is to some extent caused by the annual accounting mode.
- **Reaching the projects' readiness** to be evaluated and implemented has been a serious challenge. In order to select good projects, there must be a pool to choose from. For strategic projects, this often meant the need to formulate their detailed content with the involvement of many partners. For instance, urban revitalisation projects are typically prepared in a lengthy and complicated process. In projects selected in a competitive procedure, problems associated with their reaching readiness for implementation are frequently associated with carrying out the environmental impact assessment and obtaining the required permissions and approvals. In the final implementation stage of the Pomorskie ROP 2007-2013, part of the Programme funds, coming mainly from savings in the tenders, was earmarked for beneficiaries to prepare the necessary documentation for projects which were to be implemented in the 2014-2020 period.

Partnerships

Partnership principle is actively implemented in the framework of the Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Voivodship. Engagement of various stakeholders is secured by EU regulations, as well as by national, regional and local practices. Moreover, stakeholders are involved on different stages of the preparation and implementation of RPO and by different policy measures and structures. The most vital aspects of this phenomena will be discussed in this section of the report.

At the preparatory stage, i.e. during drafting and negotiating of the programme, non-governmental partners were invited to participate in the work of the Marshal Office. At the programming stage, projects submitted for ROP PV 2014-2020 were extensively consulted with various communities. This included 6 conferences and 30 consultation meetings with the participation of about 1150 representatives of local governments, public institutions, universities and colleges, non-governmental organisations, entrepreneurs, media and private individuals.

At the implementation stage, the critical role in addressing partnership principle is played by the Monitoring Committee. This body consists of 46 individuals representing regional and local authorities (17 people), national authorities (12 people), partners from business, non-governmental sector, higher education and R&D sector, labour unions, etc. (17 people, representing e.g. 7 NGOs). To date, the Committee has met 8 times, including 2 two-day sessions. Most of the meetings were preceded by workshops for the Committee members to discuss in detail issues which were to be resolved by the Committee at its forthcoming meeting. The members could freely voice their opinions based on the draft documents they had been sent earlier. The turnout at the workshops and at the meetings was invariably high.

In addition, stakeholders can be, and indeed are, involved in the discussion on the state of the ROP carried on during sessions of the regional assembly (Voivodeship sejmik). However, this platform is far less critical than the MC. The Pomeranian Territorial Forum (*Pomorskie Forum Terytorialne* - PFT) acts also as potentially useful platform for discussing the ROP between governmental and non-governmental sectors – it is worth notice however, that it does not limit its activity to the Cohesion policy.

3.2 Assessment of performance

3.2.1 Programme performance

Program outputs and results

Total number of completed projects financed under ROP 2007-2013 reached 1669 , roughly 45% of the total number of applications submitted under 99 calls for proposals. There were 1,312 of beneficiaries in total, with enterprises accounting for 79% of this value, and local communes – 11%. 94% of all local communes in the region benefitted directly from ROP 2007-2013 funds. According to share of funds obtained, local governments were the main beneficiary (61% of the total ERDF funding), followed by enterprises (33%), academic and research institutions (4%), and NGOs (2%) . Financial instruments were used as a tool for distributing part of the ROP funds to local enterprises. In total 5,601 loans and guarantees were extended to micro, small and medium enterprises, amounting to EUR 137.4 million. Also three start-ups were financed on the total amount of EUR 0.7 million.

The total ERDF spending under ROP 2007-2013 amounted to EUR 811,8 million. The breakdown across 10 priority axes is presented in the table below. The biggest share of funds were spent on Regional transport system, followed by support for the SME development and innovation.

Table 3. Total ERDF funding and no of projects across priority axes, ROP 2007-13, completed projects

<i>Pomorskie voivodship ROP 2007-2013</i>			
Priority axis	No of projects	ERDF funding [million EUR]	ERDF funding [% of total]
1. SME development and innovation	917	179	18.2
2. Knowledge society	43	55	6.1
3. Urban and metropolitan functions	29	164	15.7
4. Regional transport system	66	227	20.9
5. Environment and environmentally friendly energy	94	55	7.0
6. Tourism and cultural heritage	94	46	5.5
7. Health protection and emergency system	23	36	4.3
8. Local basic infrastructure	201	125	15.3
9. Local social infrastructure and civil initiatives	217	36	4.4
10. Technical assistance	39	27	2.8
Total	1723	950	100.0

Source: own elaboration, based on *ROP Pomorskie Final Implementation Report, 2017*

The absorption of funds offered under the Pomorskie ROP 2007-2013 significantly stimulated the region's development. It is estimated² that **the implementation of the Programme made the process of closing the region's gap to the EU average faster by 0.8 percentage point** (in the period concerned, closing the gap reached 14.1 percentage points compared to 13.3 percentage points it would have been without the ROP PV 2007-2013 intervention). These processes included both demand-side and supply-side effects; the latter should be visible after 2020, which is expected as a result of compounding the effects of ROP PV 2007-2013 and ROP PV 2014-2020.

The positive effects of the Programme are visible in all the areas comprised by the interventions under the adopted priority axes.

According to macroeconomic estimations implementation of Pomorskie ROP **has increased the regional GDP growth by about 1.5 pp in 2007-2015 (which was 1.9 lower than estimations from ex-ante evaluation)**. The greatest additional economic growth took place in the initial phase of the programming period (2009-2011). Moreover, it has also lead to **creation of 3 570 jobs (80% of which were created by SMEs participating in PA1)**.

Following the award of 665 grants for investment projects, 88 grants for participation in fairs and the co-financing of 110 projects promoting innovation in enterprises, employment was increased so as were sales revenues, net profits and percentage of enterprises engaged in export activity. As noted in Pomorskie ROP Ex-Post evaluation, "The vast majority of (...) beneficiaries (non-refundable) commented on positive impact of intervention on their business competitiveness (increase of: revenue – 70%, profit – 65%, employment – 65%). Positive impact on competitiveness has also been noted by companies given returnable grants (increase of: revenue – 79%, profit – 78%, employment – 39%)"

As part of the JEREMIE initiative, over 7,500 loans and guarantees were extended to microbusinesses and small enterprises, which had a positive effect on the expansion and a stable increase of the competitive advantage of the firms which received assistance. It is estimated that these activities brought about greater effects than awarding grants because firms were more cautious in applying for returnable assistance funds, which were used many times over, in effect leading to a greater number of firms being supported.

Business environment institutions were also assisted, which fostered the establishment of clusters, helped to strengthen the R&D potential and stimulate the activity of enterprises taking place outside of Poland.

21 projects to develop the teaching infrastructure of higher education institutions involved the redevelopment of the existing facilities and furnishing them with new equipment, albeit the provision did not match the actual needs.

4 projects involved the construction of a broadband network, while 19 were related to e-services, their development and implementation. These projects were delivered solely in rural areas and aimed to improve Internet access for the local residents. However, the scale of these projects was evaluated as moderate, even though the planned results were more than achieved.

Public transportation was improved following the implementation of infrastructure projects and purchase of rolling stock. These projects were implemented in metropolitan areas and helped to enhance the living conditions of urban residents and improve the condition of the natural environment by reducing pollutant emissions.

² *Ocena efektów realizacji Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego dla Województwa Pomorskiego na lata 2007-2013. Raport końcowy*, IMAPP-IBS, Warsaw.

Other initiatives implemented in the region included revitalisation of the degraded urban fabric, also with the aim of improving the social and vocational situation of the urban residents. The broad range of public consultations conducted before and after revitalisation activities should be particularly emphasised.

9 projects aiming to enhance the attractiveness of development areas in the cities and 44 JESSICA initiative projects were intended to strengthen the supralocal functions of the urban centres which received support. Although the planned number of users of the new infrastructure was not reached, most of the projects proved highly useful for the residents.

The interregional transport system was upgraded by improving the road connections between the region's major economic centres, resulting in a better accessibility of the transport hubs along motorways and in sea harbours. 366 km of roads were modernised. Such effects were best visible in the eastern part of the voivodship, where other types of EU funding were also available. The planned indicator values were exceeded. Following the implementation of the Pomorskie ROP, access to railway transport was improved in the region, both in passenger and cargo traffic. According to ex-post evaluation, **both the road transport accessibility indicator and railway accessibility indicator increased by 21%** in the period of 2007 – 2013.

Ecological threats were reduced and the condition of the environment was improved by rationalising the waste management system and landfill reclamation. The improved sewerage also helps to reduce the volume of contaminants penetrating with rainwater to ground and surface waters. The monitoring systems and flood risk maps were improved. The overall effects of the intervention are consistent with the initial assumptions. As a result of the implementation of the cohesion policy, 2% of the region surface and over 1/5 of its residents were included in the flood protection scheme.

Most of the funds expended on the extension and modernisation of the energy infrastructure were spent on investment projects involving the installation of solar thermal collectors in private households and in public utility buildings and their modernisation. In this area of intervention, neither the planned output nor result indicators were achieved, and the prevalence of simple forms of thermal energy generation (solar thermal collectors) cannot be regarded as a sufficient achievement even though some lasting ecological effects and savings were produced.

The region's characteristic features suggest placing an emphasis on water and bicycle tourism in the expansion and modernisation of the tourism infrastructure. Promoting the affluent and touristically diverse areas of the region produced high values of result indicators as it boosted the popularity of certain tourist destinations and cultural facilities. The repairs, maintenance works, conversions and refurbishments of churches, castles, postindustrial facilities and castles substantially increased the effectiveness of such promotion.

The healthcare provision for the region's residents (access to and quality of the services) was improved thanks to the co-financing awarded to 12 projects involving the development of infrastructure and purchase of additional medical equipment for specialist hospitals. Furthermore, the foundations for the development of an integrated regional emergency services system were laid. The result indicators, affected by considerable inertia (deaths caused by lifestyle diseases) were only slightly improved. More visible effects were obtained at the local level, where new equipment purchases helped to enhance the quality of diagnostic and medical services.

The construction or modernisation of municipal or county roads leading to investment sites, attractive tourist destinations, or connecting local centres of economic growth locally boosted the area's attractiveness for investment, tourist and settlement activity. These projects only partly produced the anticipated results, with the least improvement being made in road traffic safety.

Activities to foster local economic development were excessively dispersed, while the local systems undertook many diverse initiatives (with a total of 80 implemented projects). In consequence, their

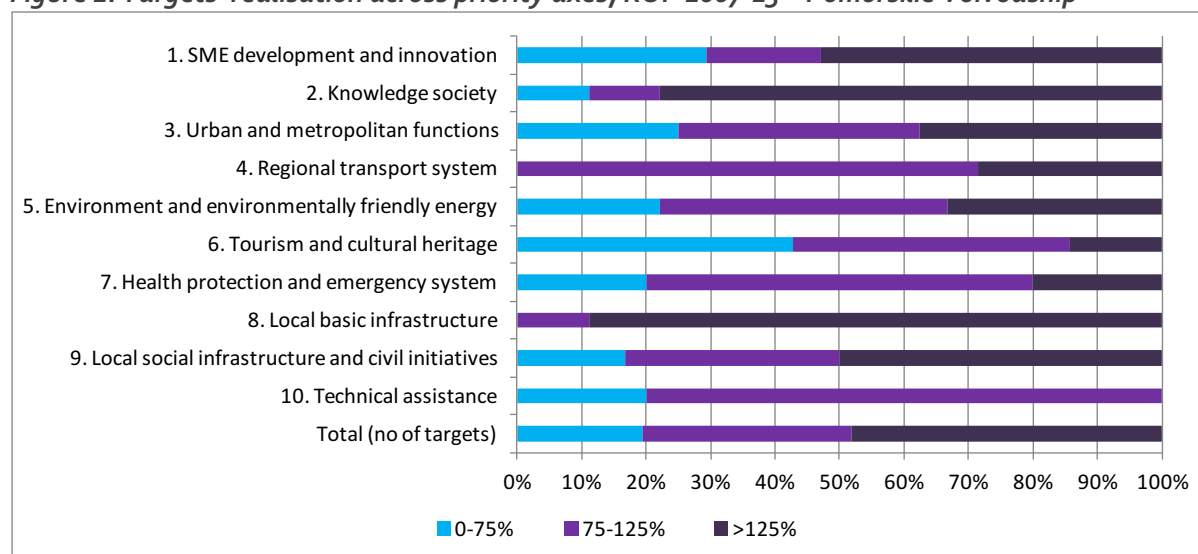
results remained dispersed, and multiplier effects were only negligible. Too great emphasis was placed on the construction of new infrastructure, and too little – on conceptual work relating to the use of such infrastructure to stimulate socio-economic growth.

Nearly 80 projects aimed to develop the local environmental protection infrastructure mostly involved the extension and modernisation of water and sewage networks and local wastewater treatment plants. Notwithstanding the scattered nature of these activities, which precluded the establishment of fully-fledged network systems, the results can be viewed as satisfactory, which is of particular importance in a region where tourism plays such a significant role.

The extension and modernisation of the local social and public infrastructure produced positive results. Access to educational, cultural, sports and leisure activities was considerably broadened, primarily in peripheral areas remaining out of reach of large urban centres. The scope of intervention measured by output indicators proved more than satisfactory, and the use of the infrastructure significantly surpassed the expectations.

Out of 77 ex-ante targets set in the ROP 2007-13, majority has been met, with only 15 falling below the threshold of 75 of an expected value. Share of failed targets across priority axes is rather stable (11÷25), with a negative exception of tourism and cultural heritage and SME development and innovation where more targets have fallen below the 75 threshold. In case of Regional transport system and local basic infrastructure the achievements were the most spectacular with no targets below 75%.

Figure 1. Targets' realisation across priority axes, ROP 2007-13 – Pomorskie Voivodship



Source: own elaboration, based on *ROP Pomorskie Final Implementation Report, 2017*

Main achievements and obstacles

A study on the results of the Programme (www.rpo.pomorskie.eu) found that it produced visible effects both on the macro scale (higher GDP, employment and investment rate) and on the micro scale (changes in specific municipalities or entities).

The following areas supported by the Pomorskie ROP should particularly be highlighted in comparison to other regions:

- the JEREMIE initiative – effective and efficient support to SME development in the regions, also – quite importantly – in structurally poor areas. A total of 5,600 businesses were assisted,
- “Invest in Pomerania” – the best-evaluated system offering services to inward investors in Poland (the project is continued as part of ROP PV 2014-2020 as a strategic venture),

- revitalisation – which effectively combined infrastructure with soft support from the ESF. Pomerania was the first to adopt an approach whereby the ERDF/ESF should be integrated and conditional; what is a standard today was not so at the time,
- strengthening the region's higher education institutions, which, owing to the Programme's investments, can now offer courses and programmes which respond to labour market needs,
- halting a downward trend in the carriage of passengers by public transport. A positive change is particularly well visible in Gdańsk, where I&E OP and ROP were mutually complementary, which produced a synergy effect and led to a massive increase in passenger numbers,
- linking the A1 Motorway with the regional road network – access roads to motorway hubs were modernised,
- the problem of rural residents' access to the **sewage network** has largely been resolved.

The current ROP (2014-2020) already has some **accomplishments** (bearing in mind that it was launched relatively recently), e.g.:

- From its very beginning the implementation of the Pomorskie ROP 2014-2020 has been very intense, with very many grants being awarded in a competitive and non-competitive selection process, which took into account various projects and investments awaiting support on the one hand, and on the other – the need to achieve a considerable progress in the Programme's implementation by the end of 2018 so as not to lose the performance reserve representing 5-7% of the total allocation for each priority axis. In effect, a **record level of contracting** has been achieved compared to the rest of the country; it currently accounts for as much as **55%** of the total allocation for the ROP PV 2014-2020. Now an intense phase of project implementation is about to begin, with the Programme's funds being injected into the region's economy, and tangible effects visible on the ground are expected very soon.
- One obstacle to the Programme implementation has been, and still is, **failure by the Government to fulfil some of the so-called ex-ante conditions**, that is the requirements concerning the adoption of specific regulations or strategies which must be fulfilled by the Member State before the onset of operational programmes or in the initial years of their implementation. This is a prerequisite for the disbursement of funds in a given area or sector. The ex-ante condition relating to the **healthcare** sector was not fully met until April 2017, while such conditions concerning **water economy** and **waste management** are still waiting to be fulfilled.
- **Implementing a part of the Programme using the ITI (integrated territorial investment) formula** also poses a challenge. Several dozen municipalities from the Tricity (Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot) metropolitan area have formed an association which co-decides on the way the funds earmarked for the region's development are expended. This partnership operates independently of the ROP Managing Institution and formally acts as the Intermediate Body, which means that it must follow the Programme's rather complicated implementation procedures. Nevertheless, ITI is certainly a significant and effective instrument, being especially useful for encouraging local governments to collaborate, which in the past were not always willing to get involved.
- One can observe limited interest of entrepreneurs in the first competitions. This is mostly due to their unfavorable experience of the previous programming period. However it is also related to the exceptionally low interest rate on loans for entrepreneurs which may induce beneficiaries to raise their financing on the commercial market. Moreover the dynamic changes on the labour market may challenge the programme realization. In the voivodship it is related to the influence of the 500+programme on the labour market and also with the growing immigration from Ukraine.

The implementation of the Pomorskie ROP was hindered by the following phenomena and processes:

- **Economic crisis** – many firms had to curb down their investment plans and postpone or forgo more risky projects. Another problem was the shortage of capital available to businesses, which was the reason why it was resolved to implement returnable instruments on a larger scale than originally assumed.
- **Spatial polarisation of growth**, which is constantly growing – the intraregional disparities in the development level are not getting smaller. However, it can hardly be expected of the Pomorskie ROP to reverse this process, although the Programme did certainly alleviate it. It also offered opportunities for the less developed parts of the region to overcome their structural barriers.
- **Wide differences in the absorption potential** in the Pomorskie Voivodship; more affluent local governments/entities were more successful in calls for proposals than those from less-developed areas. However, the arrangements which were worked out as part of the Pomorskie ROP (support to less developed areas, including basic infrastructure and selection preferences) allowed for the funds to be relatively evenly distributed in per capita terms at the *powiat* (county) and subregional level; this made the Pomorskie Voivodship stand out from other regions.
- **The Pomorskie ROP set rather ambitious goals**, especially if we take into account the level of economic development, infrastructural gap, competitiveness and innovation of the region's enterprises. Strengthening the infrastructure to support e.g. innovation and competitiveness requires time. It is only in this financing perspective when real added value can be created based on the infrastructure that was built in the years 2008-2015.
- **Too scarce resources** relating to personnel as well as organisational and financial aspects of some beneficiaries compared to the scale and level of difficulty of the tasks due to the simultaneous implementation of several, frequently large-scale, projects. The beneficiaries rightly tried to use this unique window of opportunity to make rapid progress, but it was not possible to promptly improve the institutional capacity to allow complex management of projects. The lack of such capacity was particularly well visible in the crucial areas of **public procurement**, where strict EU standards which had absolutely to be complied with resulted in widespread financial penalties being imposed as a result of inspections and audits. The many training programmes offered to the beneficiaries in this area were not able to improve this situation in any significant way, also because of an excessive workload and high turnover of the beneficiaries' staff. Also small and medium size enterprises had low level of knowledge on financial possibilities and also came across complicated grants clearance system.
- **Instability and uncertainty of legal regulations** and various guidelines and interpretations definitely made the Programme's implementation process much more demanding. After the Pomorskie ROP 2007-2013 had been launched, it turned out that the Polish laws were not harmonised with the Community laws in several important areas. This was mainly the case of **public procurement law**, but had particularly grave consequences for **environmental impact assessments**. There was a serious threat that most of infrastructure investment projects would not be eligible for co-financing due to their being prepared without taking into account the EU environmental requirements. Repeating the necessary environmental procedures delayed the implementation of very many projects even by as long as several years. In turn, the Commission guidelines concerning the execution of **financial instruments**, which were published too late and were amended too often, led to acute problems in this regard because the Programme was rolled out without any detailed knowledge as to the subsequent expectations and requirements of the European Commission.

- Too stringent national regulations governing **public-private partnerships**, as a result of which they play a negligible role in the Programme's implementation, being limited to the collaboration of enterprises with the science sector.
- The ongoing **centralisation**, assuming many tasks and competences earlier resting with the local government by the state administration (agricultural extension centres, regional chambers of auditors, the growing role of the voivodship governors in making decisions concerning the expenditure of ROP funds).

The main challenges regarding implementation include:

- The simplification of procedures that are criticised by many institutions' representatives (mostly those institutions as they were void of European regulation till May 2014).
- The sticking to the requirements of the EU regulations and restrictions (and similarly ability of the European Commission to follow the regulations and not to change it in order to spend more money).
- Unknown (as yet) results of Brexit from EU and its impact on Union's budgets.
- For instance, the selection of best projects under urban regeneration (and other) schemes.

Otherwise it is clear that effectiveness strongly improved in Pomorskie region (and other regions, as regulation was addressed to the countries, not to specific regions). However, the differences in spending money effectively can be observed between various regions. In general these structures were good for implementation. Especially for implementation of projects on demand side.

General orientation of ROP

In the Programme's delivery, the greatest emphasis falls on several issues whose roles **are changing** as ROP advances to subsequent implementation stages:

- **compliance with the regulations and guidelines** must be ensured throughout the Programme's duration as it ultimately determines the eligibility of projects and expenses made on their execution to make them eligible for receiving support under the Programme,
- owing to the indirect objective, which is to use the performance reserve in 2018, a suitable rate at which **the funds are disbursed** is of particular importance in the present, initial phase,
- although the entire Programme implementation aims **to achieve the planned results**, at the subsequent stages it will be necessary to check whether this is actually taking place and, if needed, adjustments will be made in the implementation model,
- **dissemination of information about the Programme's achievements** is necessary at all times so as to build the required support for the Programme among the general public, and will become crucial when such achievements assume the form of specific, tangible effects.

3.2.2 Programme performance – survey results

In general the respondents have a very positive opinion on implementation of programmes within framework of Cohesion Policy funds. They appreciate slightly more projects implemented at local level, but also almost 80% of respondents assess the implementation at regional level at least as well

Q1. How well – in your opinion – have Cohesion policy funds been used in your municipality and region?

	Very well	Well	Acceptable	Poorly	Very poorly	Don't know
Your municipality	44,0%	40,0%	14,0%	2,0%	0,0%	0,0%

Your region	42,0%	38,0%	20,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
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Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

The majority of respondents (c.a. 80%) believe that Cohesion Policy 'largely' or 'completely' reinforced development objectives both at regional level. The same opinion were expressed by 74% respondents in case of local level. Nevertheless, any respondent have not assessed negatively achievements of cohesion policy in this respect.

Q2. To what extent have the Cohesion Policy objectives reinforced the development objectives of your municipality and region?

	Completely	Largely	In some way	Not much	Not at all	Don't know
Your municipality	14,0%	60,0%	24,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%
Your region	10,0%	68,0%	18,0%	0,0%	0,0%	4,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

There is a general believe that Cohesion Policy funds lead to a decrease of differences in all analysed dimensions. According to respondents the impact of Cohesion Policy was especially positive in terms of catching up of poorer countries with EU average. The same refers to a decrease of interregional differences in level of development and to lesser extent between urban and rural areas within individual countries. However, more respondents tend to notice that the impact on reduction on intraregional disparities have been less significant, but no so many (12%) accuses Cohesion Policy of growth of such a disparities.

Q3. To what extent have Cohesion policy funds helped to increase or decrease:

	Decreased	Somewhat decreased	Had no impact	Somewhat increased	Increased	Don't know
Differences in the development level between poorer and richer regions in your country	30,0%	52,0%	4,0%	4,0%	6,0%	4,0%
Differences in the development level between rural and urban areas in your region	32,0%	46,0%	10,0%	4,0%	6,0%	2,0%
Differences in the development level between poorer and richer areas in your region	22,0%	52,0%	10,0%	6,0%	6,0%	4,0%
Differences in the development level between your country and other EU Member states	44,0%	44,0%	0,0%	2,0%	4,0%	6,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

Vast majority of respondents underline that Cohesion Policy helped residents of Pomorskie Voivodship to support European Union even more than in 2006, so at the beginning of Polish membership in the EU. Approximately 40% believe that the impact of Cohesion Policy was very significant in this respect.

Q4. In your opinion, has the Cohesion Policy during the last 10 years or so helped to make residents of your municipality/region support the European Union more?

It has helped a lot	It has helped rather	It has had no impact	It has had a rather negative impact	It has had a very negative impact	Don't know
40,0%	46,0%	8,0%	0,0%	0,0%	6,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

Respondents reports some problems associated with the implementation process of the Cohesion Policy. The most popular reason for complaints included scarcity of Cohesion policy funds and lack of funds for own contribution (co-financing). Another frequently reported difficulties were the audit and inspection requirements concerning the implemented projects and included excessive bureaucracy in application processes. Among the less frequently reported obstacles to the implementation of the Cohesion Policy, the relatively most popular were unclear objectives for evaluating project results and access to qualified staff. At the same time, the respondents seldom mentioned the difficulties in the access to loans and credits and poor cooperation of the partners in the implementation of projects.

Q5. How significant was the impact of the following problems and challenges during the implementation of Cohesion policy projects?

	Very significant	Significant	Average	Insignificant	Not at all	Don't know
Scarcity of Cohesion policy funds	14,0%	50,0%	22,0%	8,0%	2,0%	4,0%
Problems with obtaining Cohesion policy financing such as complicated rules for submitting applications	8,0%	34,0%	36,0%	16,0%	2,0%	4,0%
Excessive, cumbersome reporting	14,0%	28,0%	28,0%	18,0%	8,0%	4,0%
Unclear objectives for evaluating project results	4,0%	34,0%	30,0%	16,0%	12,0%	4,0%
Poor cooperation between project partners	8,0%	18,0%	36,0%	18,0%	10,0%	10,0%
Excessive audit and control during or after the project completion	14,0%	26,0%	32,0%	14,0%	8,0%	6,0%
Lack of funds for own contribution (co-financing)	18,0%	32,0%	28,0%	14,0%	4,0%	4,0%
Difficult access to credit and/or loans for own contribution	6,0%	22,0%	28,0%	24,0%	12,0%	8,0%
Lack of capacity such as qualified staff	12,0%	20,0%	40,0%	16,0%	8,0%	4,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

The respondents viewed most positively the changes in their environment which would not have been possible without EU funding. The relevance of the disbursed funds was also assessed very well. According to respondents the spending of Cohesion policy funds is adequately controlled and the administration of Cohesion policy has been delivered in an efficient (cost effective) manner.

These opinions were accompanied by the belief that fraud, including corruption and nepotism were rare during the Cohesion Policy implementation. However, more respondents expressed concerns regarding irregularities in the disbursement of funds caused by the lack of compliance with the EU law. Nevertheless, very small share of respondents believed that in most cases EU money were wasted on the wrong projects.

Q6. To what extent have Cohesion policy funds helped to increase or decrease:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cohesion policy funds finance those investment projects which your municipality/region needs the most	18,0%	54,0%	18,0%	6,0%	0,0%	4,0%
In your municipality/region Cohesion policy funding goes to investment projects which are most valued by the local residents	12,0%	54,0%	24,0%	8,0%	0,0%	2,0%
There are many irregularities in spending Cohesion policy funds due to non-compliance with EU rules	6,0%	8,0%	22,0%	36,0%	6,0%	22,0%
Fraud, such as corruption or nepotism, is common in spending Cohesion policy funds	2,0%	2,0%	10,0%	44,0%	24,0%	18,0%
There have been many positive changes in your municipality/region thanks to Cohesion policy funds, which would not have been achieved without the funds	44,0%	54,0%	2,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
The spending of Cohesion policy funds is adequately controlled	18,0%	46,0%	18,0%	8,0%	2,0%	8,0%
The money from Cohesion policy funds is in most cases wasted on the wrong projects	0,0%	6,0%	26,0%	38,0%	16,0%	14,0%
The administration of Cohesion policy has been delivered in an efficient (cost effective) manner	8,0%	44,0%	20,0%	10,0%	0,0%	18,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

Accessibility and adequacy of monitoring and evaluation reports are assessed rather positively. However, there are some concerns regarding their understandability and usefulness for improving the policy-making cycle. It may thus suggest that in this area the focus is rather on compliance with external regulations, than on actually employing this data in everyday practice.

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

			nor disagree			
The monitoring and evaluation reports provide adequate information on the implementation and performance of the programme/s	4,0%	58,0%	28,0%	2,0%	0,0%	8,0%
The monitoring and evaluation reports of the programme/s are easily accessible	2,0%	30,0%	36,0%	18,0%	0,0%	14,0%
The monitoring and evaluation reports of the programme/s are easy to understand	2,0%	18,0%	48,0%	22,0%	4,0%	6,0%
The monitoring and evaluation reports results are used to improve policy-making and implementation	2,0%	30,0%	32,0%	14,0%	2,0%	20,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=68

Policy workshops and training are rather widespread, with only 10% of respondents claiming that no representatives of their organization took part in such events over the last two years. Management is by far the most prevalent topic, with ca. 2/3 of respondents confirming that someone from their organization participated in such a training event. Trainings in communication are much less popular, suggesting that this type of events are rather targeted for specialists only.

Q9. In what Cohesion policy workshop or training sessions did the representatives of your organisation/ municipality/ region participate in the last two years?

	Yes
Management	64.7%
Control	42.7%
Monitoring	30.9%
Evaluation	35.3%
Communication	23.5%
Nobody participated in such events	23.5%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

3.2.3 Partnership principle

The Monitoring Committee remains the primary platform for stakeholders' involvement. Although this platform is largely appreciated by regional and local authorities as well as stakeholders, the latter point out a number of its weak points, e.g. too many issues placed in agenda for each meeting, which inhibits more profound discussion about the important topics. Moreover, some respondents claim that the level of some stakeholders' engagement in Monitoring Committee is not satisfactory.

In addition to the Monitoring Committee, there are other forums to discuss Cohesion policy implementation and achievements in the region. The Pomeranian Territorial Forum (Pomorskie Forum Terytorialne - PFT), which acts as a venue for exchanging information and experiences. The Forum, however, does not restrict its activity merely to the Cohesion policy, but – as enshrined in our Strategy – it has been set up to provoke and organise strategic debate and strengthen cooperation between the key stakeholders of pro-development activities in the region. The Forum was

established by the Board of the Pomorskie Voivodship in 2013 and meets regularly twice a year. It is a 25-strong body bringing together representatives of the region's major actors: former marshals and governor of the voivodship, representatives of the authorities of the region's main cities, entrepreneurs, NGOs, academic and research institutions. The Forum's main tasks include: analysing the key processes and developments taking place in the region while looking at the impact of Community and national policies and strategies, analysing the progress and effects of the Strategy and the Regional Strategic Programmes, and formulating opinions and recommendations concerning the implementation of regional development policies. To date, the Forum has met 5 times to discuss such issues as possible development scenarios until 2030, measures to support creative and talented individuals living in the region and to attract such individuals to live in the region, or the impact of migration processes on the region's development and formulation of relevant regional policies.

The Cohesion policy and its results are also discussed during the sessions of the Regional Assembly of the Pomorskie Voivodship, which are open to all the interested parties, or at the meetings of various bodies such as the Association of Municipalities in the Pomorskie Voivodship, Association of Counties in the Pomorskie Voivodship, Voivodship Council for Social Dialogue, Pomeranian Council of Non-Governmental Organizations, etc.

Numerous conferences and debates on the Cohesion policy are also a significant Programme component – not only as part of public consultations, but also in connection with the evaluation of development effects achieved in the region thanks to Cohesion policy (such as the conference summarising ROP PV 2007-2013 held in March this year). These conferences are open to the general public, attract many participants and inspire heated discussions, which proves that the region's residents are increasingly aware of the role of EU funding.

For local projects such as e.g. revitalisation of specific urban complexes, meetings with the local residents are held to discuss project assumptions, their planned execution and expected effects. NGOs are also active at such meetings, which may in effect lead to modifying the discussed projects so as to include valid suggestions from individuals and bodies concerned.

Projects implemented by the Local Action Groups are agreed by the group members, while interested residents and NGOs may forward their suggestions through the local councillors.

Projects undertaken as part of Integrated Territorial Investments are agreed by the ITI Association, which operates as an association of municipalities and counties that make up a spatially and functionally homogeneous metropolitan area.

There is a shared feeling in the region, that the structures provided as a part of partnership principle implementation deliver an efficient framework for accountability and multilevel governance. No significant issues with openness, access to information or procedures have been identified.

The general opinion of the stakeholders on the implementation of the partnership principle is positive, especially with regard to providing an effective mechanism for creating shared understanding and shared commitments to achieve programme's objectives. However, almost half of all respondents reported that partners tend to be interested only in promoting their own interests. It may suggest that expectations regarding the functioning of the partnership principle were rather low.

Q7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the operation of the partnership principle in practice?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

The way the programme partnership operates is inclusive, open and fair	4,0%	52,0%	22,0%	10,0%	0,0%	12,0%
The operation of the programme's partnership principle facilitates a shared understanding and shared commitments by partners to achieving the programme's objectives	8,0%	54,0%	20,0%	6,0%	6,0%	6,0%
Partners are only interested in promoting their own organisational and financial interests	6,0%	38,0%	24,0%	22,0%	0,0%	10,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

All in all, there is a shared feeling in the region, that the structures provided as a part of partnership principle implementation deliver an efficient framework for accountability and multilevel governance. No significant issues with openness, access to information or procedures have been identified.

3.3 Assessment of added value

The added value concept understood not only as additional impacts on developmental outcomes provided by EU involvement in regional policy, but also to governance, learning and visibility effects as well as spill-overs into domestic systems and related innovation and efficiency improvements was presented below regarding financial, strategic, administrative as well as democratic indirect results of Cohesion Policy.

The overall added value of the Pomorskie ROP has been created through components from the specific Programme's segments. The following examples can be quoted:

- Devising effective and efficient delivery mechanisms, particularly as part of the JEREMIE initiative, and testing the returnable assistance system in the form of capital injections. The new experiences led to a wider use of returnable instruments in ROP PV 2014-2020 than was the case in ROP PV 2007-2013, which broadened the potential range of support on the one hand (as the same funds could be used more than once) and on the other increased the funds' effective use.
- Supporting public utility facilities from the ROP PV funds largely increased the numbers of visitors to the facilities which had received such assistance. One particularly relevant example in this regard is the Centre for Promotion and Local Education of the 'Kaszuby' Fishing Group; there are many other similar centres across the region which were initiated thanks to support from ROP; they play a major role in education and culture, thus expanding access to these forms of activity to the residents of peripheral areas, and thereby increasing social cohesion in the region.
- Much better transport connections linking Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot (i.e. Tricity) due to the development of the Pomeranian Metropolitan Railway; in the first 6 months of 2017, it carried 1.6 million passengers, facilitating job and employment opportunities, and increasing access to tourist attractions and to educational and cultural facilities.
- One important element of added value is much wider access to both basic and specialist healthcare due to the support offered to the local healthcare centres and their provision with state-of-the-art diagnostic and medical equipment.

In general terms, an acceleration of growth by 0.8 percentage point (compared to the anticipated rate of growth with no EU assistance) in reducing the gap to the EU's average can be viewed as tangible proof of the success of the Pomorskie ROP and its role in stimulating the region's development.

Strategic complementarity

One important aspect in analysing the achievements of ROP 2007-13 in various thematic fields of intervention is the complementarity with other sources of Cohesion Policy funds spend in the region. Qualitative analysis of complementarity was undertaken in several evaluation studies, as well as in the final ex-post evaluation.

Evaluators concluded that the complementarity between various projects cofunded with different projects was achieved at different levels, and increased both utility and effectiveness of investment, especially in such fields as:

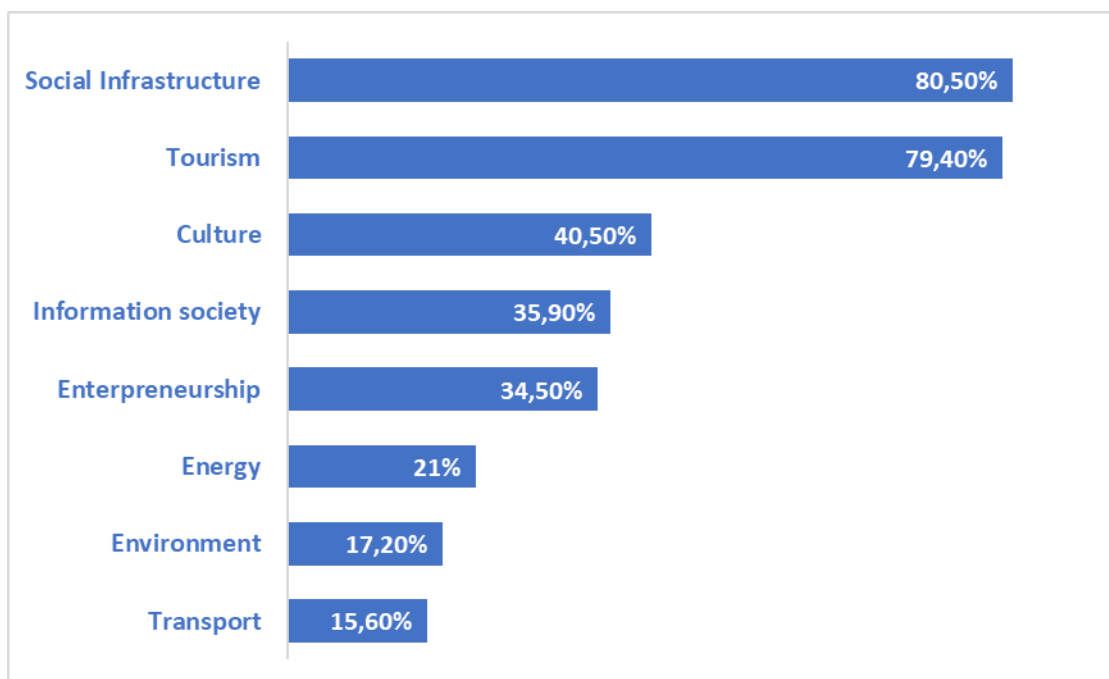
- Healthcare (improvement of access to medical rescue services due to complementarity between ROP and OP Infrastructure and Environment);
- Information Society (complementarity between ROP (provision of basic infrastructure) and OP Innovative Economy (creating networks);
- Transport (multimodal complementarity, e.g. connections between Lech Walesa Airport and Tricity (railway) and other part of region (roads)).

Yet, complementarity between ROP and some programmes was limited, e.g. only 11% of OP Human Capital projects implemented in the Pomorskie were assessed as complimentary to ROP projects³.

It is worth noted that the high level of complementarity was achieved as a result of strong coordination effort undertaken by the Regional Board. From 2009 there were weekly board meetings which were entirely devoted to increase coordination of all EU funded investments in Pomorskie. Additionally the Regional Board adopted Plan of EU Funds absorption which aims were to support sub-regional partners in contributing to broader strategic frameworks, to analyse funding possibilities, to maintain an updated database about all EU Funded projects in Pomorskie.

Fig. 2. Share of ROP Pomorskie 2007-2013 funding in total Cohesion Policy funds in the region, across thematic fields.

³ *Sprawozdanie końcowe z realizacji...*, p. 92



Note: numbers in brackets refers to the list of 86 priorities defined by European Commission for the 2007-13 period;

Source: own elaboration, based on *Sprawozdanie końcowe...* 2017

Administrative

As mentioned before, main achievements in terms of value added in administration is increased capacity to adapt new strategic approach into domestic policy systems. In 2004, 2007 and in particular 2014 regional authorities were able to adjust to all the changes. The regional authorities turned out to be very skilful in adopting the changes of the domestic policy systems to the needs of the region (in particular through implementing projects of innovation or SMEs sectors as a infrastructural support for these sectors (and, though not too big, other as well).

The positive spill over effects were particularly observed in adapting project-based funding, increased use of intervention logic, approach to use monitoring and evaluation tools outside Cohesion Policy domain. In institutional terms, the experiences gained during ROP PV 2007-2013 considerably helped to prepare another programme, ROP PV 2014-2020, make it more embedded in the region's development strategy and adopt unconventional regional smart specialisation policies, drawing both on the anticipated development directions of innovative economy and on the current and future innovative and economic potentials of the region.

Democratic

There is some evidence that cohesion policy strengthened the role of consultations, partnerships, multilevel-governance in the region. On the one hand, the involvement of stakeholders in ROPs preparation and implementation strengthened the belief that their knowledge, know-how and insights can be beneficial for public policies creation and delivery. In effect, regional and local authorities see stakeholders' involvement at least as a good practice, if not the necessary element of efficient policymaking. On the other hand, one can argue, that the process of increasing involvement of stakeholders (or democratisation of public policy making at the regional level), was an expected development (taking into account the continuous improvement of civil society in Poland and the process of innovation diffusion in policy making) and could well happen even without ROP or the overall Cohesion Policy.

Significance of Cohesion Policy added value

The value added of programs financed from European sources was particularly visible in the first period of Poland's membership in the EU, especially in the context of lower funding levels in 2004-2006. On the one hand in the later period of 2007-2013, the importance of products and results achieved by operational programs in terms of additional effects and overall added value increased. On the other hand, the growth of allocation has strengthened also the importance of domestic financial contribution. In the case of public sector entities, this often led to an increase in the level of debt, which in the current programming period has reduced the absorption capacity of some beneficiaries - especially at the local level. Larger resources allocated to the enterprise sector have triggered private capital partly because not all projects costs were eligible for EU funding. In the 2014-2020 programming period, the stronger links between the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Operational Program have been developed, although it is still important to note that the scale of the European funds is much higher than domestic public resources. The importance of monitoring and evaluating the effects of EU programs has undoubtedly increased, but it is still possible to express concerns about the use of the knowledge gained in this way in the programming and implementation of EU programs, and the transfer of good practice to national regional policy. Undoubtedly, the role of partnership in the implementation of EU programs has been strengthened. To sum it up on the one hand, the significance of the additional effects and value added of the ROP has increased, but on the other, taking into account the increase in the tangible effects of the implemented program as a result of increased financial allocation, it should be noted that the role of Cohesion Policy added value was relatively lower than in the first years of Poland's membership in the European Union.

The overall added value of the Pomorskie ROP has been created through components from the specific Programme's segments. The following examples can be quoted:

- Devising effective and efficient delivery mechanisms, particularly as part of the JEREMIE initiative, and testing the returnable assistance system in the form of capital injections. The new experiences led to a wider use of returnable instruments in ROP PV 2014-2020 than was the case in ROP PV 2007-2013, which broadened the potential range of support on the one hand (as the same funds could be used more than once) and on the other increased the funds' effective use.
- Supporting public utility facilities from the ROP PV funds largely increased the numbers of visitors to the facilities which had received such assistance. One particularly relevant example in this regard is the Centre for Promotion and Local Education of the 'Kaszuby' Fishing Group; there are many other similar centres across the region which were initiated thanks to support from ROP; they play a major role in education and culture, thus expanding access to these forms of activity to the residents of peripheral areas, and thereby increasing social cohesion in the region.
- Much better transport connections linking Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot (i.e. Tricity) due to the development of the Pomeranian Metropolitan Railway; in the first 6 months of 2017, it carried 1.6 million passengers, facilitating job and employment opportunities, and increasing access to tourist attractions and to educational and cultural facilities.
- One important element of added value is much wider access to both basic and specialist healthcare due to the support offered to the local healthcare centres and their provision with state-of-the-art diagnostic and medical equipment.

In general terms, an acceleration of growth by 0.8 percentage point (compared to the anticipated rate of growth with no EU assistance) in reducing the gap to the EU's average can be viewed as tangible proof of the success of the Pomorskie ROP and its role in stimulating the region's development.

In institutional terms, the experiences gained during ROP PV 2007-2013 considerably helped to prepare another programme, ROP PV 2014-2020, make it more embedded in the region's development strategy and adopt unconventional regional smart specialisation policies, drawing both on the anticipated development directions of innovative economy and on the current and future innovative and economic potentials of the region.

4 Cohesion policy communication

4.1 Approach to communication

4.1.1 Overall approach to communication in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020

The main strategic objective of the ROP Pomorskie communication plan in 2007-2013 was **to support the implementation of the Regional Operational Program for Pomorskie Voivodship for the years 2007 – 2013 in order to optimize the absorption and use of European Funds available for the region** (Communication Plan, p. 4).

In order to achieve this strategic objective, 5 detailed operational goals were introduced:

- 1) to promote European Funds as a regional development stimuli and their complementarity with regional development policy
- 2) to motivate potential beneficiaries to apply for EU funds available in Pomorskie in order to fully absorb allocated aid
- 3) to strengthen partnership principle and mechanisms for cooperation in order to optimize the use of EU Funds in the region
- 4) to promote transparent and effective implementation system of European Funds, especially in regard to: (I) process of project proposals generation, assessment and selection, (II) project implementation (including control mechanisms) and (III) access to information;
- 5) to raise awareness of Pomorskie citizens about the idea-brand: "Pomorskie in the European Union"

As far as 2014-2020 period is concerned, objectives were formulated in more precise and concise way. The main strategic objective for 14-20 communication actions was formulated as follows: ***Communication of European Funds support the use of Pomorskie ROP funds in achieving regional development goals.***

4 detailed operational objectives have been introduced:

- a) to motivate citizens of Pomorskie Region to submit project proposals for ROP 14-20;
- b) to support regional beneficiaries in project implementation;
- c) to provide Pomorskie citizens with information about EU funded projects;
- d) to strengthen the acceptance for development policies and programmes co-financed with EU Funds in Pomorskie;

In this regard communication targets for 2014-2020 programming period are identical in both Polish regions selected for case studies.

Target Groups

The different audiences mentioned in the 2007-2013 communication plan were divided into 4 categories with different communication needs and preferences:

- a) society (public opinion) – to raise general awareness about allocation of EU Funding to Pomorskie, to promote positive attitudes about membership in the EU and attached benefits;

- b) youth – to inform and educate potential future beneficiaries, people who could join implementing authorities (after graduation); future leaders and socio-economic partners;
- c) potential and actual beneficiaries, e.g. local authorities, HEIs, R&D institutes, public healthcare providers, NGOs, business support organizations, SMEs, educational institutions, housing associations, cultural institutions);
- d) institutions involved in the implementation system of the NSFR 2007-2013 (regional government, European Commission, Coordinating Authority, Monitoring Committee, etc.

Interestingly, local and regional media were classified in the fourth category (institutions involved in program implementation).

For 2014-2020 3 main broad target groups were chosen. Firstly, **potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries** implementing projects. Secondly, **project participants**, i.e. people with disabilities, people 50+, SMEs, unemployed and threatened by unemployment, people and families at risk of poverty or social exclusion, farmers and members of their families, pregnant women, young mothers, school pupils, teachers and other school staff). Thirdly, communication activities designed to promote the ROP effects were to be tailored for **broad public opinion in the region (the recipients of programme final results)**.

The target groups segmentation for 14-20 is identical in both studied Polish regions (as a result of adjustments made between regional communication strategies and national EU Funds communication strategy in order to improve coherence and create more synergic communication managed by different actors).

It is also worth mentioning, that Communication Strategy for 2014-2020 added separate section about tailoring communication tools to disabled audience's needs (Communication Strategy for 2014-2020, p. 22-24).

Tagline and key messages

Authors of the communication plan for the ROP Pomorskie 2007-2013 did not formulate detailed communication tagline or messages to be used, they have just decide to promote the idea/brand: **"Pomorskie in the European Union"**

In comparison, the key message in the communication strategy for 14-20 programming period in Pomorskie is expressed as follows:

- "European Funds support those who - by realizing great ideas - increase opportunities and improve the quality of life of the of Pomorskie Region citizens."

This key message is supported by the following auxiliary messages:

- "European Funds support people and organizations who want to develop Poland and its regions"
- "European Funds catalyze changes (accelerate and strengthen change process)"
- "European Funds are a comprehensive change mechanisms (not just financial aid)"
- "European Funds support big changes in the country and region, but also improve local communities and people's everyday life"
- "European Funds encourage Polish people to cooperate".

Once again, the purpose of changes introduced between 07-13 and 14-20 was to increase coherence between regional and national communication activities. As a result, both Polish case study regions use almost identical key messages.

Those changes were also implemented as a result of introducing recommendations from various evaluation researches telling that focusing on promotion of the concrete, administrative names of separate Operational Programmes, i.e. Regional Operational Programme for Pomorskie Voivodship, is not optimal choice. People tend to have serious problems with remembering all those separate names. Instead, a unified and simplified brand of "European Funds" could be easier to understand and remember by citizens.

Activities foreseen in plans

To achieve strategic goals and deliver key messages, responsible authorities decided to utilize a number of different tools and channels of communication about Regional Operational Programme in 2007-2013. The communication mix included – among others - the following measures:

- a) Information/consultation points network (one central point located in Gdańsk and 16 sub-regional points located in all poviats);
- b) Conferences, seminars, lectures, workshops, consultations – differentiated information provided to specific target groups, both general and detailed knowledge delivered to main target groups, those activities were also seen as a good way of disseminating "good practices" for preparing and implementing projects;
- c) Websites – managed by the managing and implementing authorities; provision of most important and up-to-date information about Program implementation; especially about current call for proposals;
- d) Newsletters – tool designed for fast and wide dissemination of news about ROP for all registered users;
- e) Information magazine "Pomorskie in the European Union"
- f) Information materials (booklets, brochures, leaflets)
- g) Promotion (advertisements, posters, audiovisual content) – to attract and engage potential beneficiaries, to create positive connotations among general public;
- h) Information boards - to inform broad public which investments are co-funded with EU funds;
- i) Information sharing network between Managing Authority and local administrations (self-government units)
- j) Events, fairs
- k) Project visits/expositions
- l) Contests/challenges
- m) Pomorskie Citizens in the European Union – integrated set of actions (happenings, educational initiatives) tailored for youth, to increase their awareness and to mobilize civil society in Pomorskie;

The communication mix described in 2014-2020 strategic document consisted of similar activities, but the initial segmentation of target groups and the alignment of communication tools to this segmentation was more precisely elaborated.

Additionally, the 14-20 strategy introduced broader strategic framework which aim was to secure more coherent use of different communication tools and channels. This framework consisted of the following call to actions: see (discover) and show interest!, use/benefit and recommend to others!, see (discover)!

As in previously described building blocks of communication strategies, these changes were introduced in all Polish ROPs for 2014-2020 and followed the logic of the National Communication Strategy.

Conceptual linkages between target groups, calls to action and activities are shown in the table below:

2007-2013		
Target group	Communication mechanism "Call to action"	Measures/activities
Broad public (consumers of the ROP results)	<i>SEE! (DISCOVER)</i>	Indirect reach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mass media advertising campaigns - Idea placement in media - Social media activity - Contest/challenges organized with media; - Mailing - PR activities in local media; - Word of mouth marketing Direct reach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotional events - Website: www.rpo.pomorskie.eu - Contests/Competitions - Search Engine Marketing (SEM) - Mobile Apps Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Print (guidelines, brochures) - Open seminars, lectures, presentations - Expert interviews
Potential beneficiaries/project participants	<i>SEE! (DISCOVER)</i>	Indirect reach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mass media advertising campaigns - Social media activity - Targeted Mailing - PR activities in local media - Word of mouth marketing Direct reach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website: www.rpo.pomorskie.eu - Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
	<i>SHOW INTEREST!</i>	Direct reach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotional events - Websites (both ROP and country wide EU Fund websites) - Information provided by Information Points network - Conferences, workshops, trainings - Print/online promotional materials Indirect reach:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mass media advertising campaigns - Social media activity - Targeted Mailing - PR activities in local media - Word of mouth marketing <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online guidelines, handbooks, - Information and consultancy services provided by Information Points network - Seminars, lectures, presentations - Educational campaigns in media - Printed brochures and guidelines;
Actual beneficiaries/project participants	USE (BENEFIT)!	<p>Direct reach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website: www.rpo.pomorskie.eu - Consultation in PIFE⁴ network; - Phone consultation services; - Conferences, trainings - Printed information materials <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online guidelines, handbooks, - Consultation in PIFE network; - Seminars, lectures, presentations - Educational campaigns in media - Printed brochures and guidelines; <p>Indirect reach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word of mouth; - Networks of cooperation between beneficiaries;
	RECOMMEND TO OTHERS!	<p>Direct reach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website: www.rpo.pomorskie.eu - Campaigns motivating to recommend EU Funds to others; - Publication of recommendations; <p>Indirect reach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word of mouth; - Networks of cooperation between beneficiaries;

Source: Communication Strategy for ROP Pomorskie 2014-2020, pp. 16-19.

Comparison of the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 communication strategy shows that, as a result of more coherent framework, communication mix is now composed of smaller number of activities, more precisely targeted towards specific groups. Moreover, concrete, desired behaviors from target groups are explicitly mentioned in the actual strategic documents. In addition to that social media activities gained more significant role among other communication tools included in the communication strategy.

⁴ PIFE - Network of European Funds Information Points

4.1.2 Indicators

The monitoring system of 2007-2013 communication plan consisted of 13 indicators grouped in 9 categories – according to the type of communication activities undertaken:

- a) Information/Consultation Points
- b) Organization of conferences, seminars, lectures, workshops
- c) Project visits/shows
- d) Websites
- e) Newsletter network
- f) Bulletin
- g) Publications, brochures, leaflets, advertisements, poster, video content;
- h) Media and education campaigns
- i) Information and promotion activities undertaken by beneficiaries

The set of indicators consists almost equally of output (6) and result (7) indicators. The full list of indicators is included in Annex 1. No impact indicators were directly incorporated in the monitoring plan. Nevertheless, the 2007-2013 communication plan includes separate evaluation section, which informs that the future evaluations should collect evidence necessary to assess:

- a) Pomorskie citizens awareness about EU funds roles;
- b) Pomorskie citizens attitudes toward EU;
- c) Number of good quality project proposals;
- d) The timeliness and exhaustiveness of information provided to institutional partners;
- e) Media engagement in information about EU funds and the quality (reliability) of media content about EU fund(Pomorskie ROP Communication Plan 07-13, p.20);

Indicators chosen for the purpose of 2014-20 communication strategy monitoring followed the set of indicators from the National Strategy (indicators are identical in both Polish regions):

- a) Number of visitors on ROP Pomorskie websites (MA and IB)
- b) Number of broad information campaigns about funding possibilities
- c) Level of awareness which socio-economic groups could participate in the ROP as beneficiaries;
- d) Number of people participating in workshops for potential beneficiaries of ROP Pomorskie;
- e) Number of consultancy service delivered in Information Points in Pomorskie (consultancy themes: funding possibilities and application procedures)
- f) Number of consultancy service delivered in Information Points in Pomorskie (consultancy themes: project implementation issues)
- g) Number of beneficiaries participating in targeted workshops and trainings;
- h) Number of promotional activities with broad media reach about the Programme achievements;
- i) The level of the "European Funds" brand recognition among Pomorskie citizens;
- j) The level of awareness/knowledge about the strategic objectives, priority axes or activities of the Pomorskie ROP among regional community
- k) The level of awareness/knowledge about EU funded projects in respondent's vicinity (among Pomorskie citizens)
- l) The percentage of Pomorskie citizens claiming that EU Funds support development of their region.
- m) The percentage of Pomorskie citizens claiming that they personally benefit from EU Funds (Communication Strategy for ROP Pomorskie 2014-2020, pp. 32-38).

Additionally, communication strategy mentions several qualitative measures to be used for on-going assessment of the communication activities, e.g.

- Training sessions satisfaction (quantitative surveys with participants)
- Readability of written materials (both in print and on-line) – calculated with Gunning fog index method;
- Accessibility of websites (user experience methodologies);
- Number of unique visitors and conversion rates (e.g. how many visitors subscribed for newsletter or registered for an event);
- Number of social media interactions (share)
- Reach of media campaigns;

The evolution of the approach to communication expressed in strategic documents at the national level, followed by regional level strategies shows that the responsible authorities participating in information-promotion network have seriously taken into account “lessons learned” from previous programming period and the current approach to communication is more integrated, designed with more precision and clarity. Moreover, this approach is up to date with current developments in other media sectors (e.g. commercial companies approach to communication) and to some extent similar tools are used.

4.1.3 Budget

The total budget for all communication activities listed in the Communication Plan for the period 2007-2013 was estimated at €4,6 mln). The budget allocation decreased significantly for the 2014-2020 programming period to €1,5 mln.

The following table illustrates the planned yearly allocation for communication activities in the ROP Pomorskie 07-13 and 14-20.

Total allocation	Pomorskie		Unit
Allocation [2007-2013]	2007-2008	1 104 219	EUR
	2009	619 465	
	2010	612 688	
	2011	603 115	
	2012	593 847	
	2013	606 929	
	Total	4 140 263	
Allocation [2014-2020]	Total	ca 1 534 280	EUR ⁵

Source: Communication Plan for ROP Pomorskie 2014-2020, p.27 and Communication Strategy for ROP Pomorskie 2014-2020, p. 42

During the interview with the representatives of the unit responsible for the communication activities the current funding level has been described as a major challenge that has a serious impact on the current approach to communication (interviewees mentioned other regions that use larger budgets and the range of available activities is wider).

4.1.4. Governance

In 2007-2013 three administrative unites were involved in main communication activities. Predominant role was played by the Department for Regional Programs in the Pomorskie Marshall Office (strategic documents do not inform how many FTE were assigned to communication activities). It was responsible for:

⁵ The EUR to PLN currency exchange rate applied in the ROP Pomorskie Communication Strategy for 2014-2020 was 4,012 (as of 29th April 2015).

- a) Coordination of communication activities at the regional level (provision of information, promotion activities, raising awareness about the Program achievements;
- b) Preparation of the Communication Plan for 2007-2013;
- c) Management of Regional Information Point for applicants;
- d) Supervision of the beneficiaries communication activities;
- e) Cooperation with the Coordination Authority at the national level and other relevant institutions involved in the European Funds implementation system;

Additionally, in 2007-2013, information activities were performed by the Second Level Intermediate Body for ROP Pomorskie located in the Pomerania Development Agency Co. Its main obligations were restricted to information and promotion activities related to the business support instruments (especially from the I Priority Axis). The agency was responsible for preparing yearly plans and reports, providing detailed information for potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and business support organizations.

The Department for Rural Areas Development was the third administrative body responsible for information activities in 07-13. It was responsible for delivering information to rural areas communities, citizens, agricultural organizations and associations.

Between two programming periods governance system evolved. Although Department for Regional Programs in the Pomorskie Marshall Office is still main coordinating administrative body (5 FTEs in the Information Unit), its role is now supported by the Training and Information Unit (5 FTEs) from the European Social Fund Department in the Pomorskie Marshall Office.

There are also two new Intermediate Bodies: the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (OMG-G-S) association and the Voivodeship Labour Office in Gdansk. This means that in the current programming period Managing Authority is supported by 3 IBs as far as information and communication is concerned..

Table 4. Governance framework in the communication area

Governance framework in the Communication	
2007-2013	2014-2020
Communication networks	Communication networks
Regional Network of Information Points – 1 Regional Information Point (in Managing Authority) and 16 sub-regional points located in poviats.	Communication strategy intends to create coordination platform with all authorities involved in implementation of 5 European Funds in the Pomorskie, i.e. ERDF, ESF, CF, EARDF and EMFF
Information exchange network with local authorities (self-government administration) Electronic exchange of information between Managing Authority and local governments (also – direct meetings and consultations, if needed).	
Additionally, Pomorskie ROP Managing Authority representatives took part in coordination and knowledge exchange network of information and promotion units from other ROP Managing Authorities and Coordination Authority (Ministry for Regional Development).	
Bodies responsible for implementation of the measures	Bodies responsible for implementation of the measures

Governance framework in the Communication	
2007-2013	2014-2020
<p>a) Managing Authority in the Marshall Office, i.e. Training, information and promotion unit in the Department for Regional Development (coordination and management of all communication activities);</p> <p>b) Pomerania Development Agency Co (2nd Level Intermediate Body - communication with beneficiaries of the I priority axis, provision of detailed information and consultancy about project implementation);</p> <p>c) Department for Rural Areas Development in the Pomorskie Marshall Office – provision of information and communication with rural areas communities (especially in relation to the activity 9.3 of Pomorskie ROP).</p>	<p>a) Managing Authority in the Marshall Office;</p> <p>c) 3 Intermediate Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pomerania Development Agency Co, Intermediate Body - communication with beneficiaries, provision of detailed information and consultancy about project implementation (in relation to activities: 1.1.1., 1.2. and 2.2.1) • The Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (OMG-G-S) association (in relation to the Integrated Territorial Investment mechanisms) • the Voivodeship Labour Office in Gdansk (in relation to subregional Labour Offices projects)

Source: authors' own elaboration

Most of IDI respondents agreed that the **communication of ROP Pomorskie was designed to activate beneficiaries to apply for funds and prepare good quality project proposals** so as to make the best possible use of the available funding. Respondents did not point out any significant changes in the approach to communication, but it is important to say that predominantly their level awareness about detailed communication activities and personal engagement in such activities was very limited, and - as a result - it is difficult for them to provide any detailed information about communication activities.

As far as communication tools are concerned, most respondents recall the use of information boards which seem to be everywhere now in Pomorskie. In some respondent's view Pomorskie citizens are now accustomed to these boards (they have been used since 2000-06 programming period). As a result their current effectiveness now could be lower than it used to be in the past.

Respondents claim that it is difficult to point out one target group of communication activities. There is broad communication that can reach all relevant audiences, but probably beneficiaries and project participants are targeted with the highest amount of information.

Majority of interviewed Monitoring Committee members declared that communication is not often discussed during the MC meetings and is not a key issue. Monitoring Committee have other priorities, especially discussion about selection and awarding criteria for different calls for proposals.

In respondents' view, responsible units in Managing Authority execute their communication tasks properly, and the scale of communication activities is appropriate. It is managed according to the European regulations and adopted plans. No objections were raised in this regard.

To sum up – the overall approach to communication did not change significantly. One of the attributes of the Managing Authority in Pomorskie Marshall Office is the continuity of Leadership which translates into stability of strategic approaches at all level and allow to cumulate experience. This also have positive impact on how communication is managed. In respondents' view the communication is evolving in positive way, e.g. there is a better use of tools (more usable websites), more social media engagement, etc.

4.2 Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies

4.2.1 Evaluation results

One evaluation study of communication activities in 07-13 programming period is publicly available. It was conducted in 2011, by the external and independent evaluation company (Evaluation for Government Organizations - EGO). The following table summarizes most important information from the study:

Table 5. Summary of evaluation studies of communication activities

2011 (mid-term of 2007-2013)
Methods used in the evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Desk research; o Quantitative interviews (CATI) with Voivodeship's general population o CAWI survey with beneficiaries o In-depth interviews with the MA staff, o Website usability assessment; o Expert assessment of media content used for promotion;
Analysis of approach to communication taken (e.g. relevance of aims, measures, relative focus on beneficiaries/public etc.)
<p>Main findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Communication plan for 2007-2013 is internally coherent and compliant with national and European legal and strategic documents; o Communication objectives are justified and right tools had been chosen; o Apart from socio-economic partners (NGOs, business associations) all important target groups were identified; o Inconsistencies between communication plan and yearly plans were diagnosed, i.e. different monitoring indicators used;
Implementation experiences (positive and negative)
<p>Main findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Majority of activities was addressed to beneficiaries; o Half of the monitoring indicators had already reached their estimated values in 2011; o Most of beneficiaries use Managing Authority website as a key information source; o Beneficiaries highly appreciate direct contact with MA and IB staff – but they prefer private consultancy support over MA training; o Most important sources of information for citizens: information boards, TV, press, Internet. o Experts pointed out some deficiencies of communication content: incoherence of verbal and visual messages, outdated commercial design, inadequate timing for outdoor campaign; o There is very limited cooperation with media workers (journalists) mainly due to limited experience of the Managing Authority staff; o Internal cooperation between administrative units involved in communication activities was good.
Achievements and results (e.g. in relation to objectives, quantified outputs, results etc.)
<p>Main findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 81% of beneficiaries claim that they are satisfied with the level of information available; o Only 1.7% of respondents were able to recall the brand: Pomorskie in the European Union without help (spontaneous awareness) and 30% with the help (prompted awareness); o People do not distinguish different Operational Programs – they do not understand difference between ROP Pomorskie and Human Capital OP; o Many people do not know which administrative units are responsible for ROP implementation; o Majority of respondent do recall positive effects of European Funds;

Source: authors' own elaboration based on EGO (2011) *Effectiveness, quality and utility of the selected information and promotion tools used in the communication of the ROP Pomorskie 2007-2013*.

4.2.2 Monitoring results

As noted earlier, only output and input indicators were selected for the monitoring purposes of the communication plan in the 2007-2013 programming period. The following table shows monitoring data for selected communication indicators for 2007-2013 programming period.

Table 6. Monitoring data for selected communication indicators, 2007-2013

<i>Progress of the monitoring indicators of the Communication strategies/plans 2007-2013</i>					
Output indicator	Estimated 2007-2013	% impl.	Result indicator	Estimated 2007-2013	% impl.
Number of Info Points operating	20	100 %	Number of information points' clients	10 000	>600%
Number of organized meetings for potential and actual beneficiaries	270	110%	Number of answers provided by electronic means	1 200	>1000%
Number of organized study trips (project presentations)	5	nda	Number of people attending the meetings	6 300	180%
Number of publications			Number of participants in the trips	50	
Number of Newsletter editions sent to recipients	400	240%	Number of visitors to the site	800 000	1902%
Bulletin printed copies	50 000	50%	Number of press articles or TV auditions prepared as a result of cooperation with journalists	Nda	nda
Number of all publications, brochures, leaflets	1 000 000	Nda			
Number of information boards prepared by beneficiaries	100	nda			

Regarding the monitoring of effectiveness of communication activities, evaluators concluded that: "There are consequences in monitoring activities (some indicators mentioned in the communication plan are not being measured (...)) Monitoring system has limited value in assessing the effectiveness of the communication activities in Pomorskie (...)) There are discrepancies information included in the communication plan for 2007-2013, yearly activities plans." (EGO 2011).

Table 7. Impact indicators

Impact indicators	Estimated 2007-2013	% implementation (2010)	% implementation (2013)	Estimated 2014-2020
Level of awareness which socio-economic groups could participate in the ROP as beneficiaries	Such indicators were not included in 2007-2013 communication plan monitoring system. They were introduced for the 2014-2020 period			41%
The level of the "European Funds" brand recognition among Pomorskie citizens				93%
The level of awareness/knowledge about the strategic objectives, priority axes or activities of the Pomorskie ROP among regional community				50%
The level of awareness/knowledge about EU funded projects in respondent's vicinity (among Pomorskie citizens)				75%
The percentage of Pomorskie citizens claiming that EU Funds support development of their region.				88%

Impact indicators	Estimated 2007-2013	% implementation (2010)	% implementation (2013)	Estimated 2014-2020
The percentage of Pomorskie citizens claiming that they personally benefit from EU Funds				60%

Source: Communication Strategy for ROP Pomorskie 2014-2020, pp. 32-43.

4.2.3 Policy lessons and recommendations

In general, implementation reports do not provide any analysis of effectiveness, i.e. if they simply list communication activities and measures undertaken with no deep analysis.

The communication strategy for Pomorskie ROP 2014-20 begins with the following synthesis of policy lessons and recommendations from evaluations conducted in previous perspective (Communication Plan for ROP Pomorskie 2014-2020, p.5-7):

- a) Majority of Pomorskie citizens declare that they see positive changes in Poland (88% of respondents) and at the regional level (78% of respondents) after EU accession, but only ca. 50% of respondents feel that they personally benefit from these changes. As a result the communication about EU Funds should be more human-centered (in 2007-2013 there were too many numbers, abstract data and bureaucratic jargon used in communication)
- b) 54% of Pomorskie citizens declare that they would like to receive information about "European Funds";
- c) Majority of respondents think that EU funds are mainly for SMEs (45%), farmers (43%) and local authorities (38%) – as a result communication in the new programming period should improve the understanding that also many other groups could apply for funds;
- d) Only 6% of respondents declare that applying for EU Funds is easy. Additionally 38% declare that EU Funds are divided on the fair, competitive basis with equal treatment of all applicants. Future communication activities should address these attitudes and overcome potential psychological barriers preventing people from applying;
- e) Beneficiaries should be more active in informing broader public about their projects. This is still hidden potential of communication activities that could be only unlocked with systematic and organized support provided for beneficiaries (and not isolated capacity building actions). European Funds Information Points capacities should be used to cooperate with beneficiaries. Plain language needs to be use in all communication activities, especially in all materials prepared for beneficiaries and media communication;
- f) In the new programming period communication activities should more actively engage public opinion leaders, socio-economic partners and media
- g) Plain language should be used, especially in all content prepared for potential and actual beneficiaries;
- h) Websites are primary and most important source of information about EU Funds (58,7% respondents from Pomorskie would like to receive information about ROP through websites);

The overall assessment of communication activities by stakeholders is very positive. In their view the level of awareness is high. Probably people who are not directly involved in implementation do not distinguish between sources of funding (different Funds, Programs) but majority do know that development investments are sponsored with EU Funds.

Stakeholders claim that **there is abundance of information and promotion** but majority of them have difficulties in naming the best examples of communication campaigns or other activities. They

refer to general media advertisement, mainly in regard to product placement (content prepared by or in cooperation with Managing Authority and beneficiaries).

Information Points in Słupsk and Gdańsk are praised for their professional support and good relations with local business. Additionally some of respondents recall promotional campaign with famous Pomorskie citizens (sport stars, actors). Also outdoor events – “European Funds Open Days” are often mentioned in stakeholders responses as an example of effective promotion activity that should be continued.

Overall, communication is evaluated positively, but some interviewees mentioned drawbacks of such an intensive communication activities. Firstly, it intensifies investment competition between local authorities. Majority of mayors want to be praised for their ability to absorb EU Funds, to promote their communities as active in this “game”. As a result some big local investments are not sustainable (indebtedness of local communities increased due to participation in EU Funds). Secondly, wide promotion of EU Funds could create misunderstanding among citizens that these investments are “for free”. Majority of people do not understand that maintenance of all these public investments will be financed from local communities budgets. For some communities it will be a major financial burden.

Moreover, some respondents feel that the current period is the last, in which financial allocation for Pomorskie is so expanded. In their view **communication of EU Funds should also refer to this fact, by starting discussion what to do next in terms of regional development and future role of rescaled EU Funding..**

4.3 Good practice examples in communication

As reported by the Managing Authority in the final implementation report, there have been several examples of communication good practices. Two of them are described below:

Social media campaigns – Managing Authority with the support of the external social media agency actively uses social media platforms, e.g. Facebook (<https://pl-pl.facebook.com/pomorskiewunii/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/pomorskiewunii>) and Goldenline (professional networking platform, similar to LinkedIn). These channels were focusing on delivering high quality content, e.g. infographics about ROP achievements, up-to date information about calls, events, etc.

This activity could be included in the good practice catalogue because it allowed to build close, direct relations with key users, e.g. regional leaders, media workers, as well as potential and actual beneficiaries. Additionally, social media channels were used to create synergies and build complement communication to the ROP website (mainly with specific “call to action” messages that followed releases at the website). As a result web traffic statistics showed that users redirected from social media had on average more pageviews than from other sources.

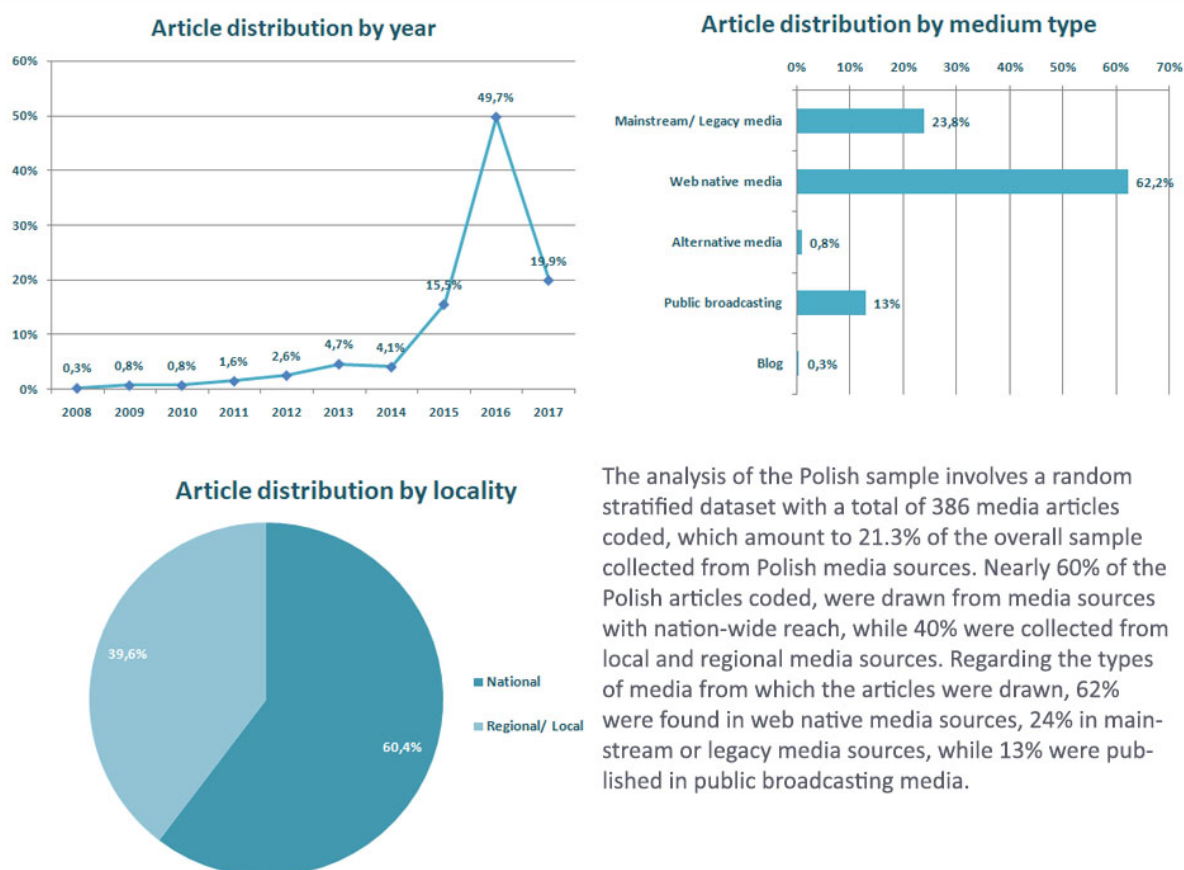
EU Outdoor Events “EU Funds Open Days” – Managing co-organized several outdoor events in cooperation with the National Coordination Unit. Yearly, in Pomorskie, this event gathered several thousand people, often whole families. Each event was a combination of different publicly available activities, e.g. info points about EU Funds, pop star concerts, classical music concerts, exhibitions of EU funded innovative products, outdoor competitions, conferences, meetings with beneficiaries implementing EU funded projects. In 2016 EU Open Days were awarded European Public Communication Award.

Unfortunately, there is no robust quantitative evidence about the effectiveness of those practices. Also, during interviews respondents were not able to provide more elaborate reflections about good practice examples in Pomorskie.

4.4 Media framing of Cohesion policy

The media framing was analysed at the national level - the results are presented below, followed by some insights from interviews with key stakeholders in the region. The sample for media framing analysis consisted of 386 articles, out of which 153 (39.6%) were of regional reach, including 67 (17.4%) articles from Pomorskie region (Triga, Vadratsikas, 2018).

Figure 3.7.1  **Poland**



As far as the framing analysis is concerned, a significant finding regarding the Polish case is the high percentage of news items that did not apply any frame. In fact, the coders did not identify any frames in 36.3% of the analysed items, which is the highest percentage among the analysed cases studies, suggesting that the Polish media tend to present merely the facts related to EU Cohesion policy, without offering specific interpretation of the news. However, 22.3% of the analysed items frame EU cohesion policy in terms of "economic consequences" and another 21.4% in terms of "quality of life" following the norm that was identified in all the case studies included in this study. Moreover, it is worth noting the high percentage of the articles that applied the "Incompetence of local and national authorities" (12.4%) indicating a critical stance of the Polish media towards the government and the Polish political personnel.

Dominant Frame Frequencies (Poland)

(n= 386)

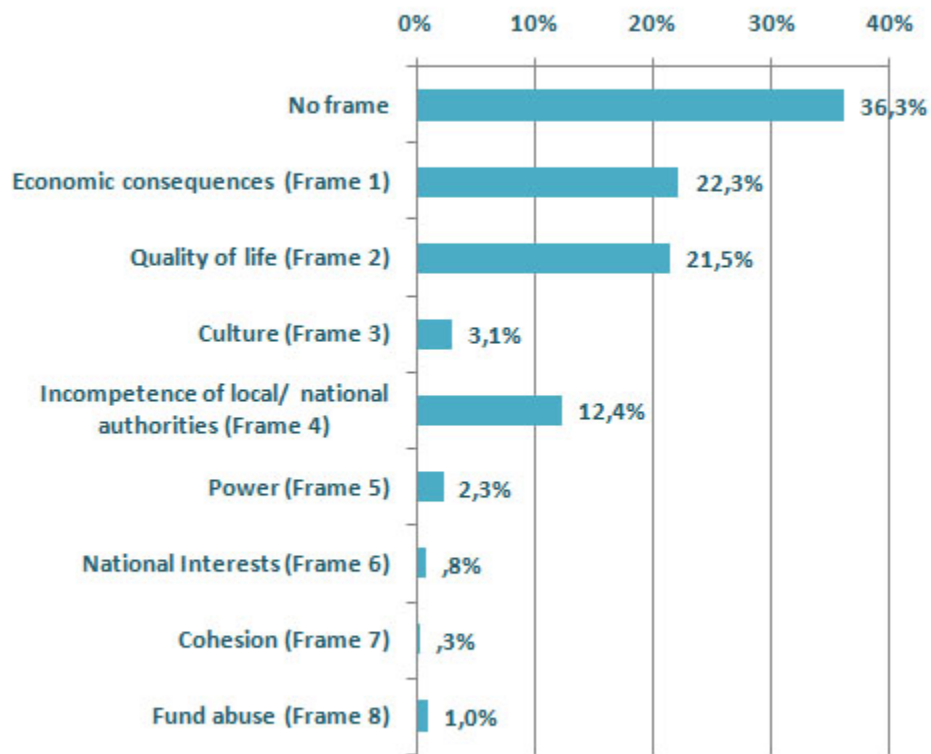


Figure 3.7.2

Dominant frame frequencies in Polish media

Dominant Subframe Frequencies (Poland)

(n= 386)

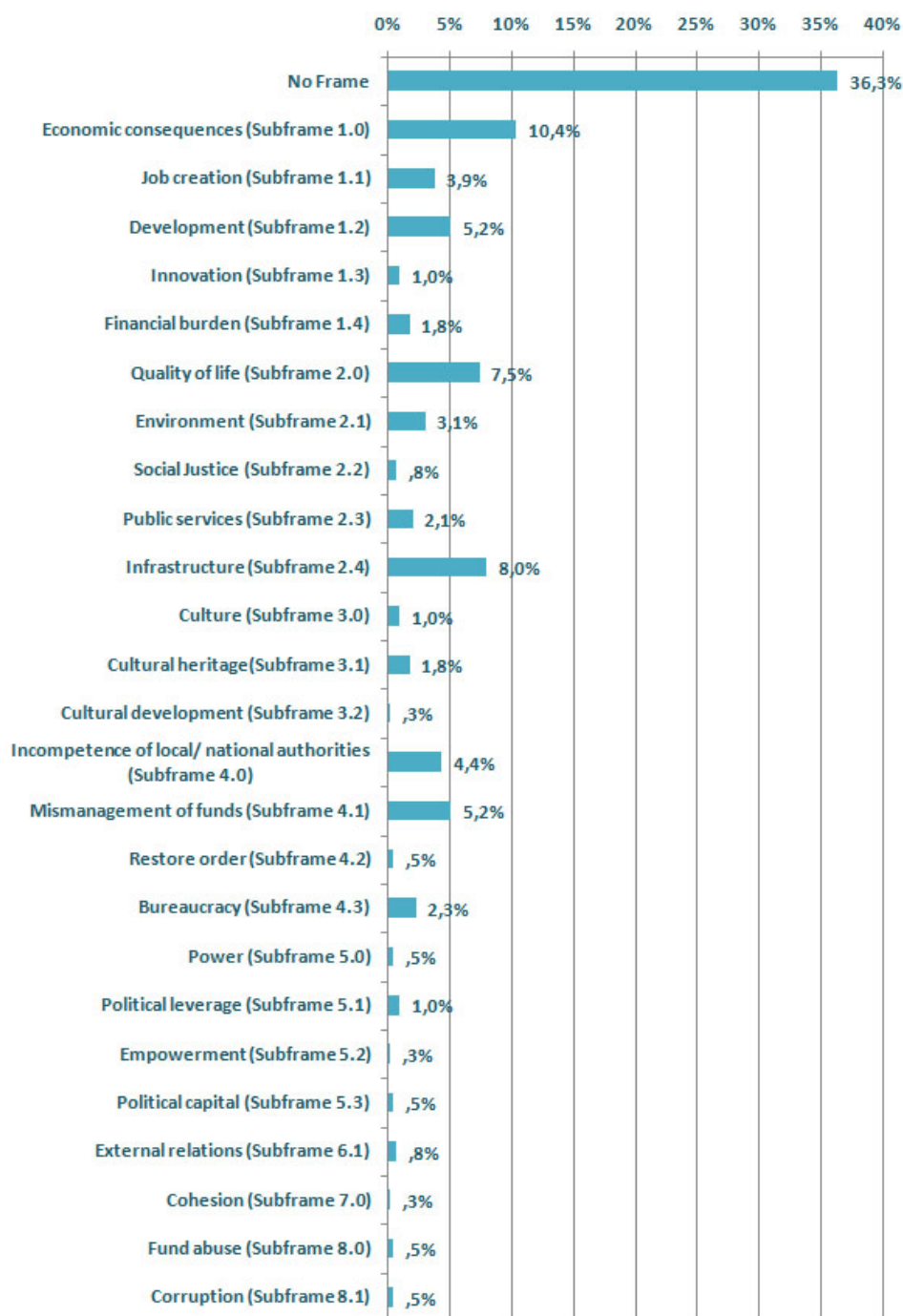


Figure 3.7.3
Dominant Suframe frequencies in Polish media

The framing analysis of the Polish sample revealed some striking differences in framing between national and regional media. As shown in Figure 3.7.5 below, regional media tend to interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of its implications on national economy (Frame 1), while they also employ Frame 5 ("Power") twice as often as national media.

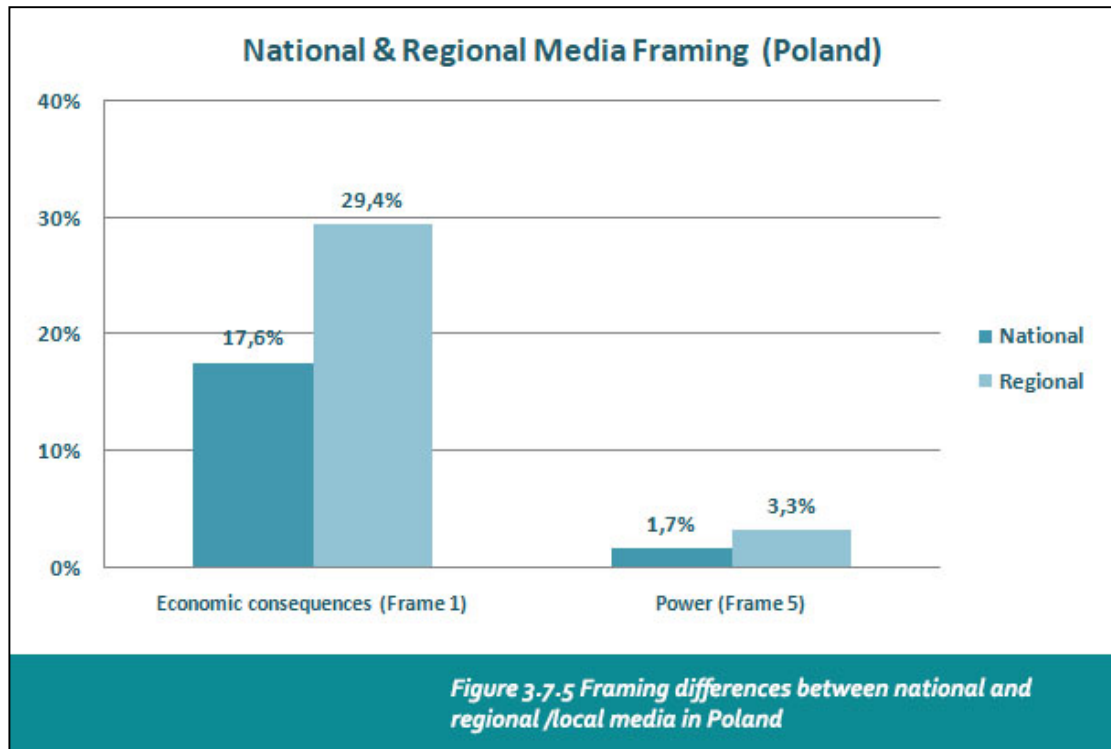
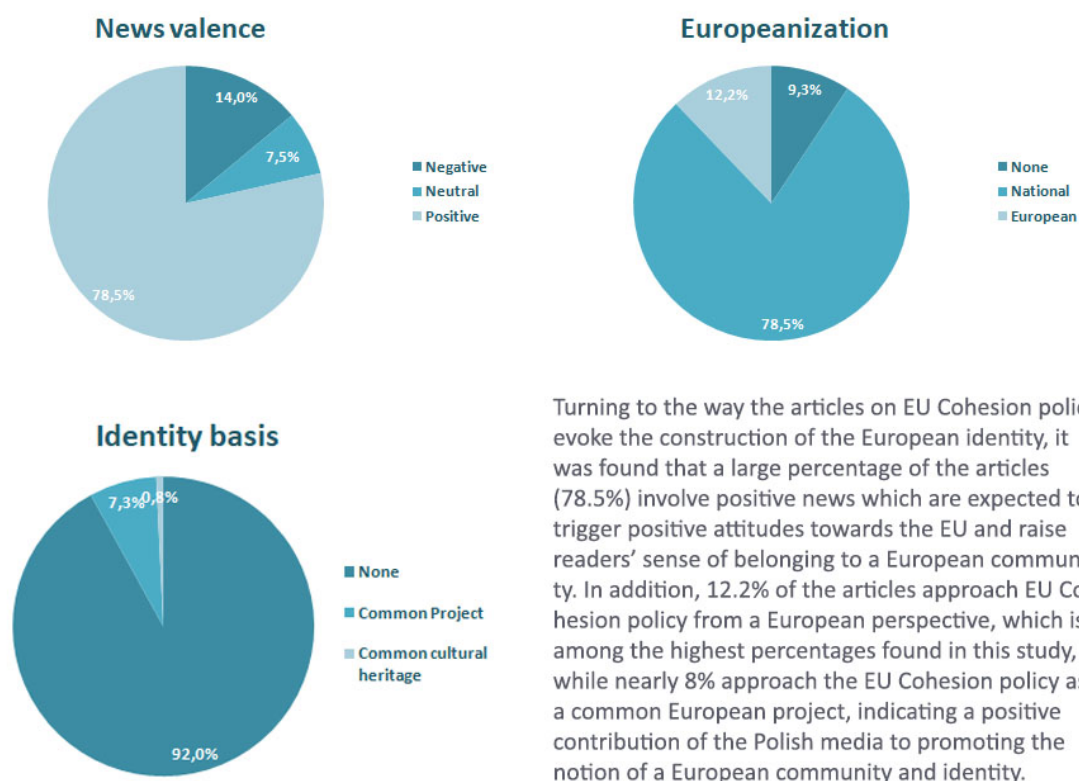


Figure 3.7.4  **Poland - Europeanization variables**



The analysis of the Europeanisation variables reveals no striking differences between national and regional media in Poland.

Stakeholders' perspective

Most respondents are convinced that information about European Funds and ROP Pomorskie is constantly present in regional and local media (press, radio, TV and websites). Nevertheless it is evident that majority of that coverage is a product placement sponsored either by managing Authority or beneficiaries promoting their projects (which is obligatory). As a result the dominant tone about EU Funds in Pomorskie regional and local media is informative and positive.

What also helps in such positive media coverage is that Pomorskie is one of the leading regions in terms of absorption. This is often used in media which inform that "we are one of the leaders" in Poland and our absorption pace is very good.

But media also have their own agendas, their own rationale for selecting topics. As a result they mainly focus on novelty, they seek new, information as attractive as possible. So now it is much more challenging to "sell" information about new investments. Public opinion is now accustomed to such information. As a result, sometimes "bad news is a good news", so there are also articles or auditions about problems in projects, e.g. financial corrections or long delays.

In addition to that most of local political leaders (elected local officials, parliament members from Pomorskie) frequently refer to EU Funds during public meetings and official events. Successful implementation of projects (especially big infrastructural investments) is seen by local leaders as a

leverage for their personal popularity among citizens (who are creating pressure to absorb investment funds from ROP).

4.5 Implications for citizens CP perceptions and attitudes to the EU

The following chapter analyses the stakeholders perception of CP communication activities, drawing on the results of the COHESIFY Stakeholder survey.

Q10. How regularly are the following communication tools used to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Television	38,0%	28,0%	18,0%	16,0%	0,0%
Radio	24,0%	26,0%	22,0%	24,0%	4,0%
Local and regional newspapers	0,0%	14,0%	22,0%	40,0%	24,0%
National newspapers	38,0%	38,0%	22,0%	0,0%	2,0%
Workshops, seminars	22,0%	28,0%	28,0%	18,0%	4,0%
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters	2,0%	12,0%	26,0%	38,0%	22,0%
Press releases	14,0%	18,0%	16,0%	28,0%	24,0%
Programme website	8,0%	20,0%	22,0%	18,0%	32,0%
Film clips/videos	48,0%	30,0%	14,0%	6,0%	2,0%
Plaques/billboard with EU flag	6,0%	10,0%	14,0%	28,0%	42,0%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)	20,0%	12,0%	12,0%	34,0%	22,0%
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio	46,0%	32,0%	16,0%	2,0%	4,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

Majority of respondents (70%) feel that information about the use of Cohesion policy funds in Pomorskie Region is often and very often delivered on billboards and plaques. Moreover, two-thirds of respondents (64%) say that such information was delivered through local and regional newspapers. More than a half of respondents have also noticed that social media and brochures/leaflets are often and very often used for such purpose. On the other hand, almost 80% of stakeholders from Pomorskie say that the information about the use of EU funds was disseminated with films or clips, advertising campaigns and national media. Overall, in this regard survey results confirmed observations from qualitative interviewing.

Q11. How satisfied are you with:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Don't know
The way Cohesion policy is communicated to citizens	4,0%	42,0%	38,0%	12,0%	0,0%	4,0%
The branding and messages used to communicate Cohesion policy	2,0%	46,0%	38,0%	10,0%	0,0%	4,0%

The use of human interest/personal stories	0,0%	44,0%	42,0%	6,0%	0,0%	8,0%
The support from the European Commission on communication	2,0%	24,0%	50,0%	10,0%	2,0%	12,0%
The targeting of different groups with different communication tools	2,0%	34,0%	38,0%	16,0%	2,0%	8,0%
The administrative capacity and resources dedicated to communication activities	0,0%	28,0%	40,0%	16,0%	2,0%	14,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

It is worth noticing that in regard to all 6 statements less than a half of respondents feel satisfied or very satisfied with the described element of communication activities. Moreover, at least 2 out of 5 respondents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. Additionally, in statements related to the support of the EC and the administrative capacity dedicated to comm activities more than 10% respondents were not able to express their feelings. These observations could be better understood with insights from qualitative research: most interviewed stakeholders said that they are not actively engaged in the management of comm activities and they don't know the whole spectrum of actions undertaken by the Managing Authority. Notwithstanding, less than 20% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction in relation to survey statements.

Q12. To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know
Conveying the achievements of Cohesion policy programmes overall and the role of the EU	10,0%	60,0%	14,0%	4,0%	0,0%	4,0%
Conveying the achievements of co-funded projects and the role of the EU	14,0%	66,0%	14,0%	0,0%	0,0%	6,0%
Using social media to promote the programme and projects (e.g. Twitter, Youtube, Facebook)	6,0%	32,0%	36,0%	6,0%	0,0%	2,0%
Fostering good working relations with the media and press to reach the general public	6,0%	50,0%	26,0%	4,0%	0,0%	6,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=50

Majority of surveyed stakeholders say that communication efforts undertaken in Pomorskie were either 'very effective' or 'effective'. 8 in 10 respondents claim that this effectiveness was evident in conveying the achievements of Cohesion policy programmes overall and the role of the EU, while 7 out of ten respondents feel the same about conveying the achievements of co-funded projects and the role of the EU. Noticeably, about one third of respondents say that both using social media and fostering good working relations with media was neither effective nor ineffective. In this regard survey results confirmed insights from both desk research and qualitative interviewing.

Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

The media mainly report negative stories about EU Cohesion policy	0,0%	8,0%	30,0%	56,0%	2,0%	4,0%
During publicity events, politicians mainly highlight the local/regional dimensions of projects to claim credit for themselves, rather than the role and contribution of the European Union	4,0%	34,0%	26,0%	28,0%	2,0%	6,0%
The media do not highlight the European Union role and contribution in a sufficient way	0,0%	28,0%	24,0%	44,0%	0,0%	4,0%
The key programme communication messages have adopted an appropriate form to reach their target audiences	0,0%	56,0%	26,0%	14,0%	2,0%	2,0%
The communication messages have been consistent at country or regional levels	0,0%	42,0%	30,0%	20,0%	0,0%	8,0%
There is insufficient resources and priority dedicated to communication by programme stakeholders	4,0%	32,0%	32,0%	24,0%	2,0%	6,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=68

First of all, the majority of respondents (56%) agree that the key programme communication messages have adopted an appropriate form to reach their target audiences. This substantiates similar evidence gathered during desk research and qualitative interviewing.

Secondly, respondents have diversified opinions about how politicians frame their narration on EU funds in the region. Roughly 4 in 10 respondents strongly agree and agree that politicians mainly highlight the local/regional dimensions of projects to claim credit for themselves. At the same time, nearly 3 in 10 can neither agree nor disagree with this statement, and a similar number of respondents disagree or strongly disagree.

Interestingly, nearly two-thirds of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that the media mainly report negative stories about EU Cohesion policy. This is a contrasting view of the prevailing opinions gathered through in-depth interviews. In addition to that, a minority of respondents (3 out of 10) agree with the statement that media do not highlight the European Union role and contribution in a sufficient way.

Q14. How effective do you think each of these communication measures are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion policy?

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used in my region
Television	30,0%	48,0%	10,0%	2,0%	4,0%	4,0%	2,0%
Radio	12,0%	62,0%	16,0%	6,0%	0,0%	2,0%	2,0%
Local and regional newspapers	16,0%	64,0%	18,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,0%	0,0%
National newspapers	10,0%	54,0%	26,0%	4,0%	0,0%	4,0%	2,0%
Programme website	10,0%	54,0%	22,0%	10,0%	0,0%	2,0%	2,0%
Video/film clips and presentations	12,0%	42,0%	30,0%	8,0%	0,0%	4,0%	4,0%

Plaques/billboard with EU flag	14,0%	52,0%	24,0%	4,0%	2,0%	2,0%	2,0%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube)	14,0%	60,0%	14,0%	4,0%	0,0%	6,0%	2,0%
Media/advertising campaigns on television or radio	14,0%	58,0%	22,0%	2,0%	0,0%	2,0%	2,0%
Press releases	4,0%	54,0%	30,0%	10,0%	0,0%	2,0%	0,0%
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters, other publications	18,0%	50,0%	18,0%	6,0%	4,0%	4,0%	0,0%
Events	22,0%	56,0%	12,0%	6,0%	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=68

Noticeably, each communication measure (separate survey possibility) was assessed as effective or very 'effective' by at least half of respondents. Yet, there are some visible differences between evaluated items. Majority of surveyed stakeholders of the ROP Pomorskie say that Local press (80%), TV and events (78%), as well as Radio and Social Media (74%) are very effective or effective in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion policy. In addition to that local press has not been assessed as ineffective or very ineffective by any of the respondents and other comm measures did not receive more than 10% of negative evaluations. On the other hand, one out of three respondents says that film clips and press releases are neither effective nor ineffective. What is surprising, is that the programme website was assessed as one of the least effective (relative to other responses). This is in contrast with other communication studies conducted in Poland since 2004, which often show that programme website is the primary source of information about ROP.

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The communication activities have led to an increased awareness among citizens of the contribution of Cohesion policy to regional and local development	18,0%	64,0%	14,0%	4,0%	0,0%
The communication activities of Cohesion policy funds increase the sense of belonging of citizens to the European Union	12,0%	46,0%	38,0%	4,0%	0,0%
The communication activities of Cohesion policy funds contribute to increasing citizens' support for the European Union	10,0%	52,0%	36,0%	0,0%	2,0%
Citizens mistrust Cohesion policy communication activities and messages or consider them to be propaganda	2,0%	12,0%	40,0%	44,0%	2,0%

Source: COHESIFY Stakeholder survey, N=68

As far as communication impact is concerned, majority of surveyed stakeholders (82%) think that the communication activities have led to an increased awareness among citizens of the contribution of Cohesion policy to regional and local development. About 6 out of ten respondents say that the communication activities of Cohesion policy funds both increased the sense of belonging of citizens to the European Union and contributed to increasing citizens' support for the European Union.

Nevertheless the large proportion of respondents (about 4 out of ten) neither agree nor disagree with these statements. Overall the impact of the EU funds comm activities on attitudes towards EU was assessed rather positively.

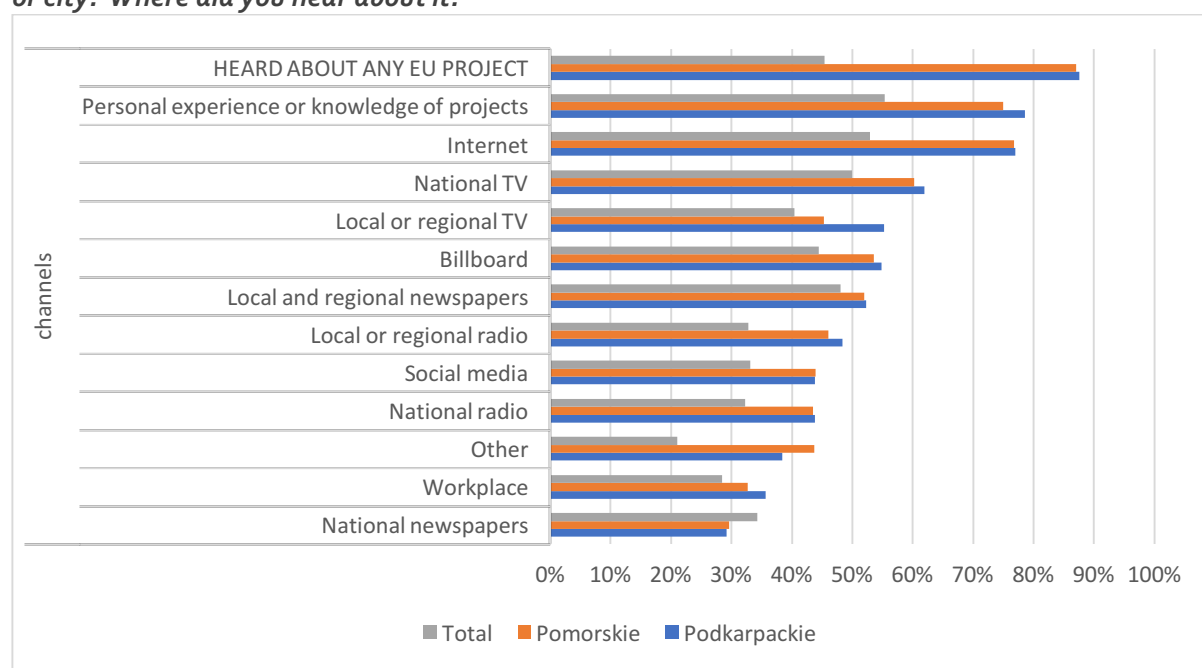
1. Citizen views of Cohesion policy and the EU

5.1 Survey results

The majority of inhabitants in both Polish regions: Pomorskie and Podkarpackie are very appreciative of the use of European funds. Almost 88% of the respondents have heard about the EU funding for infrastructure, business development and training allocated to regions and cities, which is nearly twice as high as the average in the surveyed group of regions.

Personal experiences and the Internet were the main sources of information about the EU funds. More than three in four respondents in both Polish regions pointed out these sources. Moreover more than 60% of respondents regarded national TV as the important source of information. Local and regional TV was also acknowledgeable, however was more important in Podkarpackie than in Pomorskie region (55% vs 45%). On the other hand, national press was regarded as the least important source of information about EU funds. Interestingly, it was the only source more often indicated on average in the surveyed group of regions than in Pomorskie and Podkarpackie in particular.

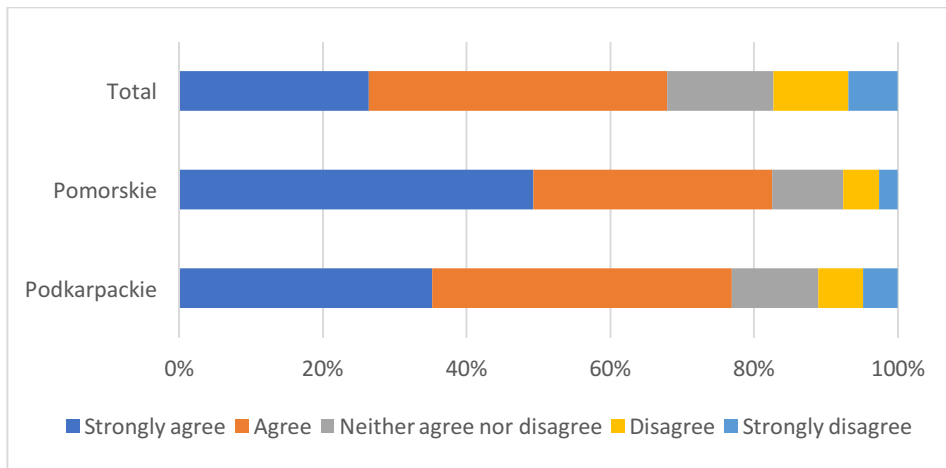
Q1-2. The European Union provides funding for infrastructure, business development and training to regions and cities. Have you heard about any such EU funded projects to improve your own region or city? Where did you hear about it?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

By and large, a very positive attitude towards the EU and the European funds was expressed; in the opinion of 76% respondents in Podkarpackie and 82% in Pomorskie, Poland benefited from being a member of the EU. The answers were more positive in comparison to the group's average by 10 percentage points in case of Podkarpackie and by 15 percentage points in case of Pomorskie. Also clearly lesser share of respondents in both Polish regions expressed disagreement with the statement of positive influence of EU funds (11% in Podkarpackie, 7,6 in Pomorskie vs. 17% on the average).

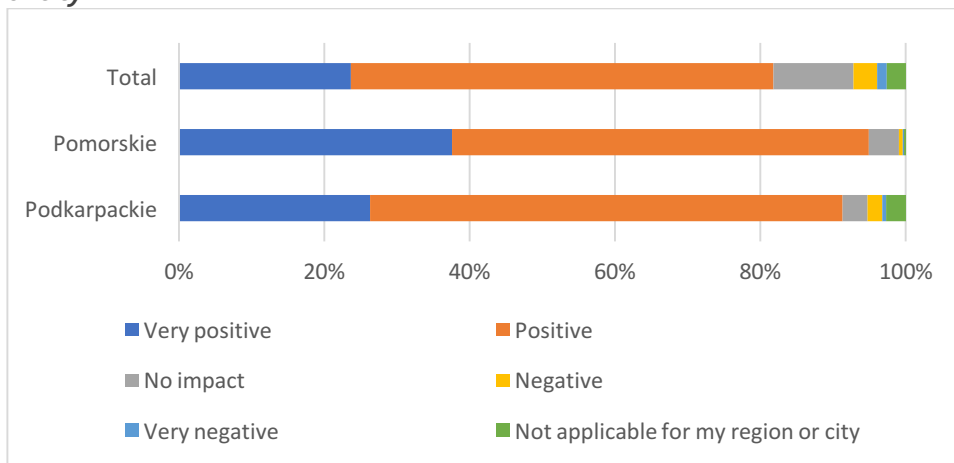
Q3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "My country has benefited from being a member of the European Union"



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

Enthusiastic attitude towards the influence of the EU on the regional development was expressed in both Polish regions. More than 90% of the respondents in Podkarpackie and 94% in Pomorskie were convinced that EU membership positively influenced the development of the their regions. The answers were more positive in comparison to the group's average by 12 and 16 percentage points respectively. The share of neutral answers in both regions were very low and negative opinion – negligible.

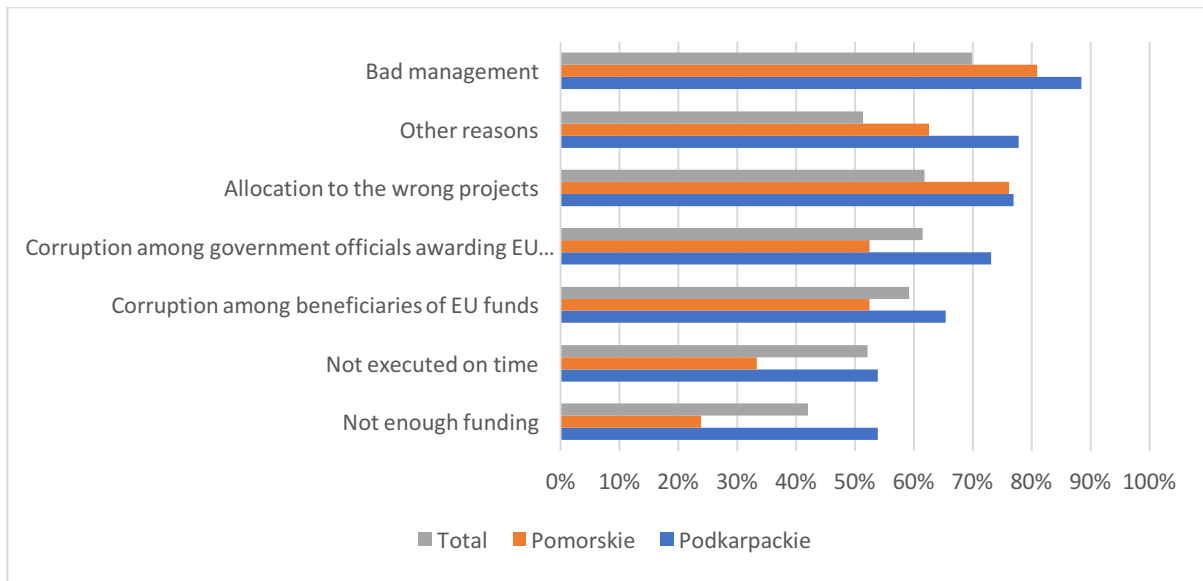
Q6. How positive or negative was the impact of the funding of the European Union on your region or city?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

The respondents in Polish regions who expressed their negative perception of the EU funds' impact, blamed bad management in the first place (81% in Podkarpackie and 88% in Pomorskie), as well as allocation to the wrong projects (76% in each region). In case of Pomorskie among factors that effected in lack of positive impact also corruption among government officials and among beneficiaries of EU funds were specified by the great majority of respondents (more than 50% in both cases).

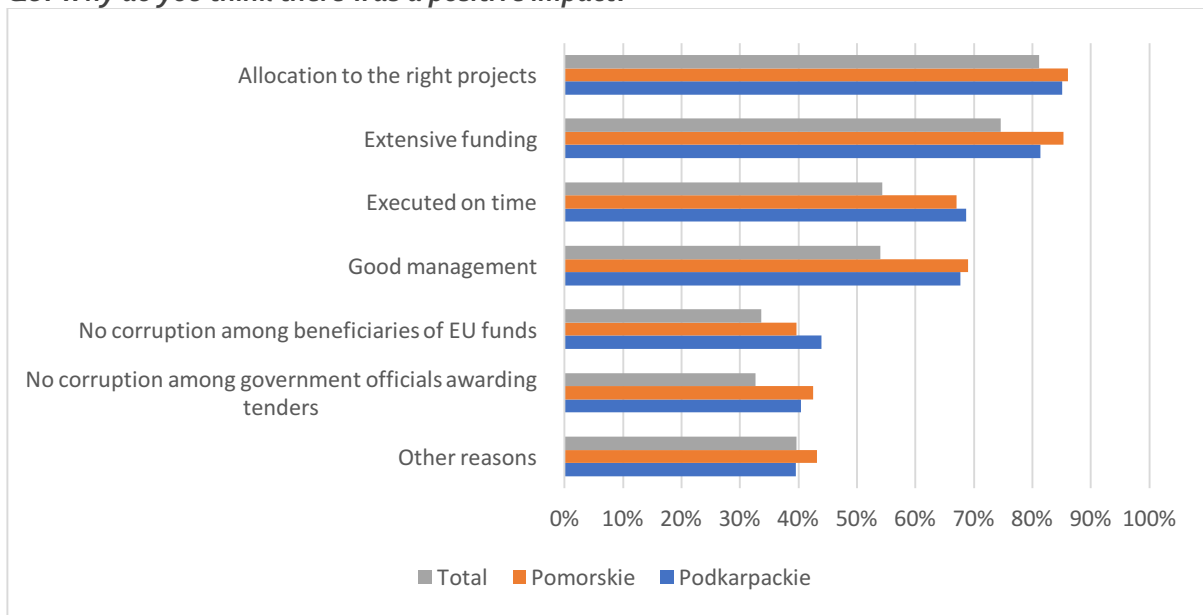
Q7. Why do you think there was no positive impact?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

The positive perception of the impact of the EU funds was associated with the appropriate allocation of funds (desirable projects) and extensive funding, alongside good management of the EU projects and their timely execution.

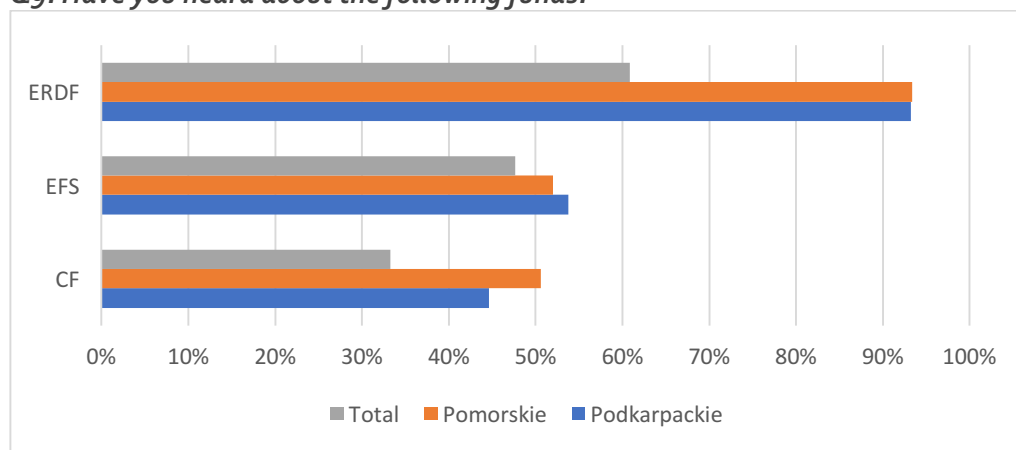
Q8. Why do you think there was a positive impact?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

The respondents in Polish regions did not associate the EU funds with Cohesion Policy instruments as such. Half of the respondents in Pomorskie and by 5 percentage points less in Podkarpackie were familiar with the term 'Cohesion Fund'. This result was, nevertheless, higher than the average (1/3 of the respondents). Other Funds were better recognisable.

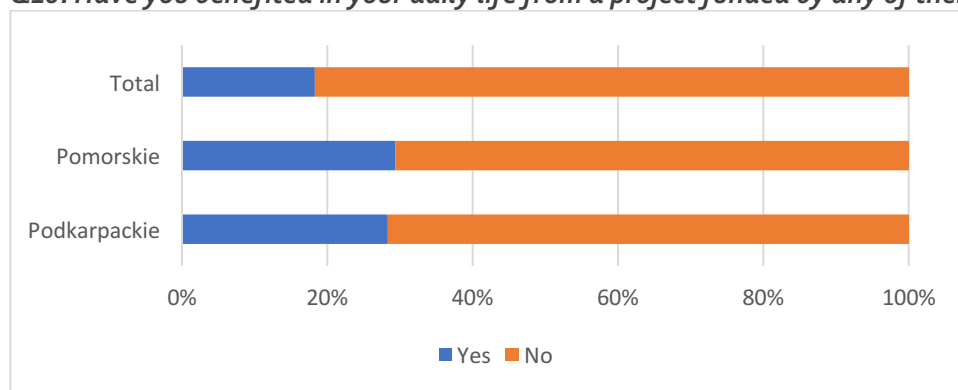
Q9. Have you heard about the following funds?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

The knowledge of the EU Funds, the Cohesion Fund included, seems to be superficial. It was proved by the fact that 70% of respondents in each Polish region declared that they did not benefited in their daily life from EU funded schemes. In is somehow unexpected in comparison to declarations of pervasive presents of EU funded project. It's however worth noticing that on the average the answers were even more negative, as 78% of respondents noticed no personal benefits.

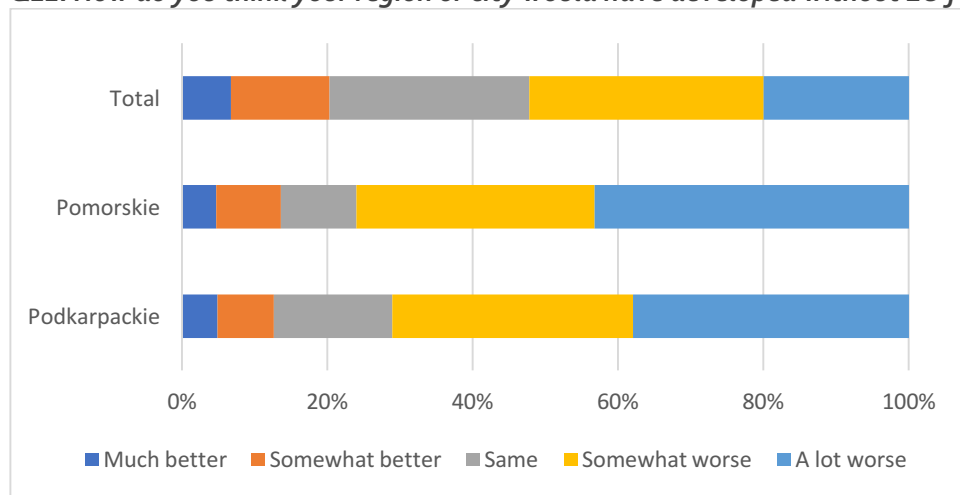
Q10. Have you benefited in your daily life from a project funded by any of these three funds?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

Only 15% of the respondents in Podkarpackie and 9% in Pomorskie shared the opinion that the region would perform the same without the EU funds, while region ca 70% in each region pointed out that it would perform somehow worse or a lot worse. And here again the perception of EU influence in Polish regions was indeed more enthusiastic towards the influence of EU funds than in the group of regions under study on the average.

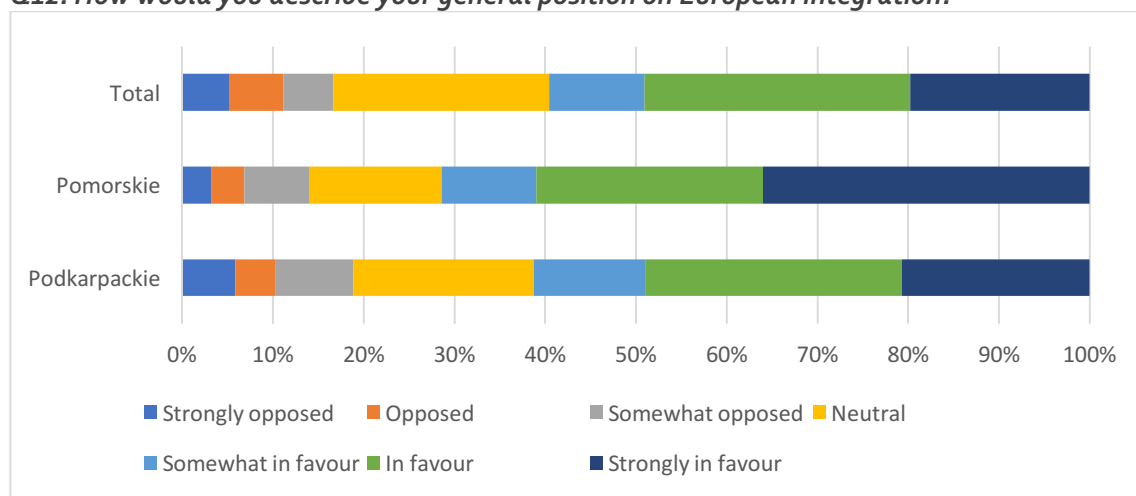
Q11. How do you think your region or city would have developed without EU funding?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

Euro-enthusiastic attitude of Pomorskie's inhabitants compared to other regions under study (also Podkarpackie) was confirmed by the fact that 71% of respondents were in favour of integration, while both groups: neutral and opposing, exceeded the low level of 14%. In Pomorskie the share of Euro-enthusiastic opinions was lower by 10 percentage points while on the average by 12 ppt.

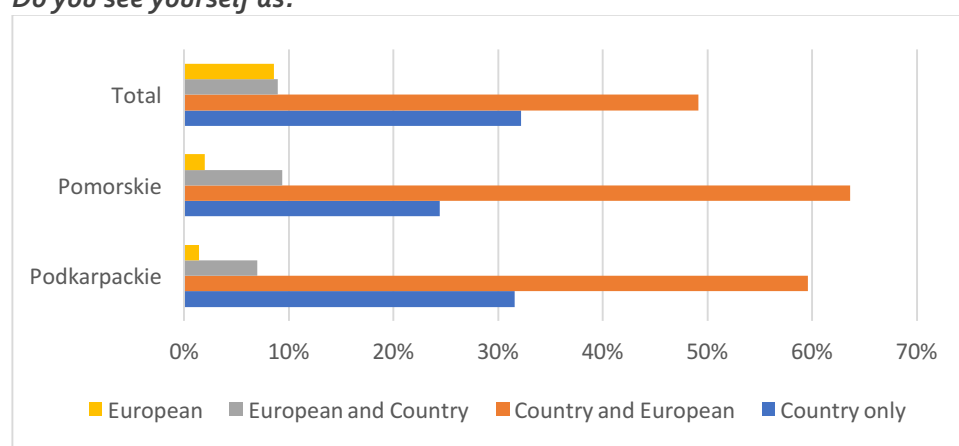
Q12. How would you describe your general position on European integration?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

The European identity and enthusiasm towards EU integration are observably high in Pomorskie. Three in four respondents in Pomorskie declared European identity (together with the country one or – however rarely – exclusively). The results in Pomorskie were more in line with those of the reference group: approximately 68% of the respondents declared European identity (simultaneously with country identity, and hardly ever exclusively so), while 32% underlined their country identity.

Q13. Please listen to the following options and pick one that describes best how you see yourself. Do you see yourself as:

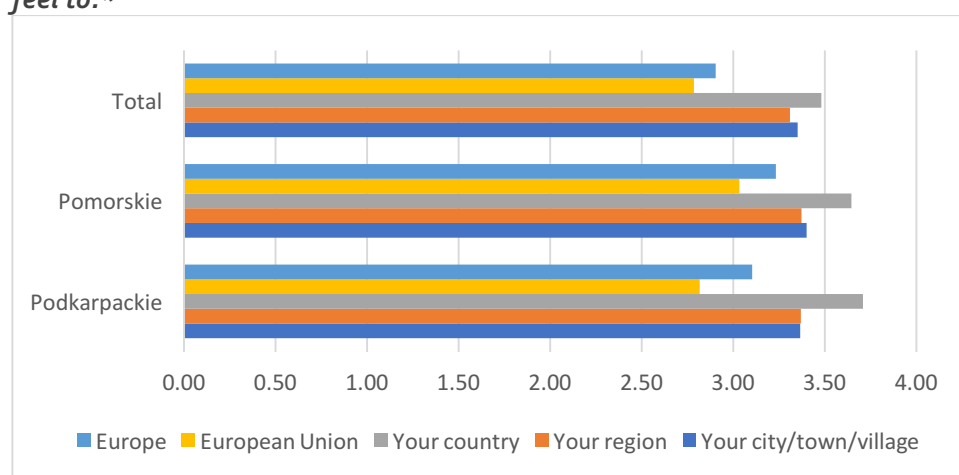


Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

In Pomorskie, like on the average, the European identity does not fully equal EU identity since more respondents felt attached (to different degrees) to Europe (96.4%) than to the EU (89.6%). While in Pomorskie, a strong sense of European identity went in line with EU identity, as the respondents felt almost equally strongly attached to Europe (96.4%) and the EU (93.6%).

In Polish regions respondents declared the strongest attachment to the country and the lowest to the European Union. The situation in Pomorskie is specific in a way that the sense European identity is associated to the highest degree with EU identity.

Q14. People may feel different degrees of attachment to places. Please tell me how attached you feel to:*

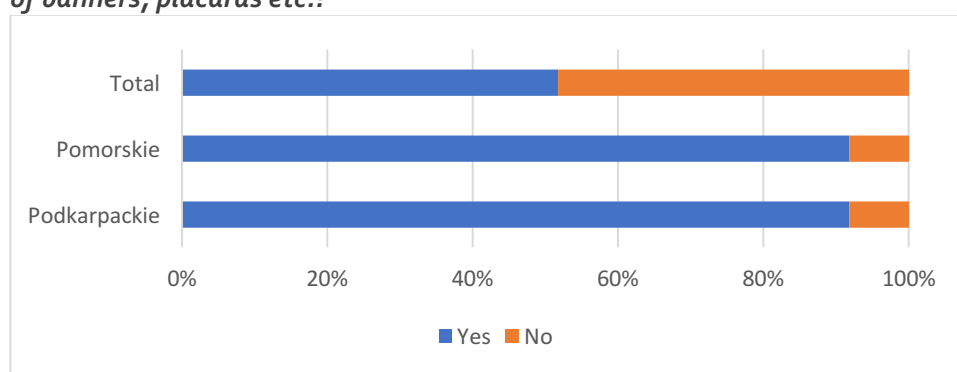


Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

* average value, where 4=very attached, 1= not at all

Inhabitants of both Polish regions have much higher chance of encountering various public acknowledgements of EU funding, as compared to other regions. Banners, placards and other visual signs have been noticed by 92% of respondents in Pomorskie Voivodship, 40 ppt. more, than mean value for the whole survey sample.

Q15. Have you noticed any public acknowledgement of EU funding in your region/town in the form of banners, placards etc.?



Source: COHESIFY Citizens' survey; regional N=500

5.2 Focus group results

5.2.1. Focus groups demographics

Three focus groups with 16 participants were conducted in Pomorskie:

Table 8. Priority axes and allocations in 2007-2013 – ROP Pomorskie Voivodship

FG	Location	Date	Number of participants	Number of female participants	Age range (min age)	Age range (max age)
PL 1	Slupsk	10/10/2017	5	3	43	72
PL 2	Gdansk	10/10/2017	6	3	26	74
PL 3	Czluchow	10/10/2017	5	3	52	77

5.2.2. Summary of focus groups discussions

Cohesion policy

Participants in Pomorskie were not familiar with the term Cohesion policy. Nevertheless, in one of the groups (PL2) the term was associated with the Cohesion Fund and Cohesion policy was defined as the process of equalising the quality or density of infrastructure. Besides the Cohesion fund, participants in two groups mentioned the ESF and ERDF.

Several EU-funded projects in infrastructure development were named, e.g. roads, new schools and playgrounds (Table 1). Projects for business support and sustainable development were also acknowledged. All the participants provided a positive assessment of the impacts of Cohesion policy. The participants said the progress was visible and that infrastructure, such as roads or new playgrounds, had improved their daily life. However, it was expressed that the progress at the country level had not affected individuals' standard of living. Participants complained that wages remained low in comparison to those in Germany. Membership in the EU and all of its related benefits were expected to raise the wealth of individuals, an expectation that has not materialised according to the participants' perception..

Table 9. Participants' reference to projects' co-financed by EU funds

Road infrastructure: Roads in general, Człuchów ring road, tunnel under the Martwa Wisła river in Gdańsk, S7 expressway

Water infrastructure:

- Waste water infrastructure
- Treatment of thermal water in Uniejów and Zakopane

Public transport:

- Renovation of railway stations in Człuchów and Chojnice
- Works on railway tracks, railway connection to Kartuzy and Kościerzyna
- Investments in the rail system in Gdansk

Business support:

- Helping the unemployed to start a business
- Support for small business
- Science and technology park

Human capital (education and employment)

- A project addressing the needs of young victims of car accidents (Dzieciaki bystrzaki)
- A project sponsoring primary school children to visit universities and attend lectures
- Computer training schemes for the elderly
- Training for the unemployed and for unemployed women
- Subsidies for employing people under 30 and over 50

Energy: Thermo-modernisation of buildings

Education, culture and sports:

- Investments in schools, Sports School Complex
- Investments in the Faculty of Electronics, Telecommunications and Informatics of the Gdańsk University of Technology, extension of the University of Gdańsk
- Renovation of historic monuments (Castle of the Teutonic Knights in Człuchów, renovation of village churches)
- "Generation ties in our village"
- Forest Opera in Sopot
- Orliks

Urban regeneration of Człuchów

- Other: Pedestrian and cyclists' paths, city-lighting system

While overwhelmingly positive about the achievements of Cohesion policy, participants were also concerned about the mismanagement of projects in terms of strategic planning for project sustainability:

PL 3, Participant 2: *"But when you're planning a project, you plan for many years. You have to plan the financing – because there is EU financing, but later the facility has to be kept up, maintained. You have to budget for it for many years. Same thing with roads. Look, the roads built five years ago are not maintained properly and holes are beginning to appear, and what now? New EU funds?"*

In two groups (PL2 and PL3), participants were preoccupied that in some cases the authorities were not addressing the real needs of citizens:

PL 2, Participant 1: *"Well, the problem I see [is] that this deluge of money encouraged us to do investments which are not necessary. For me, the airport in Gdynia is a flagship example of such an investment."*

Below we provide some extracts to highlight the way participants described the problems associated most often with Cohesion policy for the region of Pomorskie.

Communication	PL 2, Participant 6: <i>"All our media have coverage on the EU funds, maybe too little, though, sometimes it is politically biased, depends on what you listen to, but they do report it. For example, the opening of the Warsaw-Kraków-Poznań motorway. It was also built with European funds, the Cohesion fund. The media do report such things, but not enough."</i>
Project mismanagement	PL 3, Participant 2: <i>"Although, clearly, people are still not thinking long term. For example, when you do a pavement from Polbruk paving stones or blocks, you should remember not to remove snow in winter using a tractor, because the blocks will give in, and the result is that we have what we have."</i>
Partnership	PL 3, Participant 2: <i>"The people who work on projects or in projects are unwilling to share their knowledge with the consumers of those projects. How did the project originate, how is it proceeding, how will it end, what results will it have? Because we, the residents, will only see the effects on the ground."</i>

European identity

Participants emphasised different elements of European identity. Some of these were related to EU membership, such as the freedom of movement, single market and economic relations between Member States, and common laws. We can say that participants highlighted the civic dimension of European identity by putting forward common features, rights and benefits that derive from the process of European integration. However, while participants acknowledged these benefits they undermined their unifying potential when they spoke about their application in practice. For example by representing the freedom of movement and travelling as a potential mechanism for creating a greater sense of European identity, its impact was perceived as limited due to the lack of contact between people. In one of the groups, participants also supported the view that a common army and a common foreign policy could potentially be seen as crucial mechanisms for bringing Europeans closer. Yet, participants considered that common EU interests and goals are not being achieved in practice, citing the approach of dealing with the refugee crisis as an example. This issue has brought to the fore the well-embedded divisions between the "old" and "new" Europe, showing clearly the absence of a common European perspective. The euro was considered also as a building bloc of European identity and because of its absence in the case of Poland, the feeling of Europeaness is weaker.

In line with the civic dimension of European identity based on citizenship rights, participants spoke about common values, such as peaceful co-existence, education, personal and economic development. Participants also highlighted cultural differences differentiating between western societies that were perceived to be more individualistic than the Polish society. In this way, Polish identity is constructed to be different from other European countries emphasising the exclusivity of

national identity versus European identity. Along the same lines, language and history were also mentioned as elements that undermine European identity.

For Polish people to feel European, Poland has to be perceived as European by Polish and other EU citizens. Participants remarked that there was little domestic political support in Poland to feel European. In addition, another missing element of Europeanness in Poland is multiculturalism. Overall, in the case of Pomorskie, participants referred to the notion of European identity by employing civic components of identity. Yet, their effect was represented as limited in Poland since participants constructed the cultural elements to be more crucial in differentiating Polish citizens from other Europeans..

Cohesion policy and European identity

Different views on whether Cohesion policy can foster a sense of European identity emerged. Participants talked about the utility value of EU-funded projects, which can or cannot foster a sense of European identity. According to some participants, economic development can create a greater sense of European identity. Others believed that the purely materialistic element of EU-funds are not sufficient, citing the vote to leave the EU in the UK as an example and the negative implications of declining funding allocations to Poland. For example, one of the participants said the following about EU funding and European identity:

Participant 1, PL 2: "[...] the EU are fools who send us money and this does not translate into feeling part of a larger whole, but it's fun while it lasts. Until the money comes in, we don't mind the EU, but when the money ends, we will opt out."

By contrast, some participants considered that European identity was promoted through Cohesion policy because of the solidarity mechanism that underlies EU funding distribution:

Participant 6, PL 2: We're taking money now, but at some stage we will also have to give money. At least I'm sure such a time will come and, therefore, I feel more connected with the people who are now helping us. Every such financial flow certainly binds people together because it is a bond that is forged between the giver and the recipient. The money doesn't come from nowhere. It is generated somewhere by someone, there's an element of a bond, and one should realise that.

2. Key findings and conclusions

The Pomorskie Voivodship, similarly to other Polish regions, is categorised in the group of EU regions which received the most substantial financial assistance under the Cohesion policy (ca. EUR 1800 per capita in the period 2007-2013). About one fourth of these funds in the period 2007-2013 (and about 40% in the financing perspective 2014-2020) was expended as part of the regional operational programme run by the local (regional) government. Similarly to other Convergence Objective regions, outlays on the development of basic hard infrastructure (mainly transport and environment) prevailed, at the expense of outlays spent on building an innovative business environment. It should be noted, however, that the share of the latter was relatively high in Pomorskie compared to the rest of Poland and amounted to ca 22%. In the current programming period, and in line with the Commission guidance, greater focus has been placed on: (a) innovation (including smart specialisations) at the expense of expenditure on technical infrastructure, (b) higher selectivity and concentration, (c) broader inclusion of social issues (as a result of the ERDF and ESF combination in ROP), and (d) Integrated Territorial Investments (functional urban areas of the capital city).

In the period 2007-2013, the implementation of the Cohesion policy in the Pomorskie Voivodship, expressed by the scale of absorption of the Cohesion policy funds, was very effective – in 2014, about 73% of the allocated funds were committed. In addition, due to the considerable scale of financing coupled with its broad thematic scope, the European funds allocated to the Podkarpackie Voivodship influenced practically all the spheres of socio-economic life. However, one may notice a predominance of investments in hard infrastructure in comparison to soft measures and a prevalence of ROP initiatives related to the economy (mixed respondents' opinions on technological advancement) rather than activities aimed to solve social problems (mixed respondents' opinions on trainings).

The respondents positively viewed the absorption of the Cohesion policy funds at the local and regional levels. The opinions on the positive impact of the Cohesion policy on the perception of the European Union in the two Polish regions were the strongest of all the analysed case studies. The respondents often emphasised that Poland's position in the European Union had improved considerably thanks to the Cohesion policy funding. Moreover, the stakeholders agreed with the statement that the programme adequately addressed the regional needs. At the same time, they listed cumbersome duties related to reporting the progress in the implementation of the programme/project, including the ambiguities associated with the evaluation process and excessive auditing requirements concerning the expended funds less frequently than was the case in the other Polish analysed region. The need to secure the beneficiaries' own contribution to finance the project was an issue that became more acute in the current financing perspective. At the same time, the respondents cited problems with the correct spending of the funds or fraud/corruption during the implementation of the programmes/projects were brought up much more seldom than in the case of the Podkarpackie Voivodship.

In Pomorskie, for 2007-2013 there was one strategic objective of the communication activities (to support the implementation of the objectives set out in the Regional Operational Program for Pomorskie Voivodship for the years 2007 – 2013), accompanied by 5 specific operational goals. For the 14-20 programming period strategic goal was simplified (to support the use of Podkarpackie ROP funds in achieving regional development goals), and 4 objectives were selected. These objectives mirror objectives from the National Communication Strategy within National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 prepared by the Coordinating Authority in the Ministry of Regional Development.

There were 4 target groups in the 2007-2013 communication plan: society – public opinion, youth, potential and actual beneficiaries, institutions involved in the implementation. In 2014-2020 3 main target groups were chosen: potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries, project participants and public opinion in the region (the recipients of final programme results).

The actual segmentation for 2014-2020 is identical in both studied Polish regions (as a result of adjustments made between regional communication strategies and national EU Funds communication strategy in order to improve coherence and create more synergic communication managed by different actors).

Authors of the communication plan for the ROP Pomorskie 2007-2013 did not formulate detailed communication tagline or messages to be used, they have just decide to promote the idea/brand: "Pomorskie in the European Union". For 2014-2020 key messages were focusing on umbrella brand "European Funds" and the active role of people and organizations (funds' beneficiaries) was underlined.

The communication mix for 2007-2013 included many different activities (local media campaigns, print communication, broad and targeted events, info-points, online activities, study tours, cooperation with local journalists, posters and information boards, promotional gadgets and accessories). The communication mix described in 2014-2020 strategic document consisted of similar activities, but the initial segmentation of target groups and the alignment of communication tools to this segmentation was more precisely elaborated. Additionally, the 14-20 strategy introduced a broader strategic framework which aim was to secure more consistent use of different communication tools and channels. This framework consisted of the following call to actions: see (discover) and show interest!, use/benefit and recommend to others!, see (discover)!

The monitoring system of 2007-2013 communication plan consisted of 13 indicators grouped into 9 categories. The set of indicators consists almost equally of output (6) and result (7) indicators. As a result, responsible authorities predominantly measured how much effort and resources have been put in communication activities and the size of different audiences reached by those means. No impact indicators were directly incorporated into the monitoring plan. However, it should be remembered that the impact of communication activities was assessed with other means.

There was a significant shift in the approach to monitoring of communication activities between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming period. For the 2014-2020 Managing Authority has chosen only 13 indicators. Additionally, communication strategy mentions several qualitative measures to be used for on-going assessment of the communication activities.

Most of IDI respondents agreed that the communication of ROP Pomorskie was designed to activate beneficiaries to apply for funds and prepare good quality project proposals so as to make the best possible use of the available funding. Respondents did not point out any significant changes in the approach to communication, but it is important to say that predominantly their level awareness about detailed communication activities and personal engagement in such activities was very limited. The overall assessment of communication activities by stakeholders is very positive. In their view the level of awareness is high. Stakeholders claim that there is abundance of information and promotion but majority of them have difficulties in naming the best examples of communication campaigns or other activities.

Communication activities in ROP Pomorskie were efficient (in terms of delivering what was planned) and had positive impact on EU Funds awareness in the region (evidenced both by the opinion polls commissioned by the Coordinating Authority and conducted within Cohesify project – almost 90% of respondents do know that EU funds are allocated to the region, more than 94% think that EU funding had very positive and positive impact on their region or city. Additionally, despite the fact that less than 2 out of three respondents claim that they have benefited from EU project in their life, 7 out of ten respondents say that their region would have developed somewhat worse or a lot worse without EU Funding⁶).

⁶ Cohesify citizen survey results (unpublished)

Communication policy implications and recommendations

Lessons learned and policy recommendations for both analysed Polish regions regarding communication policy are the following:

1. It is overly challenging to build a strong brand of the particular regional programme. Lessons from Polish regions tell that ROP detailed name should be only communicated to audiences engaged in implementation, while the more general name "European Funds" should be promoted for general audiences.
2. As a result of introducing one umbrella brand – EU Funds - there is a strong need for coordination between communication undertaken at various policy levels, e.g. between actions undertaken by national authorities (coordinating bodies), regional authorities (managing authorities) and other actors (intermediate bodies). This could be achieved through unified planning framework, single corporate design elements (e.g. the same website structure for all programmes) and on-going working meeting and good practice exchange among units involved in communication.
3. The foundations of Cohesion Policy should be more underlined in the process of policy communication including such principles as territorial and thematic concentration and partnerships in the programming process i.e. design, management, implementation, monitoring, evaluation.
4. As websites are a primary and most important source of information for beneficiaries, they need to meet a high standard of usability, i.e.: valuable content, easy to follow and information architecture, language (clarity and simplicity), design.
5. Social media could have been regarded as innovative during 2007-2013 period but nowadays they should be used as a standard communication tool. Nevertheless creating content that is suitable for these channels demands appropriate capacities (so either external digital agencies should be engaged or institutional staff should be trained to use these channels).
6. Communication needs to be concise and targeted. It should use the mix of tools (both traditional media, events and direct engagement, as well as social media). Plain language standard should be applied to all communication tool targeting beneficiaries and broader public.
7. More have to be done to build beneficiaries capacity to act as EU Funds advocates. They should be more active in informing broader public about their projects.

Summing up, in the communication policy at the regional level, it is important to show that in the assumptions the system of cohesion policy implementation is carefully planned, efficient and reflecting the interests of regional and local communities. This does not mean that it is and will be free of errors, but it should be emphasized that it is not built on the basis of discretionary decisions of unknown actors.

Annex 1: Tabular synthesis for communication plan 2007-2013 indicators

Output indicators	Result indicators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of organized meetings, seminars, workshops and other kind of meetings; 2. Number of organized study trips (project presentations) 3. Number of newsletters sent 4. Number of bulletins produced; 5. Number of copies of publications, brochures, leaflets, etc. 6. Number of information boards, posters produced by beneficiaries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Number of information points' clients 8. Number of inquiries by electronic means; 9. Number of meetings participants; 10. Number of participants in the project visits 11. Number of web site visitors 12. Number of newsletter recipients (registered) 13. Number of press articles, radio and television programs resulting from direct cooperation with media representatives;

Source: ROP Pomorskie communication plan for 2007-2013

Annex 2: List of interviewees

Interview	Date	Type of organisation	Details
Interview A	June 2017	Regional institution	Regional Board representative, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview B	June 2017	Business association or federation	Intermediate Body (OP1) representative, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview C	June 2017	Regional Labour Office	Intermediate Body representative, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview D	June 2017	Regional institution	Managing Authority representative, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview E	June 2017	National Government	Representative of Podkarpackie Voivodship Central Administration, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview F	June 2017	Regional state institution	Marshall Office, Department European Social Fund, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview G	June 2017	Higher Education Institution	Gdańsk Technical University representative, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview H	June 2017	Local state authority association or federation	Integrated Territorial Investment Association, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview I	June 2017	Business association or federation	Kashubian Employer's Association representative, Monitoring Committee member
Interview J	June 2017	Local Action Group	Kashubian Tourist Organization, Monitoring Committee member
Interview K	June 2017	Fisheries Local Action Group	Kashubian Fisheries Local Action Group, Monitoring Committee member
Interview L	June 2017	Local Community (local administration)	Gdańsk Local Community representative, Monitoring Committee member
Interview M	October 2017	Local state authority association or federation	Marine and Coastal Towns association, Monitoring Committee Member
Interview N	October 2017	Communication Unit Staff	Marshall Office, Department of Regional Programmes
Interview O	October 2017	Regional state institution	Marshall Office, Department of Rural Areas Development, Monitoring Committee Member

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