

Complementarity between programs and projects within the Regional Policy. Case of Łódzkie Voivodship

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Abstract

Effectiveness of implemented under the EU cohesion policy measures has become a significant issue. The relevance of the topic is undeniable, given the ongoing discussion of the results of public interventions conducted at the EU level and the resulting concept of an integrated approach to study the effects of actions undertaken within the cohesion policy. Based on various studies conducted to date, the authors argue that the effectiveness of the funds targeted to Polish regions could be greater if more care was focused on complementarity among the undertaken actions. The paper concentrates on issues related to complementarity between programs and projects implemented under EU Cohesion Policy in regional level Poland. Case study of one of Polish region - namely, Łódzkie¹ - shows that adopted methods and tool, which should provide complementarity do not work in a proper way. The results suggest the existence of severe restrictions when it comes to assessing the actual intensity of complementarity and the resulting synergy effects. As both the analyses of documentation and the comments of participants during in-depth interviews indicate that the complementarity of projects is misunderstood or deliberately distorted (so that the highest score during the application stage can be obtained), it can be stated that the scale of complementarity is far from satisfactory. Conducted research enabled the authors to elaborate conclusions and recommendation on what solutions should be taken into account in aim to improve implementation of complementarity concept in the next financial perspective for years 2014-2020.

1. Introduction

One of the main goals of the EU cohesion policy is to speed up convergence between European regions by supporting the socio-economic growth of poorest entities. This goal is reflected in the EU budget for 2007–2013, where 81% of the funds have been allocated for convergence purposes. Poland has one of the greatest territorial disparities in terms of gross domestic product per capita among EU countries. Three types of disparity are evident: a gap between Warsaw and the rest of the country; rising disparities between large urban areas and rural ones; and finally a persistent gap between eastern and western Poland [see: Regional Development in Poland, Policy Brief, OECD 2008]. There is still a significant (albeit systematically shrinking) gap between the level of development of Poland as a country and EU-15 members in terms of GDP level. Such disparities authorized Poland to benefit from EU structural funds. Of the EUR 67 billion in the EU cohesion

¹ Research was conducted as part of the “Evaluation of the internal and external complementarity of Łódzkie Voivodship Regional Operational Program” project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in the framework of the Technical Assistance Regional Operational Programme. Project was realized in 2011. http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/wyniki/documents/ocena_komplementarnosci_wew_i_zew_rpo_wl_27022013.pdf

policy granted for Poland in 2007–2013, the majority supports projects developed within the regional policy. There are 16 Regional Operational Programmes whose purpose is to stimulate economic growth and overcome stagnation. EU financial aid to Polish regions is also provided within Human Capital Operational Programmes, the Rural Development Programme (within Common Agricultural Policy), and programs supporting cross-border cooperation. There are also investments co-financed within the cohesion policy that are managed at the national level (mainly transport infrastructure projects) located in all regions.

In this context, it is worth asking questions about the effectiveness of all implemented measures. According to a macroeconomic modeling projection, only Development of Eastern Poland Operational Programme is expected to deliver an additional gross domestic product (GDP) of 1.38% as well as up to 13,610 new jobs annually, but the evaluation of the real impact of EU aid will be extremely difficult and should be undertaken in a long-term perspective. At this stage, the most important task is to ensure that the funds finance projects with the greatest potential and provide the highest degree of complementarity among them. In light of the research to date, the authors argue that the effectiveness of the funds earmarked for Polish regions could be larger if there were greater care for complementarity among the undertaken actions. The degree of linkages among implemented projects, which could increase their impact on socio-economic development and thereby contribute to decreasing the distance to the European regions of higher growth, is far more insufficient.

The significance of the topic and its relevance is undeniable given the ongoing discussion of the results of public interventions conducted at the EU level and the resulting concept of an integrated approach to study the effects of actions undertaken within the Cohesion Policy. The aim of this article is to reflect on the nature of complementarity, its role and the mechanisms provided to ensure its presence in projects implemented with use of EU funds on regional level. In addition to theoretical considerations, the authors present the results of empirical research on the real implementation of the complementarity concept in one of the Polish regions—namely, Łódzkie. Within the case study analyses, the authors tried to respond to several fundamental questions, including:

- What is the degree of complementarity among different programs and projects implemented in the Łódzkie region?
- Is the complementarity volunteered or rather casual?
- Do beneficiaries of EU funds really care about complementarity of their project?
- What do regional government leaders do to provide complementarity among realized projects?
- What mechanisms and tools are provided by implementation institutions to strengthen the level of complementarity among different programs and projects?

Research tools adopted in case study include the analysis of statistical data, evaluation reports, literature, and qualitative survey results (interviews with the representatives of selected local governments and regional institutions gathered via the evaluation research project financed by the Marshal's Office of Łódzkie Voivodship).

Theoretical analysis and empirical results drew to the conclusions regarding the need to ensure special mechanisms and measures that provide complementarity within programs and projects co-financed from EU implemented in the regions. Final comments and recommendation may be

useful when planning assumptions for the implementation frames of regional operational programs for the 2014-2020 period.

2. Complementarity as a tool increasing the efficiency of EU cohesion policy

The original definition of complementarity apparently derives from microeconomy, which offers the notion of complementary goods as those opposite of competitive goods. In the case of complementary goods, owning one of them generates demand for another, as the possession of the second constitutes an indispensable condition for using the first one (or largely broadens the range of its use).

Complementarity, in its most basic sense, is defined by public policies as a mutual complementation of deliberately undertaken activities, achieved through the directing of a support stream toward their implementation in order to solve a given problem more effectively or attain an objective at a local, regional, supraregional, or national level [*Mechanizmy zapewnienia...*, p.3]. Complementarity can have various dimensions (spatial, functional, or historical), and the mutual impact between projects can include one or two poles (project A strengthens the effects of project B or projects A and B jointly create added value).

In terms of structural funds, complementarity is understood in a similar manner. The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRO) indicates that operational programs have been prepared in such a way that they should mutually supplement the measures to be undertaken [*The National Strategic...*, p. 97]. Yet at the same time, the observation can be made that complementarity prevents the doubling of undertakings. Consequently, when it comes to the notion of complementarity, operational programs often indicate only the areas of potential risks in financing the same project and its exclusion. Nevertheless, in the context of searching for tools that increase the efficiency of the cohesion policy, it seems reasonable to assume a narrower, positive definition of complementarity—namely, one closely related with the produced synergy effect [see: *Mechanizmy zapewnienia...*, p.3].

The notion of ‘synergy effects’ become crucial to understand the idea and the importance of ensuring a high level of complementarity between programs and projects co-financed by the EU funds. The concept of synergy was risen in 1964 by H. Igor Ansoff who presented it in the context of companies’ performance. He used the concept of ROI (Return on Investment) to define “Synergy”, which is that synergy means “ $1+1>2$ ” and proved that is the company’s value as a whole is greater than simple addition of its component’s value. Suszyński points out that the synergy effect consists in the maximization of positive results through the joint and simultaneous usage of available resources and methods of the activity in configurations assuring them mutual stimulating and strengthening (Suszynski, 1992). Generally, synergic effect can be defined as the difference between the total effect of acting of the set of co-operating objects, and the sum of individual effects these objects would be able to gain operating by separately (Krzyżanowski 1994). It can be represented by a simple formula proposed by Nowicka-Skowron (2000):

$$E_S = E_{TEA} - E_{IEA}$$

where:

E_S – synergy effect,

E_{TEA} – joint effect of acting of the set of elements, which the co-operation is occurring between,

E_{IEA} – sum of individual effects possible to reach by elements operating individually.

Of course estimation of the range of synergy effect requires solid comparative analyses. However, it is worth stressing that in most publication concerning complementarity, it is assumed that appearance of synergy effects is closely connected to the greater effectiveness of activities undertaken together.

Complementarity constitutes one of the key principles governing the implementation of community policies and serves to fulfill the established developmental objectives. The need to ensure the complementarity of interventions within the cohesion policy is emphasized in all program documents and legislative acts at every level of structural-fund management. An approach focused on complementarity and cohesion complies with Article 9 of the General Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006), which obligates Poland and member states to maintain the complementarity of support funds with other community financial instruments. Complementarity is mentioned primarily in the community's strategic cohesion guidelines, the National Strategic Reference Framework, and the documentation for each operational program.

The significance of complementarity results from the fact that its successful implementation in the community's measures, policies, and programs contributes to the boosting and enhancing of the synergic impact while excluding the possibility of financial doubling of the same undertakings. Therefore, additional outcomes can be multiplied with resources unchanged, ultimately resulting in an increased efficiency of public interventions.

A number of publications have underscored the importance of ensuring the maximum complementarity of measures conducted under the cohesion policy. The need for making programs and projects designed to strengthen innovative potential cohesive is also argued by T. Grosse, who pointed out that the promotion of complementarity should become a new paradigm of the EU's cohesion policy [Grosse 2009]. A similar statement was made by a group of experts who were investigating problems of synergies among different programs and instruments implemented under the Lisbon Strategy. In the final report, they stressed that, "in order to achieve synergies, in general terms, ways have to be found to strengthen the commonalities and 'bridge' the differences, e.g., by adapting the rules between the two frameworks and/or by aligning their orientations in order to increase their compatibility and interoperability and strengthen their complementarity." To achieve this goal, it is necessary to organize the synergies between the financial instruments, improving information and communication about possible ways of combining different funding instruments and the use of complementary funding [Frans van Vught et al. 2011, p. 14.]. Barca, in his meta-evaluation study on determinants of the effectiveness of the EU cohesion policy, gave integrated and completed intervention a special role. He mentioned the results of a previous evaluation report in which, within four main bottlenecks to the efficient absorption of funds and their effective outcomes, it was highlighted that "an administrative rather than strategic management of the interventions [led] to a lack of synergies with other initiatives." [Barca 2009].

The importance of the complementarity of different policies and actions is repetitively stressed in different EU institutions' documents and statements. In Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on complementarities and coordination of the cohesion policy with rural development measures, it is stated that "it is of key importance to the EAFRD's success to ensure mutual complementarity between activities co-financed under the EAFRD and those co-financed under the structural funds, and thus for the assistance under the various funds, in particular the European

Fund for Regional Development, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund, to be suitably coordinated and for the complementarity of those funds to be ensured.” [Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on complementarities and coordination of cohesion policy with rural development measures (2008/2100(INI))]. The Committee of the Regions argued that, to have a more significant impact on regions’ cohesion and competitiveness, measures aimed at reducing economic, social, and territorial disparities must be based on actions that are coherent. Guaranteeing that national and EU interventions are truly complementary becomes a serious challenge for the next implementation period [Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on “The complementarity of national and EU interventions aimed at reducing the disparities in economic and social growth”, Official Journal of the European Union (2012/C 9/06)].

Taking into account the discussion thus far, special attention from institutions involved in the implementation of the cohesion policy should be given to actions that could provide the largest scale of complementarity of realized programs and projects. This concerns all levels: European, national, regional, and local ones.

3. Types of complementarity

In terms of the classification of complementarity types, the existing literature is quite diverse in this regard. One of the sources suggests a division into territorial, historical, and functional complementarity, as below:

- (1) territorial complementarity concerns the correlation between projects implemented in the same territory
 - (2) historical complementarity concerns the correlation between projects implemented in different periods, but relating to the same goal
- functional complementarity concerns projects interrelated on an objective and substantive basis. [see: “*The complementarity of measures implemented under the Regional Operational Programme for the Śląskie Voivodship for the years 2007–2013*,” PSDB, May 2010, p. 32.]

The divisibility—hence the point of differentiating among territorial, historical, and functional categories—can be called into question because ultimately the functional correlation always turns out to be necessary, whereas territorial concentration is only an exceptional case in which it can be obtained, just as complementary projects do not have to be implemented simultaneously. However, these deliberations enable us to note two important aspects: First, complementarity is based on a common objective; second, it only involves linked projects. The link can be physical (e.g., tourist attractions with accommodation and catering facilities that are conveniently interconnected), in which case the beneficial factor will be territorial proximity, or abstract and virtual aspects.

Such analysis can be compared to the conclusions of research on PO RPW ²(the Development of Eastern Poland Operational Programme), according to which complementarity can be assessed in terms of:

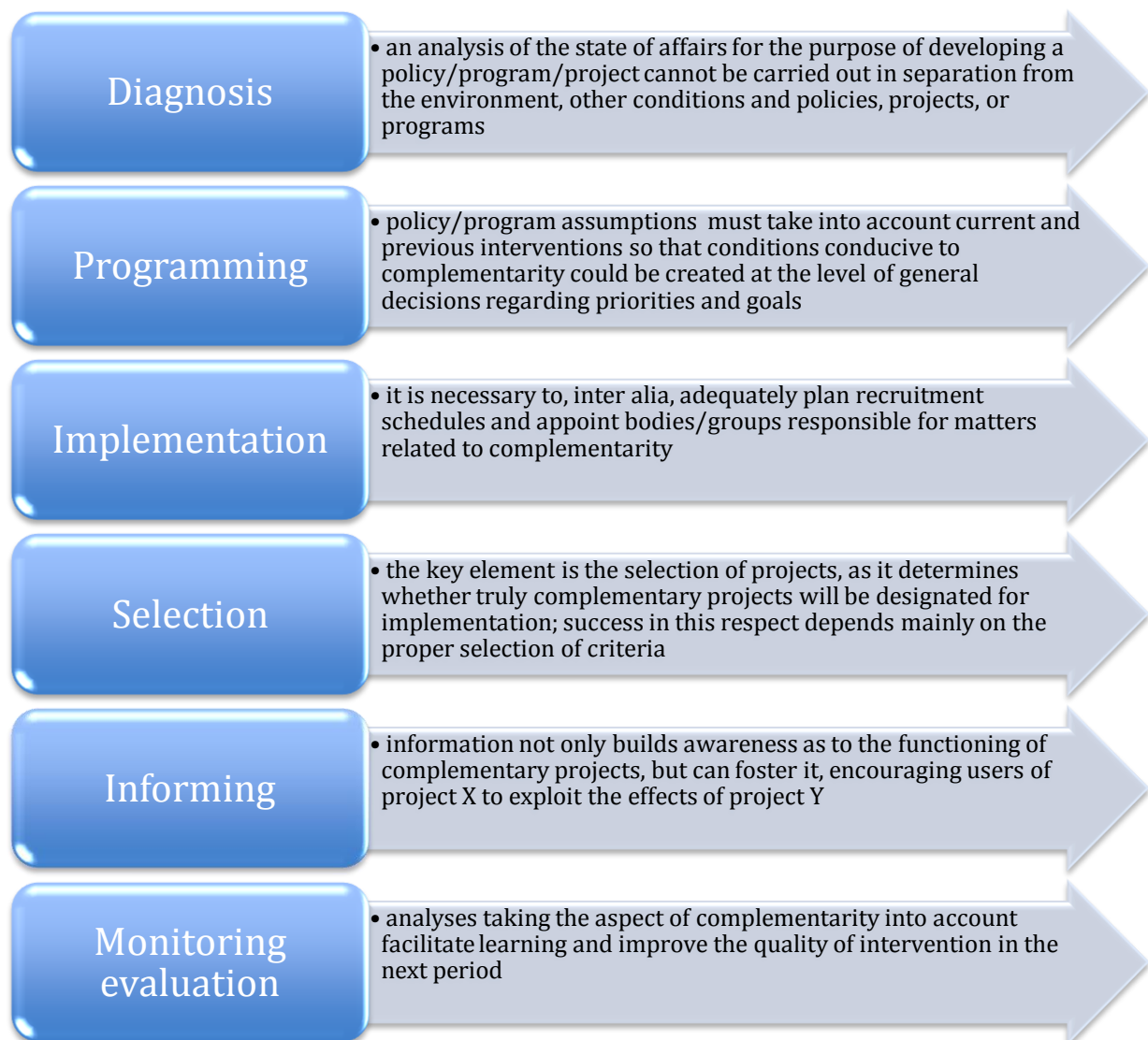
- Location in space (e.g., road projects being sections of a single large transport corridor)—spatial complementarity; or

² *Komplementarność i synergia projektów realizowanych na terenie Polski Wschodniej (The complementarity and synergy of projects implemented in Eastern Poland)*, op. cit. p. 20.

- Substantive scope (e.g., projects in the field of expansion of telecommunications infrastructure complemented by training projects on the use of the Internet)—objective complementarity.

Furthermore, from the perspective of various levels of EU funds management, the following types of complementarity can be distinguished: between periods/within one period, between policies/within one policy, between funds/within one fund, between programs/within one program, between priorities/within one priority, between measures/within one measure, and between projects/within one project. Obviously, these categories are not separate, so inter-period complementarity can be accompanied by its inter-program variety. In fact, this list serves to demonstrate that measures aimed at ensuring the ultimate complementarity of projects must cover all levels and, consequently, be conducted in many stages of structural-fund management.

Fig. 1 Provision of complementarity and the stages of managing an operational program



Source: T. Kupiec, D. Wojtowicz, P. Kościelecki "Evaluation of the internal and external Complementarity of Łódzkie Voivodship Regional Operational Program. Final Report"

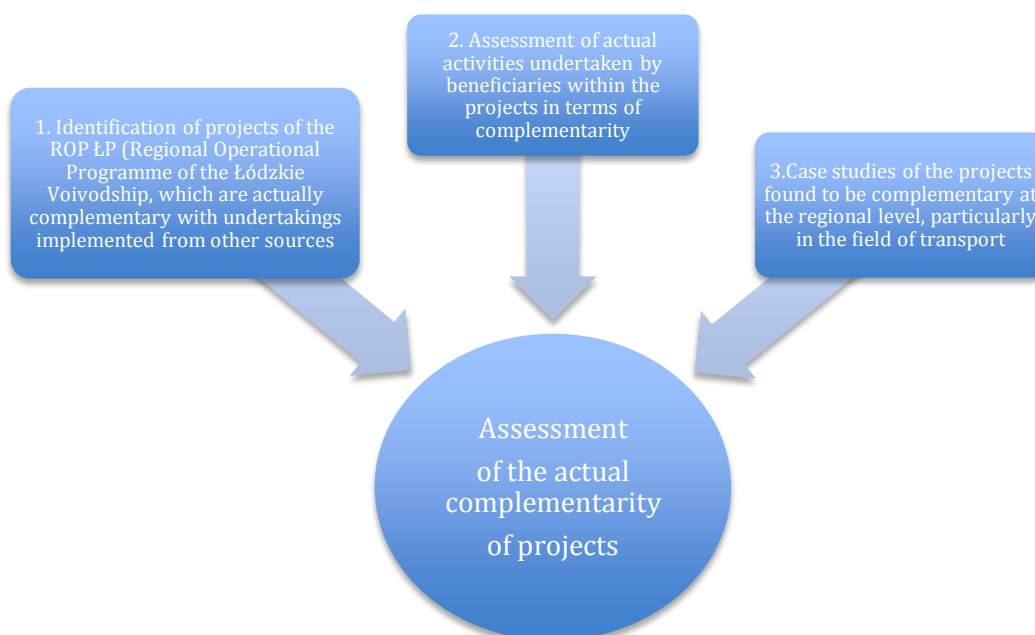
The previously identified typologies should not all be treated as competitive, but rather as providing a variety of perspectives on the issue of complementarity.

In the context of the above, examine how the concept of complementarity is being actually realized may provide interesting conclusions. As I. Otola states, the main problem of the determining and estimating effects of synergy is related to the choice of the kind of estimations. Thus, to study the real synergic effects resulting from implementing a given project, the application of the ex-post analysis is needed (Otola 2007, pp. 70).

To answer some basic question on implementation of complementarity assumption in practice, we analysed the case of Łódzkie region. We focused on question whether, the projects that were granted EU funds are compleement to each other and thus they are potentially able to generate positive synergies. The study mainly explored complementarity understood as the mutual complementing or supplementing of individual projects as well as mutual strengthening and intensifying of the effects of projects aimed at attaining a similar objective or function. Such a definition served as the basis for the analysis of actual complementarity at the level of implemented projects. It has to be stressed that we concentrated on examining the complementarity and not on estimating the size of synergy effects, which should be done by adopting comparative studies of alternative variations (Suszyński, 1992). Such studies must be undertaking on the level of each intervention, while are interests were focused rather on reflecting on mechanisms that should provide complementarity. The estimation of the size of synergy effect – as an extremely important issue in the context of examining the effectiveness of EU Regional Policy - should be immanent element of conducted ex-post projects' evaluations.

The following graph presents the methodological assumptions adopted to examine the real complementarity in case studied region.

Fig. 2 The scheme of the study on actual complementarity

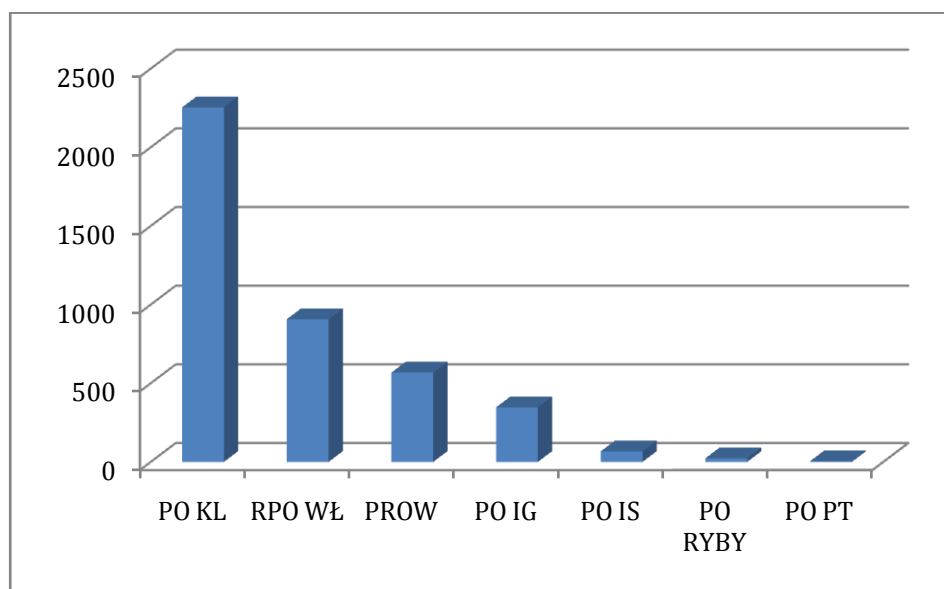


Source: Author

4. Real complementarity of programs and projects - result from Łódzkie Voivodship case study

In addition to projects implemented as part of the ROP ŁV, the Łódzkie Voivodship launches projects within all sectoral operational programs available.

Fig. 3 Number of projects implemented in the Łódzkie Voivodship under respective operational programs (as of June 2011)³



Source: Authors

Fig. 4 Total value of projects implemented in the Łódzkie Voivodship under respective operational programs (in PLN billion)

³ PO KL = HC OP (Human Capital Operational Programme)

RPO WŁ = ROP ŁV (Regional Operational Programme of the Łódzkie Voivodship)

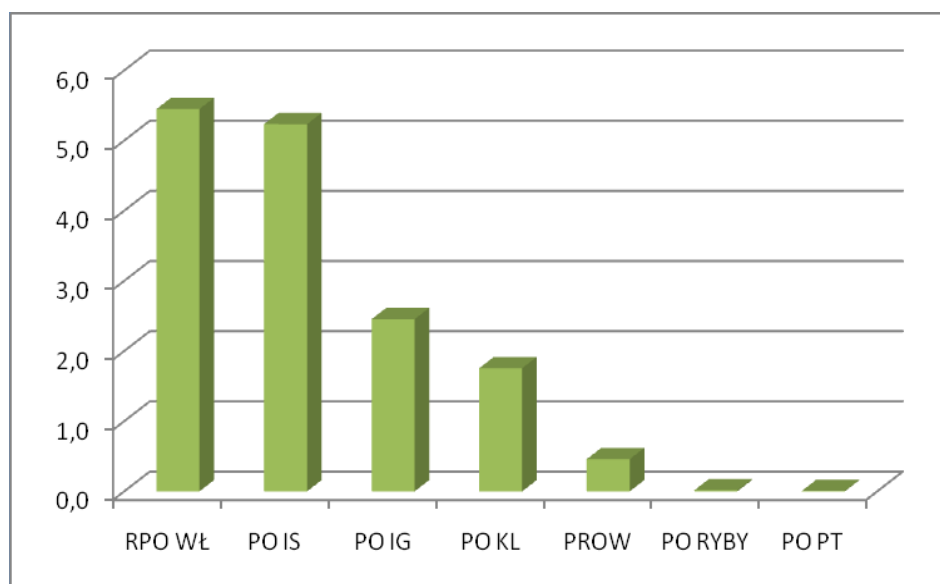
PROW = The Programme for the Development of Rural Areas

PO IG = IE OP (Innovative Economy Operational Programme)

PO IS = IE OP (Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme)

PO RYBY = Operational Programme “Sustainable Development of the Fisheries Sector and Coastal Fishing Areas”

PO PT = TA OP (Technical Assistance Operational Programme)



Source: Authors

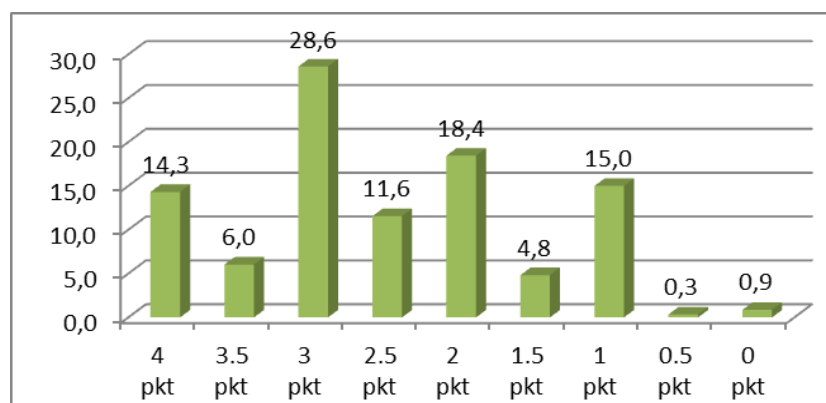
The complementarity of projects implemented under the ROP ŁV has been assessed by means of various research tools in such a way as to provide the broadest possible depiction of the issues discussed. In the first stage, the analysis covered the experts' assessments with respect to project applications, made with regard to the general criterion of complementarity. In total, 64% of all application fiches have been analysed (n=585; N=907) for projects implemented within the ROP ŁV. This mostly involved an average score from two forms; the average value from scores given by three experts was calculated in the case of only 12 projects.

The results of analyses suggest that the assessments of the complementarity criterion made by the experts within substantive evaluation of projects are highly diverse. The majority of projects received 3 points on average (on a scale from 0 to 4; 28.6% of all projects analyzed). What needs to be emphasised is the fact that nearly 1% of examined applications received an average score of 0.5 or 0 points.

The projects whose complementarity was highly assessed (3 or more points) comprise fewer than half of all undertakings that received financing from EU funds under a regional programme. Thus, it can be stated that the degree of complementarity in almost every second project has been assessed as high or very high.

Fig. 5 Average value of complementarity assessments made by the experts—namely, members of the Competition Board (as a percentage of all examined applications)⁴

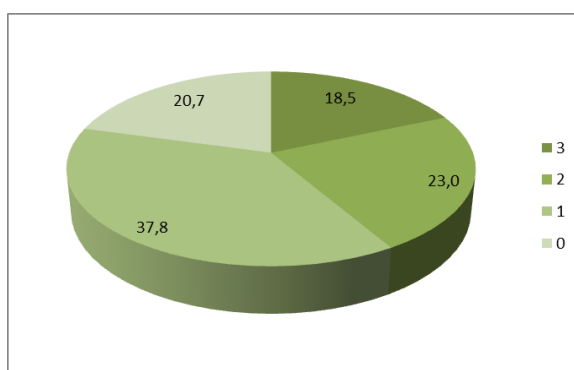
⁴ pkt = pt.



Source: Authors

The next stage of determining the actual complementarity of the projects implemented in the Łódzkie Voivodship under the ROP ŁV involved an additional evaluation during this study. The evaluation covered projects whose complementarity criterion was assessed highly (an average score of at least 3 points) by experts verifying the applications at the stage of substantive assessment. The projects selected for analysis (n=135) proportionally correspond with the number of applications that were assessed highly, with respect to the complementarity criterion, during the substantive assessment, within particular measures. Thus, they do not constitute a sample representative of the entire program. The results are presented in the following diagram.

Fig. 6 Assessment of the intensity of the complementarity of projects selected for an in-depth analysis, presented by percentage (n=135; assessment scale 0-3)



Source: Authors

The results depicted in Figure 6 indicate that the potential complementarity of projects implemented under the ROP ŁV, determined on the basis of a criterion regarding interrelation that translates into the intensification of the effects of implemented undertakings, is significantly lower than the value that follows from the assessment of complementarity made on the basis of criteria adopted by the Marshal's Office. Consequently, it can be hypothesized that inadequate tools for complementarity assessment are selected at the stage of application verification. Another aspect worth mentioning, being a problem which considerably hinders the process of a thorough assessment of complementarity, is the insufficient description of the type and nature of

complementarity in the grant application. In their applications, beneficiaries often confine themselves to listing projects that they deem to be complementary in relation to the main project, stating that “the projects complement each other in the implementation of established goals.”.

Interesting conclusions in this regard can be derived from the analysis of a case study for the project entitled “The provision of transport access to an entrepreneurship area and facilities of ‘The Land without Barriers’ in the town and commune of Poddębice”. The undertaking, for which the beneficiary received a subsidy, involved the renovation of several sections of commune roads. Complementary projects indicated by the beneficiary in the application regarded other investments made under a broader program entitled “The Land without Barriers” and aimed at providing Poddębice and its neighboring areas with more favorable conditions for economic development connected with the promotion of the tourism sector (intended for the disabled and persons requiring rehabilitation). Yet complementarity between the projects was not shown to have a direct nature (it can be regarded as complementarity of the second or even third degree), which results from the location of the roads renovated under the project: They do not reach any of the investment sites covered by the “The Land without Barriers” program, nor do they directly improve tourists’ accessibility to Poddębice. Their function, following the renovation, is limited to reducing the traffic burden on voivodship road no. 703, which serves as a transport route connecting the A2 motorway and the center of Poddębice. According to the beneficiary, each investment improving the condition of the commune’s infrastructure falls under the fulfillment of a broader objective (i.e., the improvement of conditions for the development of the tourism sector), and this testifies to its complementarity. Determining the degree and intensity of complementarity, as indicated in the application, without locating them on the map of Poddębice seems impossible. Thus, a question arises: To what extent are the experts assessing complementarity able to estimate the actual cohesion of submitted projects that involve the modernization of road infrastructure.

The characteristics of existing types of complementarity of RPO ŁV

The types of complementarity have been categorized according to the following levels:

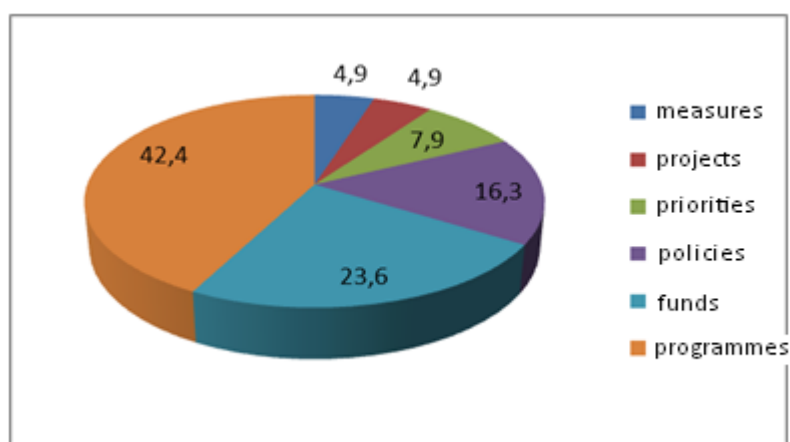
- Interdependence at the level of projects implemented within the same measure;
- Interdependence at the level of various measures, but within the same priority of the ROP ŁV;
- Interdependence at the level of various priorities, but within the ROP ŁV;
- Interdependence at the level of various funds, but within the same policy (e.g., ESF, ERDF within the cohesion policy);
- Interdependence at the level of various policies (e.g., common agricultural policy, cohesion policy); and
- Interdependence at the level of various programs, but within the same fund and policy.

The first three types of interdependence can be classified as internal complementarity whereas the other three are external complementarity.

The results of the analyses suggest that the most common type of complementarity is interdependence at the program level, which was observed in 42% of all examined complementary projects. This means that projects classified as complementary are implemented within various (other than ROP ŁV) operational programs. Nearly one in four complementary

projects concerned interdependence at the level of funds, so the projects classified as complementary were financed from various funds, but within the same policy. Complementarity arising from the implementation of projects within various policies was found in 16% of examined cases. The least represented group comprised complementary projects, the interdependence of which related to projects implemented within the same measure, priority, but different priorities of the ROP LV (interdependence at these three levels was observed in almost 18% of the projects analyzed). Taking these results into consideration, it should be stated that the complementarity of projects launched as part of the ROP LV is largely external in nature, rather than internal, the latter being identified in only 12% of the projects analyzed.

Fig. 8 Types of complementarity between the ROP LV projects and projects classified as complementary (by percentage)



Source: Authors

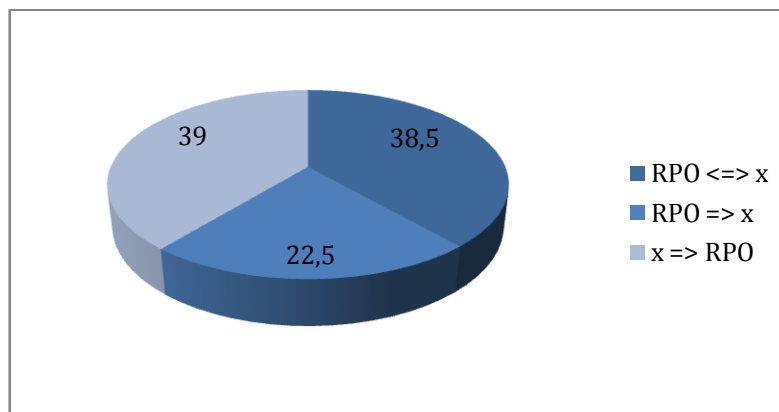
Another analyzed aspect was the direction of mutual impact between projects classified as complementary. Three possible directions were identified:

- 1) achieving the effects of a project implemented under the ROP LV depends on the effects of implementing a project indicated in the application as complementary;
- 2) achieving the effects of a project indicated in the application as complementary depends on the effects of a project implemented under the ROP LV; and
- 3) the project implemented under the ROP LV and the project indicated in the application as complementary complement each another, increasing their effects.

Differences in the occurrence of these types of impact have been found to be relatively insignificant. In the majority of cases, achieving the effects of a project implemented under the ROP LV depended on the effects of implementing a project indicated as complementary in the application (39%). Interdependencies based on the complementing of projects, which led to the mutual strengthening of their effects, had almost equal proportions. The third direction of impact, regarding the intensification of the effects of a complementary project towards a project implemented under the ROP LV as a result of implementation of the latter, is the least frequent case (22% of analyzed projects). Such a situation can arise due to insufficient information from

the project-implementing entity on the undertakings launched by other institutions (as was observed in the case of road projects carried out by higher-level local governments that did not classify undertakings conducted by communes as complementary).

Fig. 9 Directions of impact of complementary projects⁵



Source: Authors

Functional complementarity

Functional (objective) complementarity in the studied projects concerns fewer than 30% of projects classified as complementary.

In relatively few cases, complementarity involved the implementation of so-called “soft” (non-investment) projects, financed under the HC OP (Human Capital Operational Programme) or the SOP HRD (Sectoral Operational Programme—Human Resources Development). Here, a question can be posed about the reason for such a low number of soft projects among complementary projects in relation to undertakings implemented within the ROP ŁV. This question is even more justified against the fact that 2,254 HC OP projects were launched in the Łódzkie Voivodship.⁶

The results of in-depth analyses conducted within case studies suggest that beneficiaries might omit projects with which interdependence occurs in the form of their complementarity. For instance, during a phone interview, the respondent—who represented a beneficiary implementing the project “Providing additional equipment to the mechatronic laboratory in the Łódź Centre for Teacher Improvement and Practical Training”—listed projects financed from the HC OP that were undoubtedly complementary for the project, but still not included in the application. Another situation concerned the omitting of the “Agrotourism inside out!” project in the application, although it is complementary in relation to the project entitled “Improving transport accessibility between the communes of the Skierniewice District, along with auxiliary infrastructure.” The main objective of the project implemented from 2010 to 2011 under Measure VI.3 Local initiatives for the employment activation in rural areas, within HC OP, focused on enhancing district residents’ occupational and social development by raising of their qualifications and the

⁵ RPO = Regional Operational Program

⁶ According to data delivered by the Marshal’s Office in Łódź, as of June 30, 2011.

acquisition of skills required to set up and run an agrotourism farm. The road project carried out as part of the ROP LV improved transport accessibility in this part of the district, where—following the “Agrotourism inside out!” project—new agrotourism farms are to be established. Furthermore, the road project includes the construction of bicycle paths that will expand and supplement current bicycle routes, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of this form of recreation in the district. This in turn can translate into an increase in the number of tourists who will make use of the services offered by the agrotourism farms and generate their income. It is worth mentioning that the beneficiary in both these projects was the same entity: the Skierniewice District.

The assumptions of complementarity in the application documentation

The interviews and case studies conducted as part of the evaluation provide a solid basis for concluding that, for the majority of projects analyzed, descriptions of complementarity included in the applications are consistent with their actual course.

In several cases, the lack of complementarity (although indicated during the application stage) resulted from the discontinuation of planned projects (beneficiaries usually justified this with the failure to obtain financing for which they applied under various programs). If a project planned for implementation is discontinued, its complementarity effects might be either weakened/reduced or even completely eliminated. The latter situation involves projects characterized by first-degree complementarity, whereby their mutual impact is either bilateral or the effects of the complementary project strengthen the effects of implementing the main project. Such interdependencies are most evident in road projects, as confirmed by one of the respondents: “Our assumptions were correct; however, since some projects have not been completed, we could not obtain the effect of complementarity. Due to the lack of connection, the projects are non-cohesive, so our only tangible achievement is the length of the roads constructed.”

The beneficiaries pointed out that certain projects that they deemed to be complementary were characterized by very poor cohesion in relation to the main project. They tended to list every possible project implemented by a given beneficiary or whose spatial or objective scope approximated the planned undertaking. They did so as a “won’t hurt, but can help” sort of action in order to “boost” their chances of receiving high scores for the complementarity criterion during the substantial evaluation stage.

The complementarity of projects aimed at developing and modernizing road infrastructure

The analyses suggest that the complementarity of projects implemented under Measure I.1 of the ROP LV, “Roads,” in general contributes to the achievement of the objective focused on the expansion and modernization of the region’s road network. In their plans for road development, the beneficiaries take into account the largest road investments in the region—namely, the construction of the A2 motorway and the modernization of national roads forming the basic transport network in the voivodship. Specifications included in the application documents related to the major transport routes and emphasized the function of connecting lower-class roads with voivodship and national routes. Yet the complementarity of road projects can be somewhat limited, as local-government authorities and institutions responsible for road supervision are often directed by the technical condition of the road surfaces and the resulting urgent need for repairs. Therefore, they do not devote enough attention to the optimal complementing of road-

improvement projects within a given area, including both those that are still in progress and those that have already been completed.

In the case of road projects implemented under the ROP ŁV, the beneficiaries often mentioned (in addition to spatial complementarity) the objective complementarity of their projects, usually concerning undertakings in the field of tourism development and entrepreneurship support. In the case of the former, road repairs along a given section enhance the effects of investments connected with providing access to attractive tourist facilities and areas (monuments, tourist trails, etc.). The latter type of projects, due to improved transport accessibility, creates conditions that are more conducive to starting and running a business. As previously mentioned, relevant bodies at the district and voivodship levels are not always aware of the complementarity of their projects in relation to projects launched by communes in which a given road is located. Such a situation was observed in two case studies performed within the framework of the evaluation study.

An almost model example of combining funds from various sources for the purpose of creating a cohesive transport route is the project entitled “Improving transport accessibility between the communes of the Skierniewice District, along with auxiliary infrastructure.” The overall objective of the project assumed improvements in the transport accessibility of the Skierniewice District and, hence, all of Łódzkie Voivodship. This investment was intended to raise the standard of living for the residents of the Skierniewice and Żyrardów Districts, broaden access to investment areas serving public benefit, and provide conditions for the development of innovation- and tourism-related businesses. The project involved a systemic reconstruction of the surfaces of district and commune roads within the Skierniewice District, along with their auxiliary infrastructure (bicycle and pedestrian paths, car parks, etc.). In the project, 13 km of district roads and 7 km of commune roads were reconstructed; along their length, 1 km of bicycle paths was provided.

Complementarity in this case consists in the fact that all of those projects (implemented by various entities, using funds from various sources) created consistent communication route, acting as the bypass of Skierniewice. Each of the reconstructed road segments shortened travel time, but the benefits of the implementation of all projects is greater than the total amount of time saved by drivers (synergy effect). Implementation of all projects resulted in the creation of its kind since the ring road – which now is perceived by drivers as a product than can be used to avoid passing the city of Skierniewice. The omission of the modernization of any of road section would result in decreasing the attractiveness and - by that - the utility of the bypass.

Fig. 9 Graphic depiction of road sections renovated under the project “Improving transport accessibility between the communes of the Skierniewice District, along with auxiliary infrastructure” and complementary projects



Source: Authors

Road sections marked with 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 14 were redeveloped as part of the project within the Regional Operational Programme of the Łódzkie Voivodship; sections 6 and 13 within the National Plan of Local Roads Improvement 2008-2011; and sections 1, 8, and 10 with funds from the local governments of the Skierniewice Commune, the Skierniewice District, and the Żyrardów District.

Summary and recommendations

The importance of ensuring complementarity to increase the efficiency of public undertakings seems unquestionable. Different expertise and evaluations prove that one of the barriers limiting positive results of interventions co-financed by EU funds is the insufficient degree of mutual complementarity of programs and projects that should be guaranteed in both the planning and implantation phases at all levels (European, national, regional, and local). Complementarity stimulates and enhances synergic impact while excluding the risk of duplicate financing of the same undertakings. The adoption of measures aimed at strengthening mechanisms that serve the implementation of cohesive and complementary projects will lead to greater efficiency and better performance of specified objectives.

Acknowledging complementarity as a tool that can maximize the results of public interventions has a fundamental significance and, as previously indicated in this article, mechanisms facilitating the highest possible degree of complementarity should serve as the basis for a new paradigm of

the cohesion policy. This is especially vital in the context of the next programming period for the Cohesion Policy 2014–2020.

Given the results of the study on the actual complementarity of projects implemented under the ROP ŁV, it is rather impossible to give a straight and definite answer to the question as to whether the recorded level of complementarity is acceptable and, thus, conducive to the higher efficiency of activities co-financed with EU funds. The analyses suggested the existence of severe restrictions when it comes to assessing the actual intensity of complementarity and the resulting synergy effects. As the analyses of both the documentation and the comments of participants during the in-depth interviews indicated that the complementarity of projects is misunderstood or deliberately distorted (so that the highest score during the application stage can be obtained), it can be concluded that the scale of complementarity is far from satisfactory.

Increasing this scale requires the reorganization of the scoring system for this criterion at the application verification stage, an extension of the beneficiaries' knowledge on complementarity and their ability to correctly identify specific effects resulting from project complementarity, and—finally—a broader promotion of projects that could potentially aid in the implementation of smaller complementary projects (e.g., building a broadband Internet network would support IT projects in public administration and companies).

However, the case study showed that it is not in funds' beneficiaries' interest to provide complementarity between different projects. At the stage of application they are pointing potential complementarity, which in reality does not exist in aim to gain as much points as possible so their project can be qualified for financing. It is the role of Managing Authorities to assure that co-financed projects are complement to each other and hence they are prone to produce positive synergy effects. The best solution to achieve this would be the implementation of integrated projects, which ex-ante evaluation would include the solid assessment of potential synergy effects. Of course, this requires - as mentioned earlier in this article - the development and dissemination of comparative methodology for estimating synergy effects of planned projects. Managing Authorities should also put great attention to estimation of size of synergy effect examined within ex-post evaluations, by elaborating special guidelines and harmonized methodology for the next period of implementation.

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