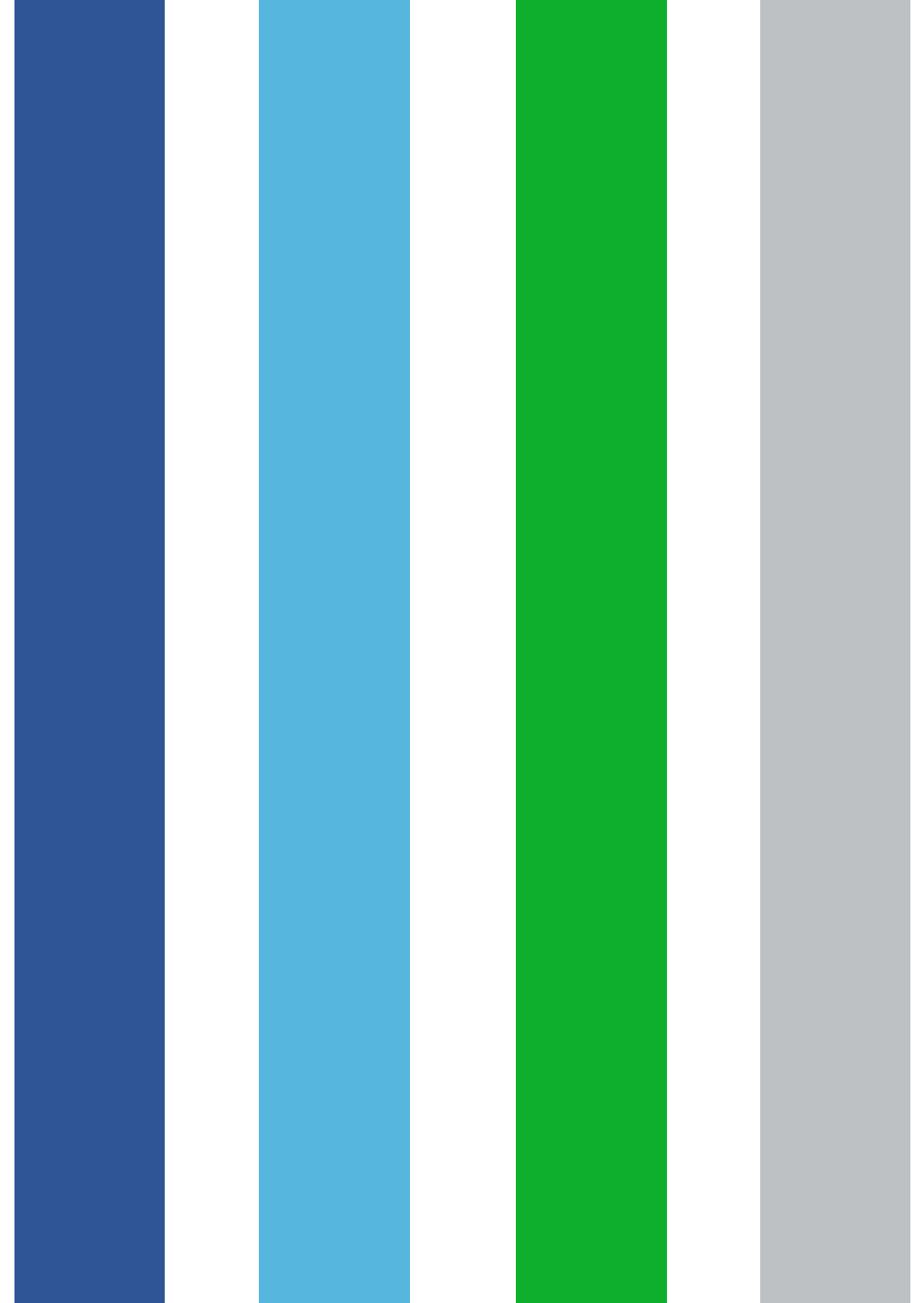


**Evaluation of the impact of
the INTERREG V-A Poland –
Germany / Saxony 2014-2020
cross-border cooperation
programme on the assisted
area of the Polish-Saxon
border**



Introduction



Concept and objective of the study

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of measures implemented under all priority axes (excluding Technical Assistance) and to analyse their effects and impact on the socio-economic life of the residents of the assisted area. The study assessed the impact of the Small Project Fund on achieving the goals set for the Programme's Priority Axis IV.

The evaluation was made using the following criteria:

SUCCESS RATE

To what extent have the stated goals been achieved?

COST-EFFICIENCY

To what extent are the expenses incurred cost-efficient?

USEFULNESS

To what extent are the actual results of the Programme in line with the needs of its target groups?

SUSTAINABILITY

What has changed in society and the environment as a result of the Programme?

Scope of the study

This study included an evaluation of the success rate of the measures implemented under all priority axes of the Programme and an analysis of their effects, including the impact on the socio-economic life of the residents of the assisted area, as well as the degree of achievement of the specific objectives of the Programme.

As part of the evaluation, the Programme's outcome indicators were also measured following the methodology specified in the Programme and presented in the document titled “The development of the concept and methodology to measure and estimate the value of milestone and target outcome indicators for the INTERREG Poland-Saxony 2014-2020 cooperation programme”. Measurement of outcome indicators included:

- The level of cultural and natural attractiveness of the assisted area,
- Travel time between towns and cities in the border area,
- Degree of linkage and diversity of educational offerings,
- Sentiment index of institutions involved in Polish-German cross-border cooperation.

An important component of the study, resulting from the provisions of Article 50(4) of the General Regulation, was the evaluation of implementation of horizontal policies under the Programme:

- promoting gender equality,
- equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities,
- sustainable development.

Methodological outline I

Methods to measure outcome indicators

- **Measurement of indicator 1: Level of cultural and natural attractiveness of the assisted area**

- A. PAPIs (Paper and Pencil Interviews) with tourists from outside the Polish-Saxon border area – regional level

Surveys (600 interviews) were conducted in 20 localities – the same ones used to measure the baseline in 2014.

- B. PAPIs (Paper and Pencil Interviews) with tourists from outside the Polish-Saxon border area – project result level

The surveys were conducted in 20 localities – in 10 localities where projects were successfully implemented under the Programme's support and in 10 where no project was implemented.

- **Measurement of indicator 2: Travel time between towns and cities in the border area**

- A. Study of the reduction of travel time between towns and cities in the border area – regional level

Measurements were carried out for road sections between towns and cities in Poland and Germany. The measurements included 13 road sections between 26 towns and cities in Poland and Germany – the same ones used in the 2014 baseline measurement.

- B. Study of the reduction of travel time between towns and cities in the border area – project result level

Measurements were carried out for all road sections where projects under the Programme were initiated and implemented, as well as for those sections where projects could not be implemented. The same sections were analysed in 2018.

- **Measurement of indicator 3: Degree of linkage and diversity of educational offerings**

The survey was conducted using a mixed-mode approach (combined use of CAWI and CATI techniques) among beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the Programme from the education market and among potential employers.

- **Measurement of indicator 4: Sentiment index of institutions involved in Polish-German cross-border cooperation**

The survey was conducted using the CAWI technique among beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the Programme, associated with institutions or NGOs involved in Polish-Saxon cross-border cooperation.

Methodological outline II

Other research methods

- **Desk research**
- **Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) with residents of areas where projects were implemented**

As part of the evaluation, telephone interviews were conducted with residents of areas where projects were implemented under the Programme. A total of 400 interviews were conducted – 200 in Poland and 200 in Germany.

- **CAWI/CATI with Polish and German partners of regular and small projects**

The survey was conducted among Polish and German partners of approved projects using CAWI and CATI techniques.

- **In-depth interviews (IDIs), In-depth Telephone Interviews (ITIs) or online interviews with representatives of Programme institutions**

The survey was conducted among representatives of the Managing Authority, the National Authority, the Joint Secretariat, the Euroregion offices and the Monitoring Committee.

- **Case studies**

Case studies were conducted on 12 projects with particularly high success rate.

- **Delphi panel**

The expert panel included 2 experts specialising in regional development and 2 experts in cross-border cooperation.

- **Network analysis**

Both monitoring data and data obtained from the CAWI/CATI survey with project partners were used to analyse the partnership network. The results of the partnership network analysis are presented in the form of linkage maps.

- **Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**

The qualitative comparative analysis made it possible to identify, among other things, factors determining the achievement of the objectives of the Programme and of individual projects, factors affecting the variation in absorption of funds among the areas of cooperation under the Programme, and factors affecting project cooperation.

- **Search of local and regional and community media**

The search was carried out on the basis of Polish and German sources and included entries concerning the Programme.

Context of existence and budget of the Programme I

The main objective of the Poland-Saxony Interreg Poland-Saxony 2014-2020 cooperation programme is to deepen cooperation in order to overcome development barriers in the Polish-Saxon borderland. The Programme supports joint cross-border projects that contribute to solving common key problems and address common challenges in the development of the Polish –Saxon border region.

The Programme focuses on four priority axes:

I. Common natural and cultural heritage

II. Regional mobility

III. Cross-border education

IV. Partnerships and institutional potential

Context of existence and budget of the Programme II

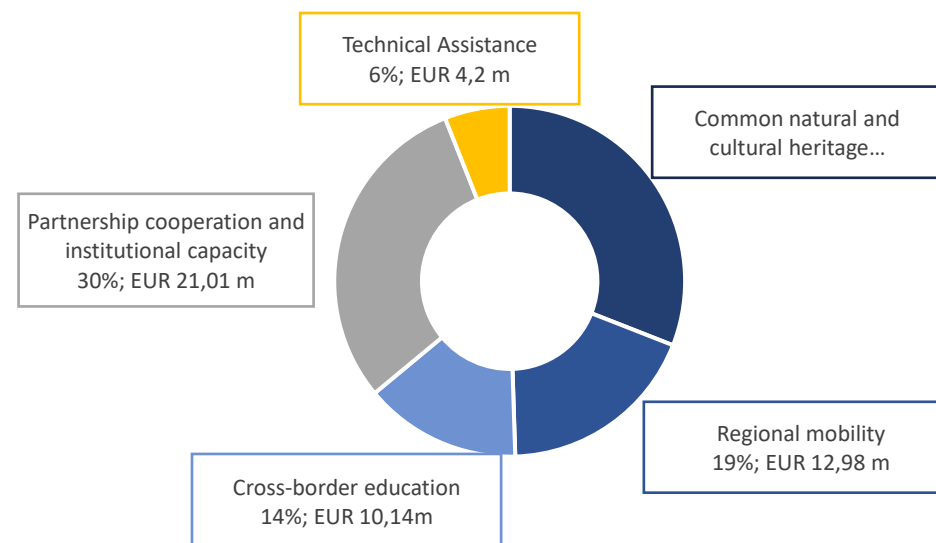
The following types of projects are being implemented under the Programme:

- regular projects – under priority axes I–IV;
- flagship projects – under priority axes I, III and IV;
- umbrella project Small Project Fund (SPF) – implemented under priority axis IV;
- micro-projects – initiatives implemented under the Small Projects Fund.

The Programme has been allocated EUR 70 million from EU funds. The amount of funds under each priority axis is as follows:

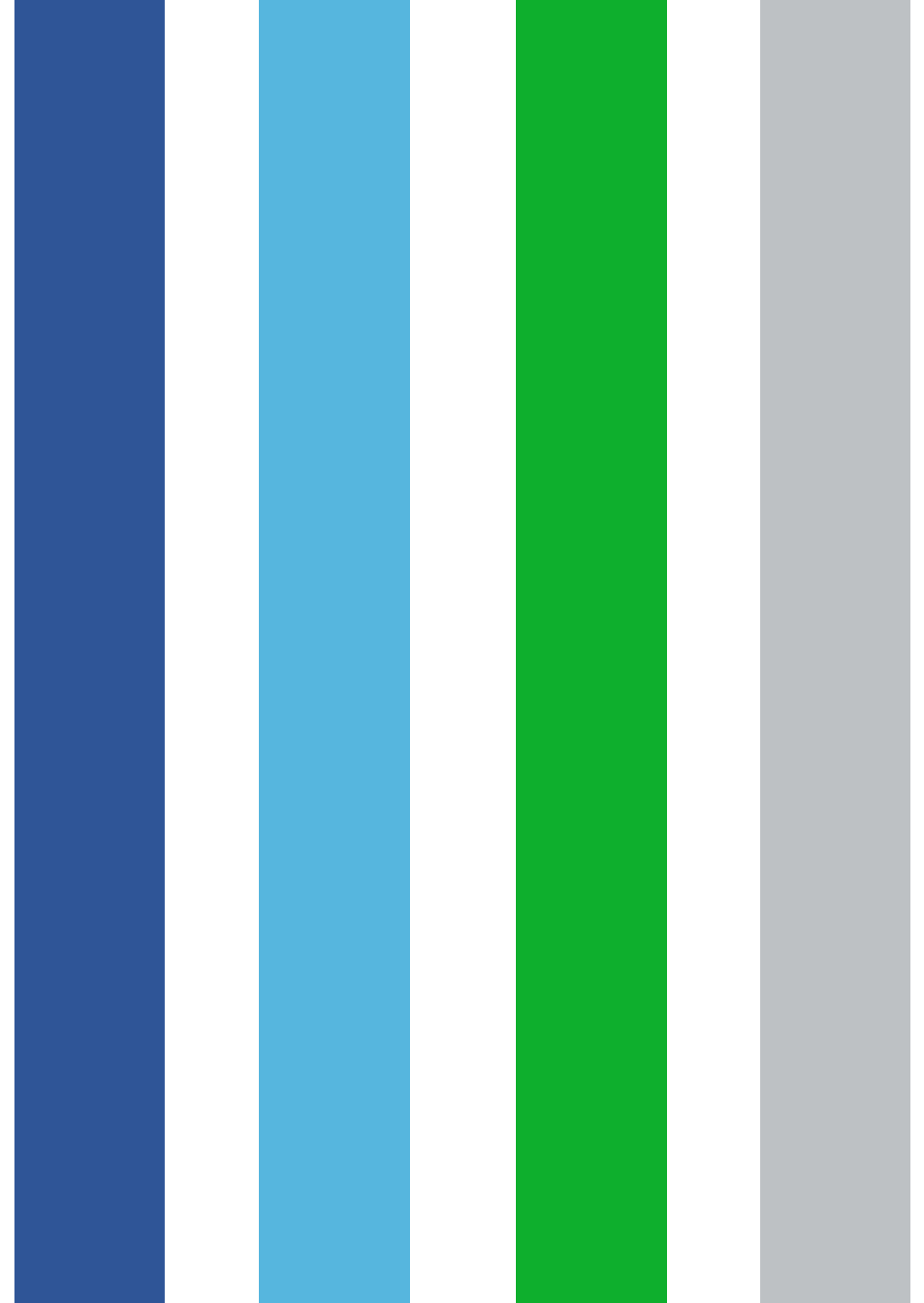
1. Common natural and cultural heritage – EUR 21.66 million;
2. Regional mobility – EUR 12.98 million;
3. Cross-border education – EUR 10.14 million;
4. Partnership cooperation and institutional capacity - EUR 21.01 million.
5. Technical Assistance – EUR 4.2 million.

Chart 1. Value of the financial allocation earmarked for the individual priority axes of the Programme after the reallocation of funds in 2020 [in EUR million]



Source: own elaboration based on the Annual Report on Programme Implementation for 2020

Key findings



Achievement of Programme objectives I

The analysis carried out proved that the objectives of the Programme were achieved. Contributing to this were the projects approved under the Programme, which were in line with the specific objectives. The values of programme indicators in Priorities II, III and IV have already indicated the achievement of the end goals for the Programme set for the end of 2023 in 2021. In the case of Priority I, the reported values of indicators should allow to show the set values in the final report on Programme implementation.

Table 1. Common and Programme-specific output indicators (by priority axis, investment priority) (excluding Technical Assistance)

Priority axis	Indicator	Unit of measure	Target value (2023)	Cumulative value (2022)
I	Number of undertakings in projects for preservation, protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage	[pcs.]	189	158
I	Increase in the expected number of visits to supported cultural and natural heritage sites and tourist attractions (common indicator)	[pcs.]	5,145	557,112
II	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads (common indicator)	[km]	25	42.22
III	Number of participants in joint education and training systems to support employment, educational opportunities as well as higher and vocational education across borders (common indicator)	[persons]	7,300	21,097
III	Number of ventures in education projects	[pcs.]	123	141
IV	Number of individuals participating in projects implemented in the framework of cooperation between citizens and institutions	[persons]	21,720	156,291
IV	Number of undertakings in projects on cooperation between citizens and institutions	[pcs.]	355	568

Source: Annual report on program implementation for 2022

Achievement of Programme objectives II

The effectiveness of the implementation of the Programme's goals is evidenced by the measurement of outcome indicators. While it is true that the values of two of the four indicators did not exceed the expected intermediate value, and thus were below the target value, it should be noted that the lower values of the indicators were certainly influenced by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation, as well as the geopolitical situation related to the war in Ukraine.

Table 2. Results of measurement of outcome indicators

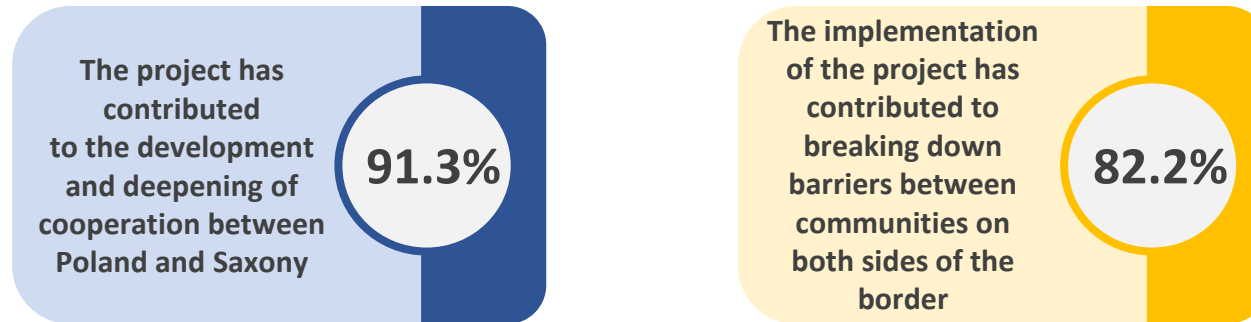
Priority axis	Indicator	Base value	Intermediate value	Target value	Annual value for 2023
I	Level of cultural and natural attractiveness of the assisted area [%]	61.7%	64.9%	76.7%	64.9%
II	Travel time between towns and cities in the border area [min]	35.5 min	34.2 min	30.2 min	29.6 min
III	Degree of linkage and diversity of educational offerings [%]	57.1%	59.9%	74.7%	66.4%
IV	Sentiment index of institutions involved in Polish-German cross-border cooperation [%]	75.0%	77.8%	90.2%	51.6%

Source: own compilation based on surveys conducted.

Achieved results with the identification of their impact on the local communities I

According to the vast majority of surveyed partners, their project contributed to the development and deepening of cooperation between Poland and Saxony (91.3%), as well as to the removal of barriers between communities on both sides of the border (82.2%).

**Figure 1. Do you think that your project has contributed to the development and deepening of cooperation between Poland and Saxony?
Do you think that the implementation of your project contributed to the removal of barriers between communities on both sides of the border?**



Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

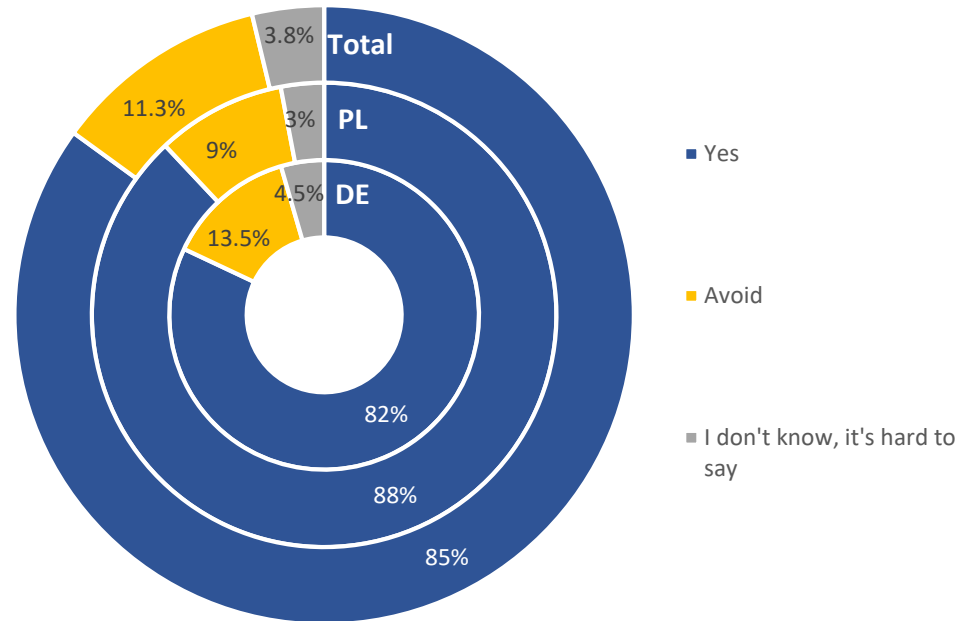
An analysis of respondents' answers shows that the greatest benefits were reported in terms of interpersonal contacts. Much has also been gained in the areas of institutional cooperation, culture, national heritage and education.

According to the respondents, the implementation of the projects has primarily contributed to bridging the barrier caused by cultural differences (83.3%). Breaking stereotypes was cited by 69.4% of respondents, and removing psychological/mental barriers by 60.6% of respondents. According to 45.0% of the partners, their project has contributed to bridging barriers due to historical backgrounds.

Achieved results with the identification of their impact on the local communities II

A survey among residents of the border area showed that the vast majority of them had the opportunity to benefit from the effects of projects implemented under the INTERREG Poland-Saxony 2014-2020 cooperation programme (85.0%). Slightly more often such an answer was indicated by residents of the area located on the Polish side of the assisted area (88.0% versus 82.0% on the German side).

Chart 1. Have you had the opportunity to benefit from the effects of projects implemented under the INTERREG Poland-Saxony 2014-2020 cooperation Programme?



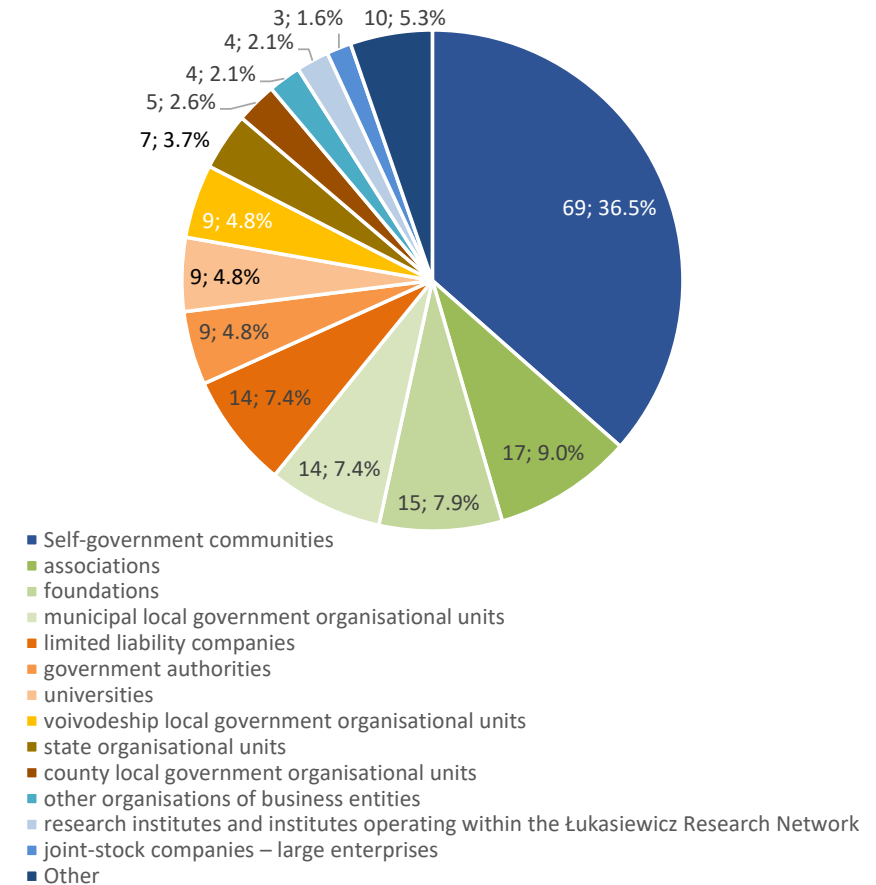
Source: CATI survey with residents of the border area (N=400)

Structure and activity of beneficiaries

The Programme involved 189 partners in the implementation of 62 regular projects: 103 Polish and 86 German entities. Local authorities were the largest group among these entities (36.5%). Foundations and associations accounted for 16.9% of participants.

Considering the type of area where regular projects under the Programme have been implemented, one can observe the dominance of small urban areas (69.8%). Rural areas accounted for 30.2%. It was noted that the predominance of urban centers in obtaining external funds is a common phenomenon in Polish local governments. Due to the greater financial resources at their disposal, they are more active in obtaining EU funds.

Chart 2. Entities involved in the implementation of regular projects within the framework of the Interreg Poland-Saxony 2014-2020 cooperation programme according to legal forms

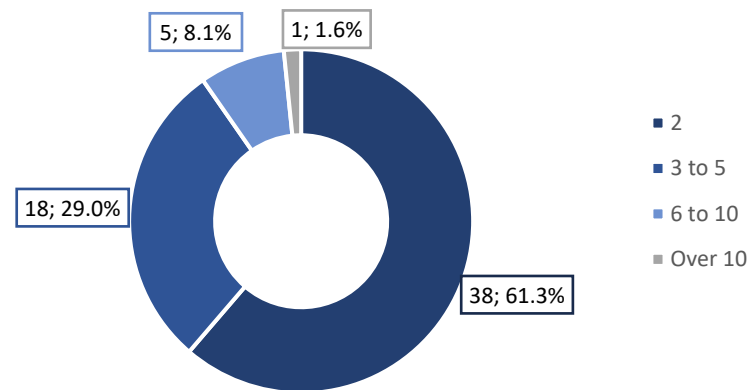


Source: own elaboration based on MA data

Structure of project partnerships with an indication of intensity and quality of cooperation I

Most of the regular projects were implemented by 2 partners (61.3%). For 29.0% of the projects, the number of beneficiaries ranged from 3 to 5. More partners were reported in 9.7% of the projects.

Chart 3. Structure of project partnerships in regular projects under the Interreg Poland-Saxony 2014-2020 cooperation programme by number of partners



Source: own elaboration based on MA data (N=62)

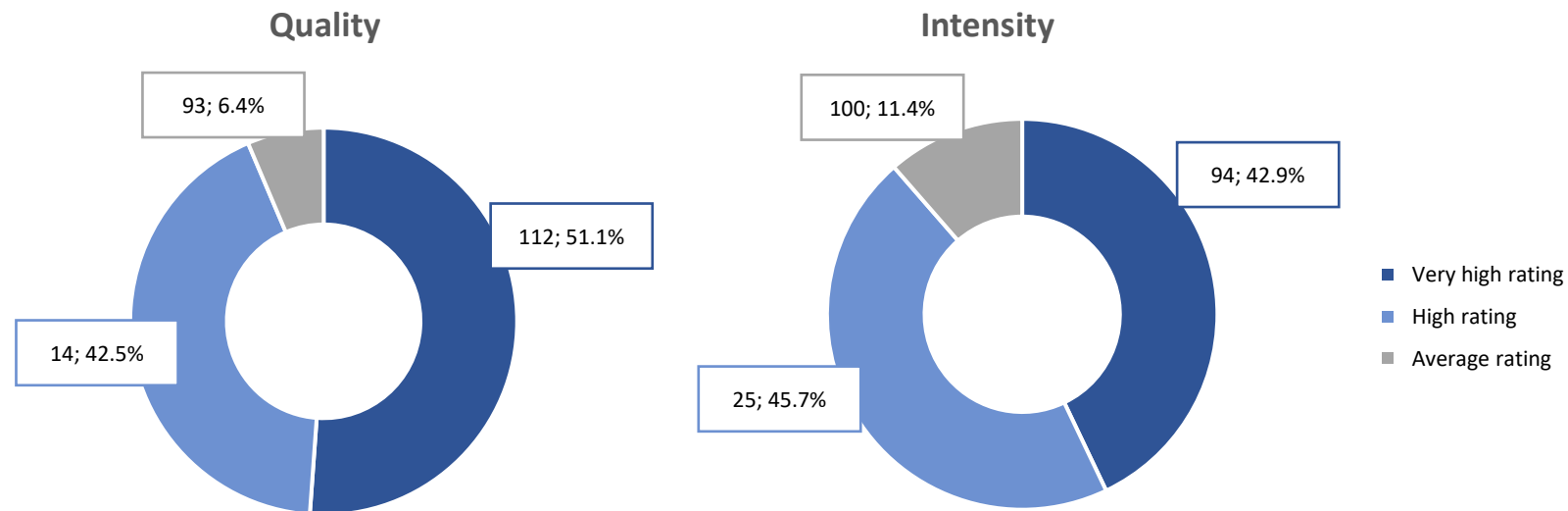
When considering the attitudes adopted by entities involved in the implementation of regular projects, it can be observed that Polish entities were more likely to play the role of lead beneficiary (42 times). The German side performed this role 20 times.

An analysis of the structure of regular projects by the dominant scope of intervention showed that the largest number of projects involved investments in institutional capacity, the efficiency of public administration and the effectiveness of public services at the national, regional and local levels to carry out reforms, including better lawmaking and good governance (25.8%).

Structure of project partnerships with an indication of intensity and quality of cooperation II

A quantitative survey with project partners assessed the intensity and quality of project cooperation. The survey results indicate that the vast majority of respondents rated both aspects positively. The percentage of “high rating” or “very high rating” responses was 93.6% and 88.6%, respectively.

Chart 4. How do you assess the quality of cooperation with the partner in the implementation of the project? How do you assess the intensity of cooperation with the partner in the implementation of the project?



Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

Partners' plans for further cooperation

The partnership within the current financial perspective has yielded the expected results, which can be evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of surveyed beneficiaries plan to continue working with their partners in the future (89.1%). This will provide opportunities for further exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices among partners. It is noteworthy that of the beneficiaries planning further cooperation, an overwhelming majority intend to reapply for EU funds together with their partners (88.1%).

Chart 5. Do you intend to continue working with your partner in the future? Do you intend to apply for EU funds again in the future together with your project partner?



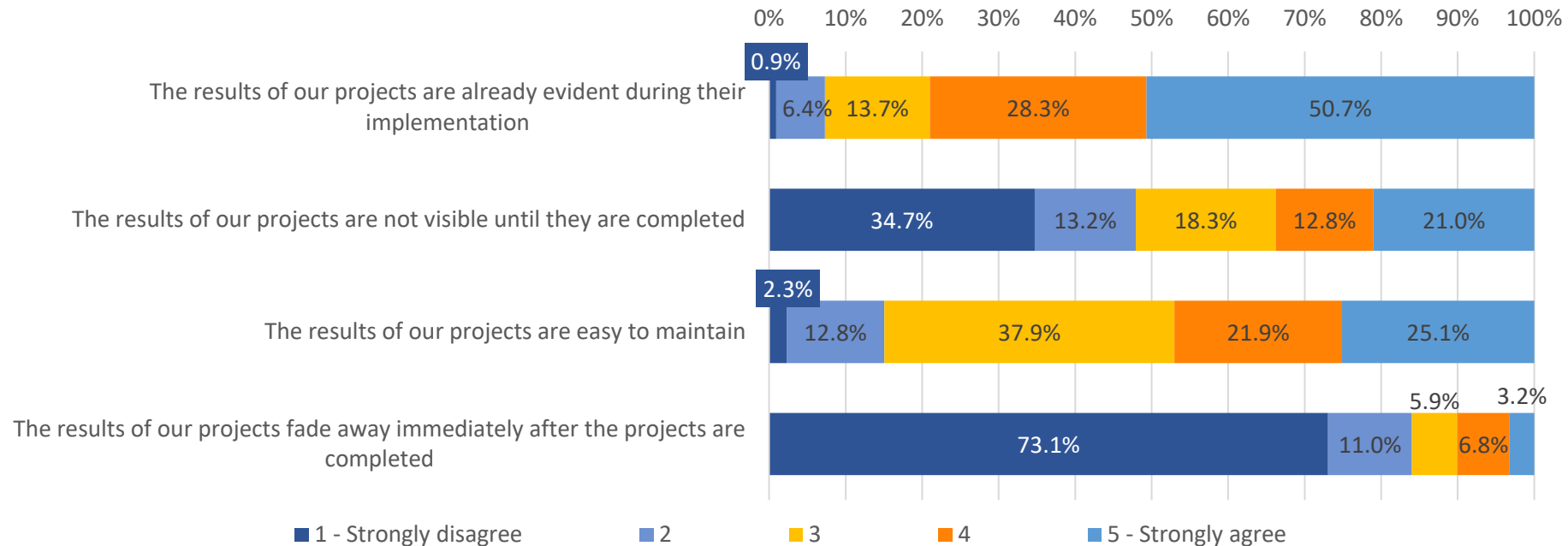
Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

Beneficiaries planning further cooperation with their partners were also asked about the thematic areas in which they intended to apply for EU funds under the current financial perspective. The largest number of respondents indicated an area related to strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (59.3%). A slightly lower percentage plans to implement projects under the Small Projects Fund (54.1%).

Sustainability of the effects of projects and of partnerships established I

Respondents disagreed with the statement that the effects of implemented projects fade immediately after their completion – 84.0% of respondents disagreed with such a statement (sum of ratings 1 and 2). Taking into account the above results, it can be concluded that a significant part of the beneficiaries assess the effects of the implemented projects as sustainable. This is also confirmed by findings from in-depth interviews with project partners as part of the case study analysis.

Chart 6. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.



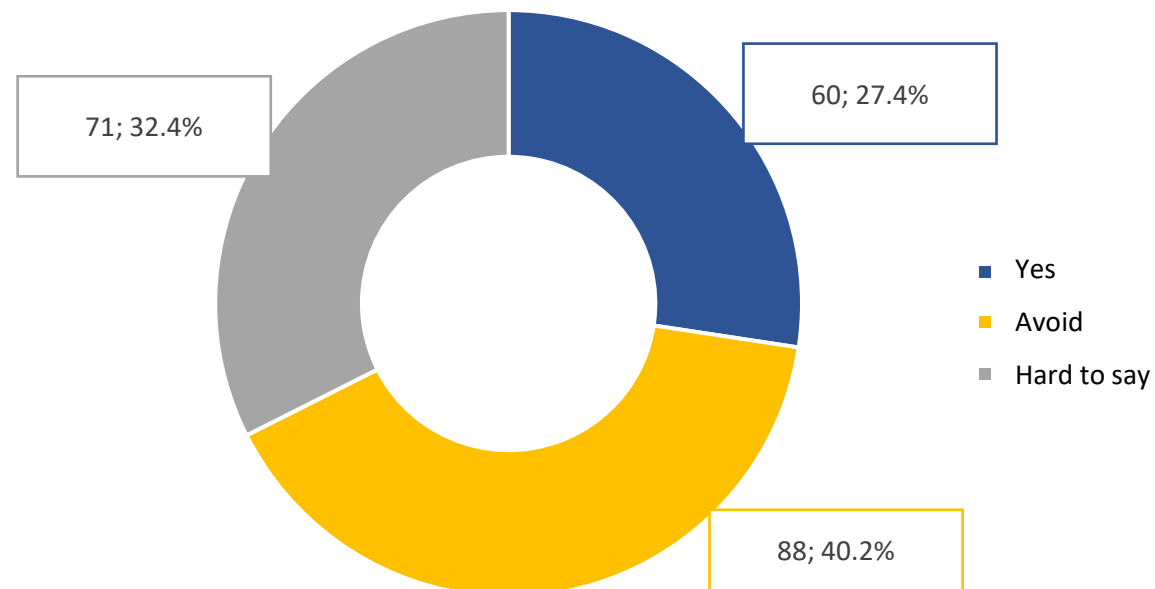
Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

Sustainability of the effects of projects and of partnerships established II

Two out of five surveyed project partners believed that maintaining the effects of the completed project would not possible without further EU funding (40.2%).

With these results in mind, one must be aware that project partners may have different interpretations of what it means to “maintain the effects” of a project. Some may understand it as long-term maintenance of positive changes in the community, while others see it as long-term financial independence without external support.

Chart 7. Do you think it is possible to maintain the effects of the completed project without further EU funding?

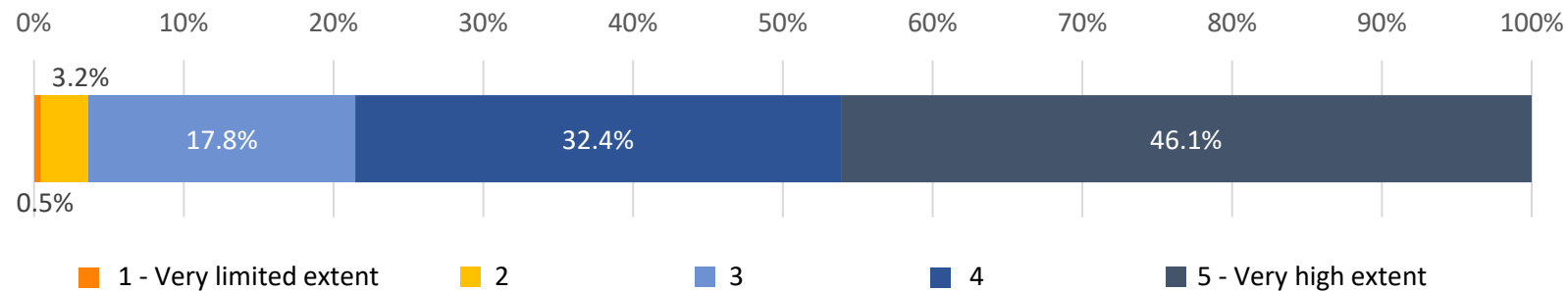


Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

Manner and degree of taking into account horizontal policies I

The analysis carried out showed that the vast majority of beneficiaries took the horizontal principles into account to a great or very great extent (ratings 4 and 5 indicated by 78.5% of respondents). An average level of compliance with these principles was indicated by 17.8% of respondents, and only 3.7% of respondents rated it as low or very low. The results obtained allow us to conclude that the degree of consideration of horizontal principles at the level of individual projects should be rated highly.

Chart 8. Please indicate to what extent the horizontal principles have been taken into account in the implementation of the project?



Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

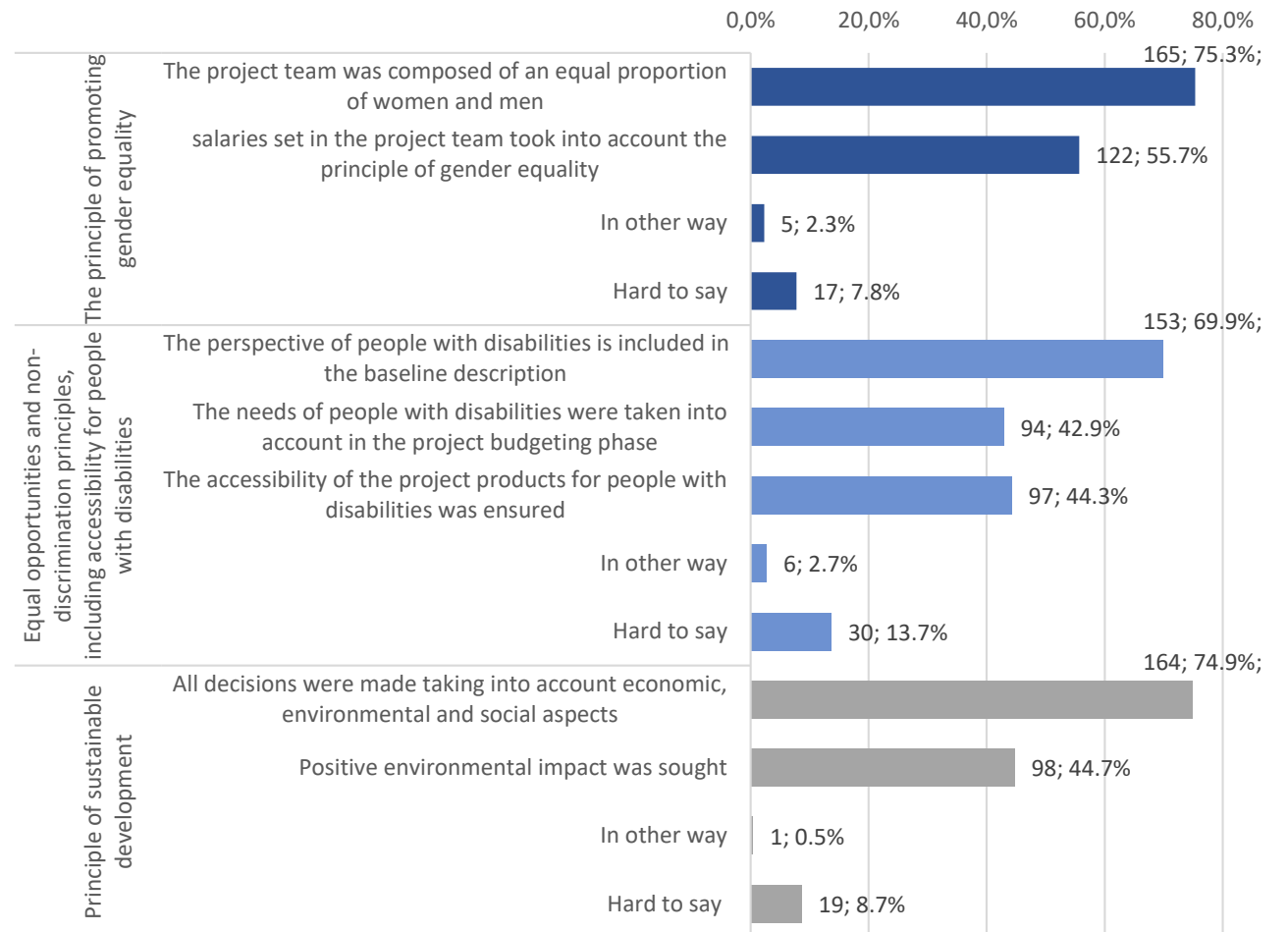
Manner and degree of taking into account horizontal policies II

Considering the principle of promoting gender equality, it can be seen that its consideration most often consisted of ensuring that the project team was equally divided by gender (75.3%).

In the case of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, its compliance was based primarily on the inclusion of the perspective of people with disabilities in the baseline description (69.9%).

The principle of sustainability was adhered to most often by making all decisions taking into account economic, environmental and social aspects (74.9%).

Chart 9. Have the following horizontal principles been taken into account in the implementation of the project?



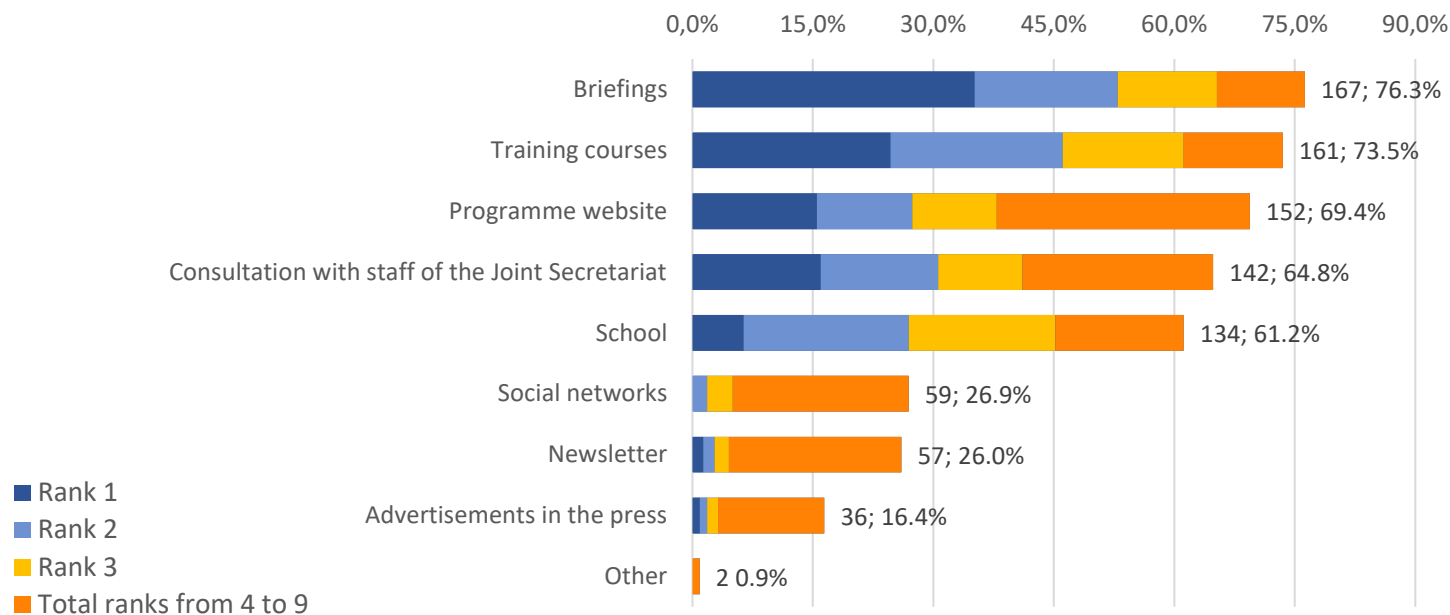
Source: CAWI/CATI survey on Polish and German partners of approved projects (N=219)

Evaluation of the tools and activities used for the Programme's communication strategy

Partners of approved projects participating in the quantitative survey indicated the sources of knowledge about the Programme they used. The analysis showed that they most often used the information provided in the manual and on the Programme's website (62.1% and 60.7%, respectively). More than half of the respondents said they had participated in briefings (54.3%), consultations with Joint Secretariat staff (53.4%) and training courses (50.7%).

Three out of four project partners indicated that information and promotion activities that should be continued are briefings (76.3%) and training courses (73.5%). High percentages were also recorded for the Programme website (69.4%), consultations with Joint Secretariat staff (64.8%) and workshops (61.2%).

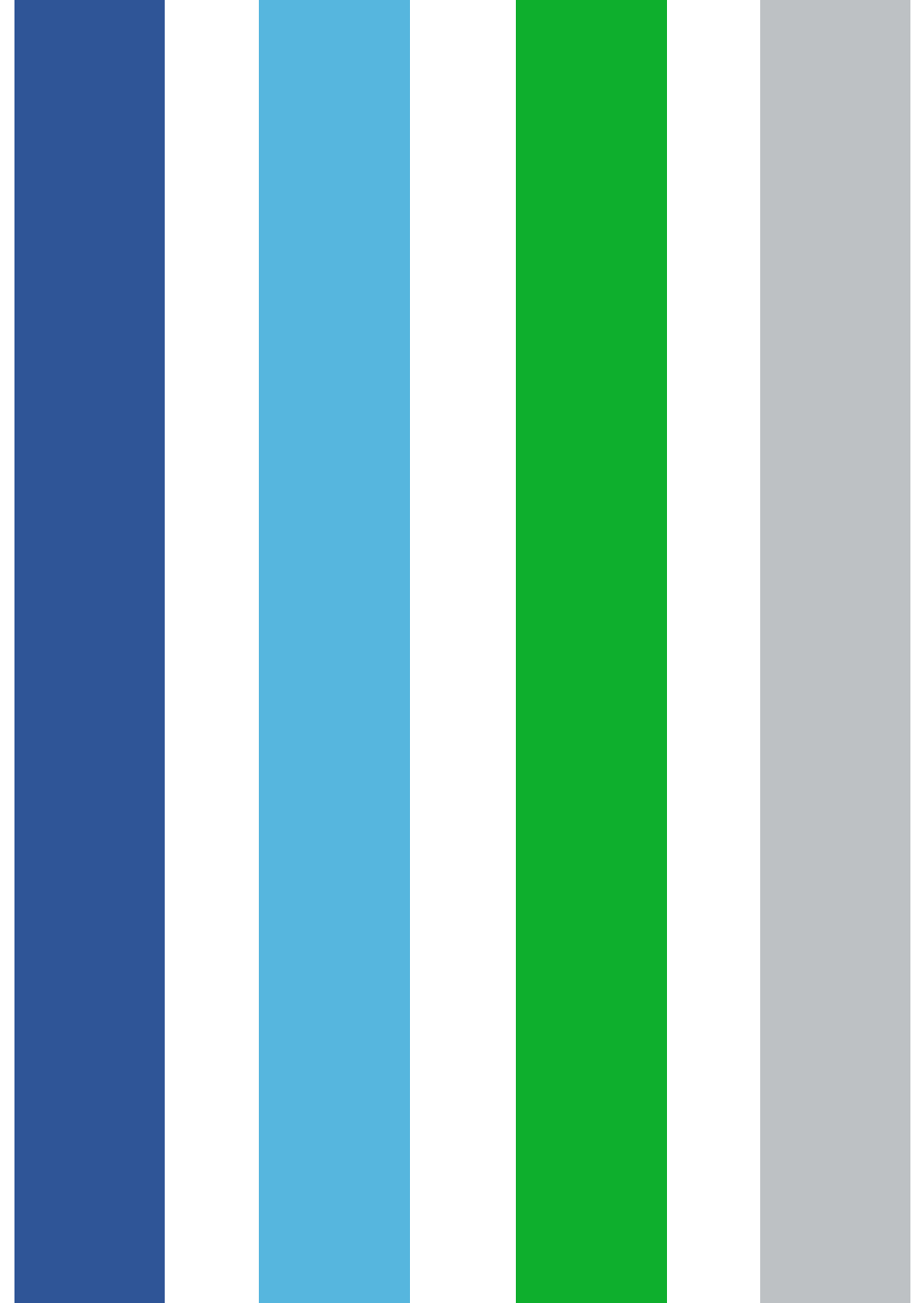
Chart 10. Which information and promotion activities do you think should be continued?



Source: CAWI/CATI survey with Polish and German partners of approved projects; ranking question (N=219)

*The question allowed ranking the answers according to the respondent's preferences, from most important to least important.

Conclusions and recommendations



Conclusions and recommendations I

No.	Content of the application	Content of the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Method of implementation
1	No command of the neighbour's language is often a major problem in partnerships, and this is why English is sometimes used to communicate. In some cases, cooperation is only possible because employees of German institutions have Polish roots or the Polish partners speak German very well.	It is recommended that further support be provided to children, young people, and the region's staff in improving their language skills by encouraging potential beneficiaries to submit projects aimed at improving language competences.	MA	In the financial perspective 2021-2027, the importance of projects aimed at strengthening the language competences of the inhabitants of the border area should be emphasised as part of the information and promotion activities addressed to potential beneficiaries. This will make it possible to overcome the language barrier, which is one of the biggest barriers in the Programme, and will help decrease unemployment in the region and increase the attractiveness of the area for potential inhabitants.
2	The structure of beneficiaries of the Programme's regular projects is dominated by local governments. A much smaller share was held by NGOs which, through projects in the field of broadly understood culture, sport, and education, carry out activities important for breaking down barriers between the two nations, strengthening neighbourly relations, and overcoming stereotypes.	It is recommended that the share of NGOs be increased in the structure of applicants. In this respect, it is important to continue promotion and information undertakings aimed at instilling the benefits of cooperation in the local community, with particular emphasis on NGOs.	MA	To increase the activity of NGOs, dedicated channels for disseminating information about the Programme should be prepared. It would also be advisable to try to identify and activate local leaders from among NGOs.

Conclusions and recommendations II

No.	Content of the application	Content of the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Method of implementation
3	Project partners can use a variety of sources of funding for their activities, including funding from other INTERREG programmes in the German-Polish border area.	To exploit synergies, it is recommended that cooperation with other cross-border programmes in the same area be strengthened and trilateral PL-CZ-DE cooperation be undertaken, for example by extending a project selected in one programme to include cooperation with a third party.	MA	The possibility of extending cooperation with a third party should be included in the projects announced. It is necessary to identify cross-border projects covering the same area and with similar issues covered. To implement the recommendations, it would also be necessary to arrange meetings that animate future cooperation and to identify individual barriers to wider cross-border cooperation. Implementation of the recommendations will enable a more flexible use of allocations and contribute to better results in the achievement of the Programme objectives.
4	The activity of applicants is significantly affected by difficulties in finding a suitable partner willing to cooperate and by insufficient staff skills in preparing applications and accounting for projects. As the survey results indicate, easier access to information on project implementation would encourage more than half of the surveyed beneficiaries to submit an application.	It is recommended that information and promotion activities concerning the Programme, including training and individual consultations addressed to potential beneficiaries, be continued. It is also recommended that the process of finding a partner on the other side of the border be supported and opportunities to create new partnerships and involve entities into cooperation be constantly sought.	MA JTS RCC	Comprehensive support should continue in the form of information and promotion activities, including training and individual consultations, covering accounting and reporting issues. This will provide applicants with the feeling that they will be supported, at the stage of project implementation, by the institutions implementing the Programme. Institutions willing to apply for funds under the Programme should be supported in finding a partner on the other side of the border, which will allow for involving new entities into cooperation and thus increase the effectiveness and impact of the Programme.

Conclusions and recommendations III

No.	Content of the application	Content of the recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Method of implementation
5	The information obtained directly from the employees of the programme institutions is of greatest value for the beneficiaries. With respect to promotion and creation of a positive image of the Programme, local media, including social media, are also important and increasingly constitute the main source of information. By contrast, analogue ways of reaching the recipients are definitely less attractive and have the smallest impact on the recipients.	It is recommended that the use of traditional sources of information, such as newsletters, press releases, leaflet, and brochures be reduced as part of information and promotion activities. Activities should be focused on delivering content in the form that audiences prefer, i.e. primarily through social media and face-to-face meetings (training, consultation, and workshops). It is also recommended that modern communication tools (videos, podcasts, webinars, etc.) be introduced.	MA JTS	To increase the effectiveness of the Programme's communication strategy, communication channels should be adapted to the needs of the audience. Therefore, it would be advisable to limit all the traditional forms of promotion of the Programme in favour of an increase in the use of local media in this respect, especially social media (continuation of the Programme profile on Facebook and Twitter), while using modern communication tools (video, podcasts, webinars, etc.). Efforts should be made to increase the number of interactive events that enable direct contact, exchange of knowledge and experience, and networking. The continuation of effective and useful information and promotion activities is key to achieving positive effects in terms of communication, public involvement, and the image of the Programme.
6	Although more than half of the surveyed inhabitants of the border area have so far encountered information and promotion activities, a significant proportion of the inhabitants of the area of support have not.	It is recommended that information and promotion activities addressed to the inhabitants of the Polish-Saxon border area be intensified, especially in territorial units located in the area of support, where there have been no beneficiaries of the programme so far.	MA JTS	It is also recommended that the implementation of projects within the financial perspective 2021-2027 be continued to instil the importance of cross-border cooperation and the benefits arising from it in the inhabitants of the area of support. Activities should be implemented in all priority axes. They will enable local communities to both participate in the projects and benefit from their effects to a greater extent.

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