

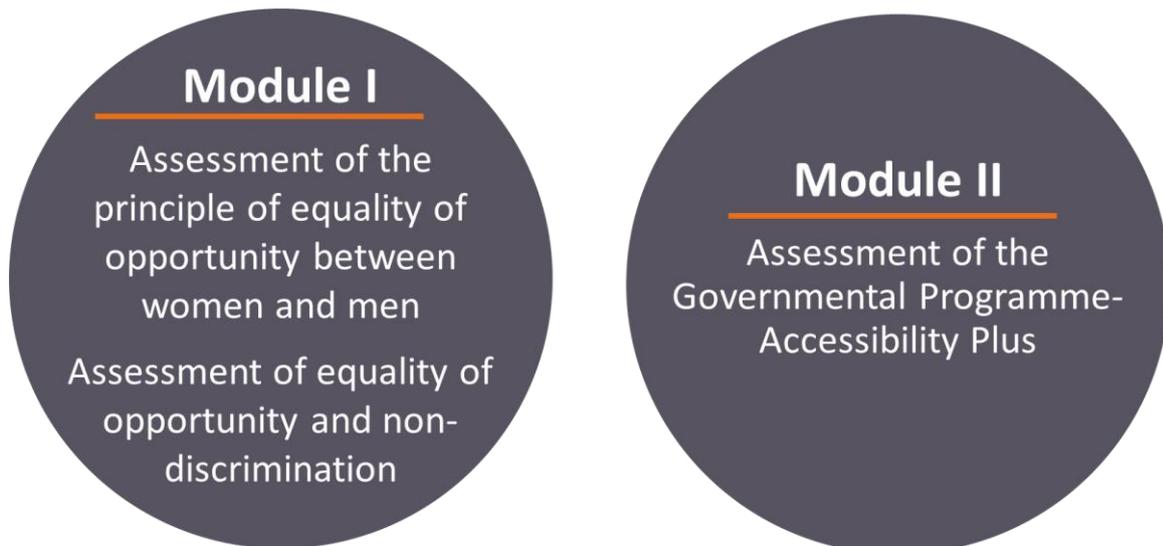
Evaluation study on the application of the principle of equality of opportunity between women and men and of the principle of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, within Cohesion Policy 2014-2020

Information brochure

Module II: Effects of implementation of the Accessibility Plus Programme

Objective and scope of the study

The „Evaluation study on the application of the principle of equality of opportunity between women and men and of the principle of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, within Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 and on the assessment of implementation of the Governmental Programme - Accessibility Plus 2018-2025” has consisted of two research modules.

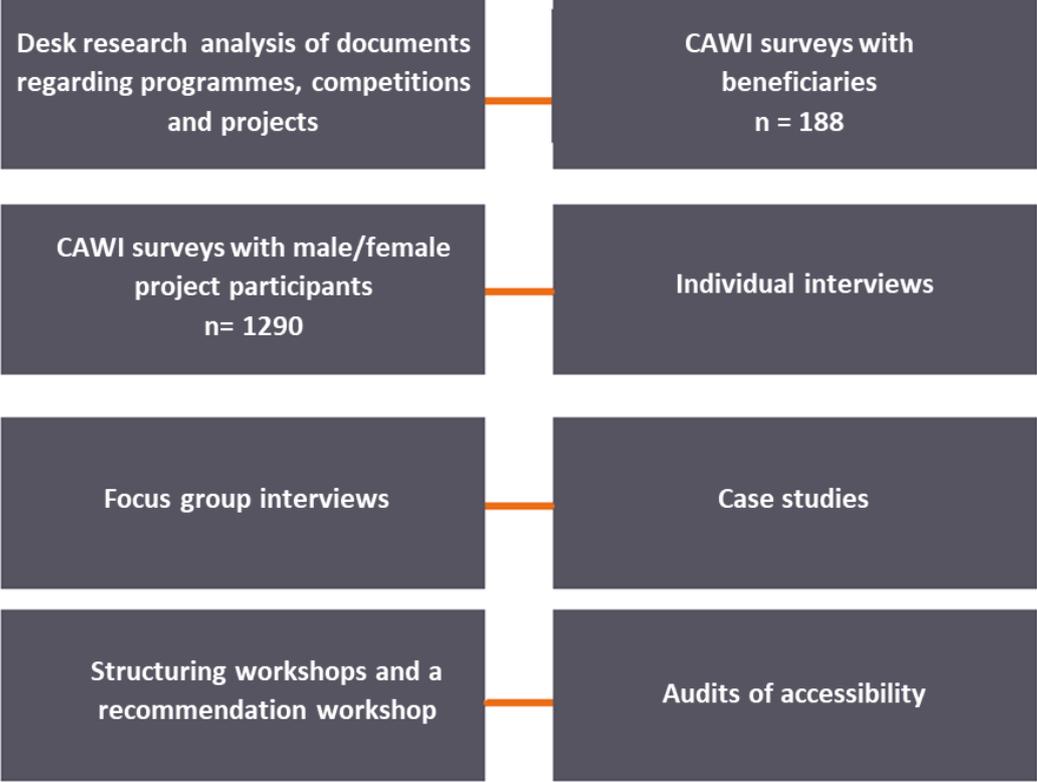


Module II has focused on the assessment of management system and effects of the Governmental Programme – Accessibility Plus.

Methodology

In the study, the concept of **theory-based evaluation** has been applied and then its specific form, namely **contribution analysis**, has been used. Its main objective was to verify whether the cause-and-effect relationships assumed in theory and the effects of initiatives undertaken have occurred.

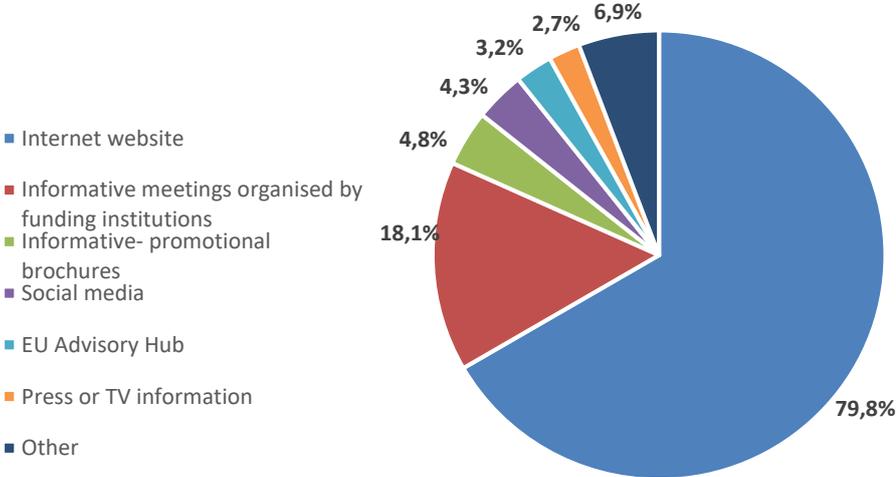
In the study, within the evaluation of Module II, the following research methods/techniques have been applied:



Assessment of informative-promotional activities undertaken under the Programme

➡ The primary source of information on the Programme is an **Internet website** which is a separated subpage within the EU Funds service ⬇️

Sources of information on possibilities of applying for project support



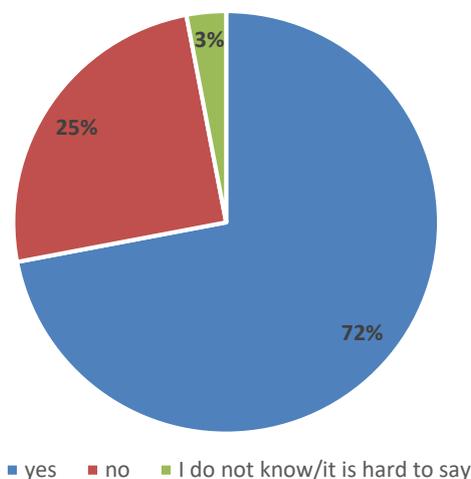
Source: CAWI survey with beneficiaries , n=188.

- ➔ The Programme is well known to people who **deal with the problem of disabilities** on a daily basis.
- ➔ **Not all beneficiaries are aware of the fact** that the project they are implementing or that the support they are getting within the project is part of the Accessibility Plus Programme.
- ➔ A reason for low popularity is among others, a **lack of continuous, coordinated campaign promoting the Programme** and disseminating certain attitudes or ways how persons with disabilities are perceived.

Overall assessment of the Accessibility Plus Programme

- ➔ From the 3-year perspective **the effects of the Programme implementation should be assessed positively.**
- ➔ It was a **fast and efficiently prepared** response to an urgent **social need** related to providing **improved accessibility** of space and public services for persons with disabilities.
- ➔ **One of key effects of the Accessibility Plus Programme is including the question of accessibility in public debate.**
- ➔ **The implementation of some legislative amendments, planned within the Accessibility Plus Programme** - which build up in a particular way a stable infrastructure and a basis for implementing accessibility in a long-term perspective- could be regarded as its greatest achievement of the Programme.
- ➔ Beneficiaries **think highly of the relevance** of assumptions of the support granted in the context of the needs of persons with disabilities. 📌

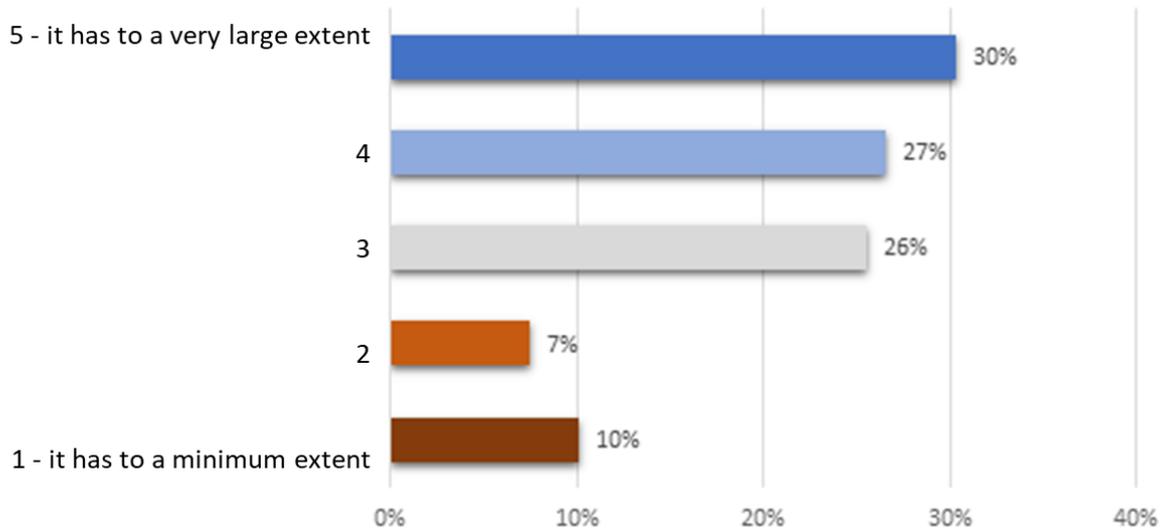
Have the assumptions of the competition/call for proposals/tender fully allowed to implement projects responding to the needs of persons with disabilities?



Source: CAWI with beneficiaries, n=188

- ➡ As early as at the present stage of implementing the Programme, beneficiaries declare the occurrence of the **first positive effects of the support.** ⬇️

Has the implementation of the project at its present stage contributed to increased accessibility for persons with disabilities? - beneficiaries

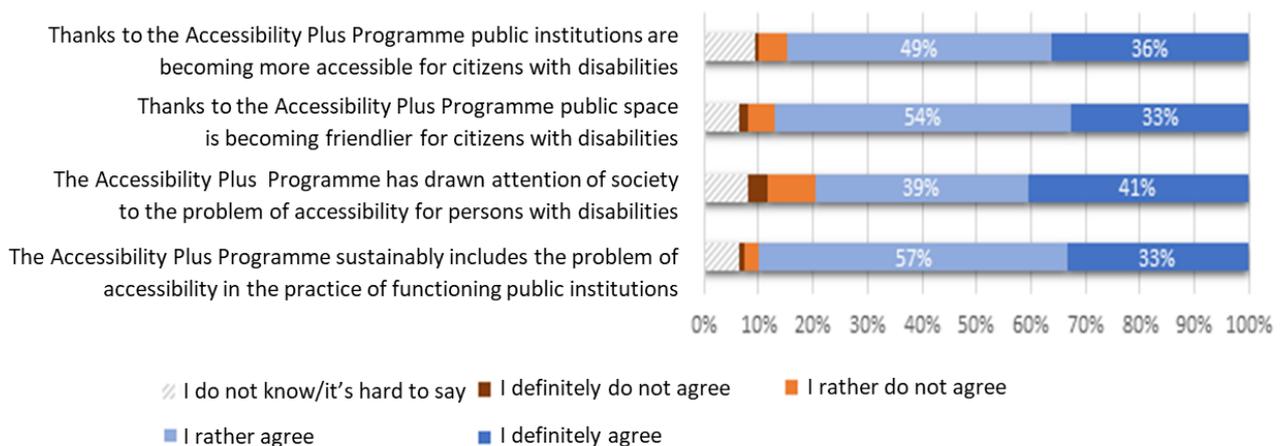


Source: CAWI with beneficiaries, n=146

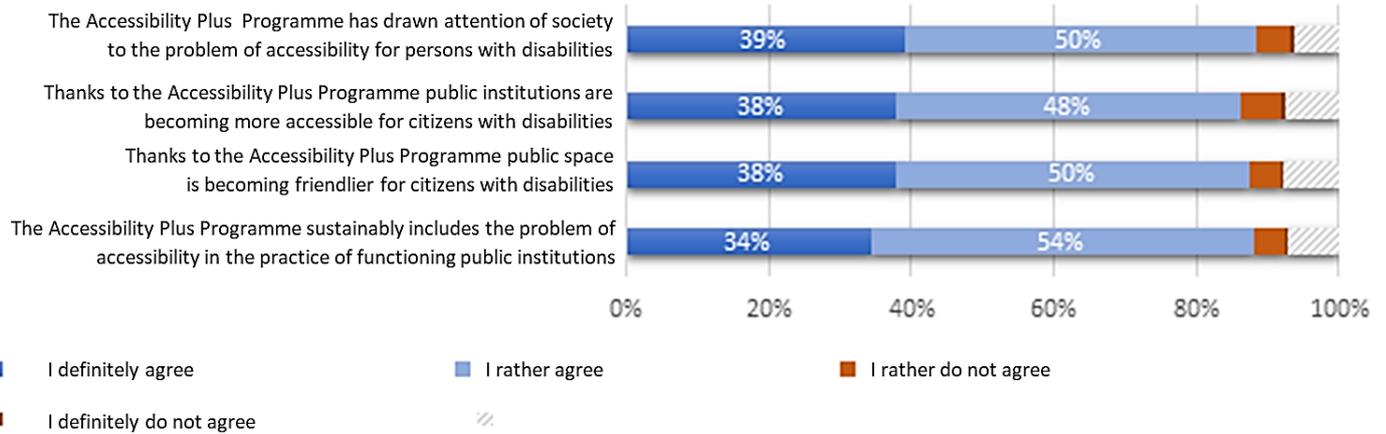
- ➡ All female/male participants of this study have agreed that thanks to the Accessibility Plus Programme the issues related to accessibility **have taken top positions on political and programming agendas** of institutions and organisations. ⬇️

Below you can find the statements which – to a different extent -refer to the Accessibility Plus Programme. Please tick to what extent you agree or do not agree with each of them

Beneficiaries



Participants



Source: CAWI with beneficiaries, n=138; CAWI with participants, n=833

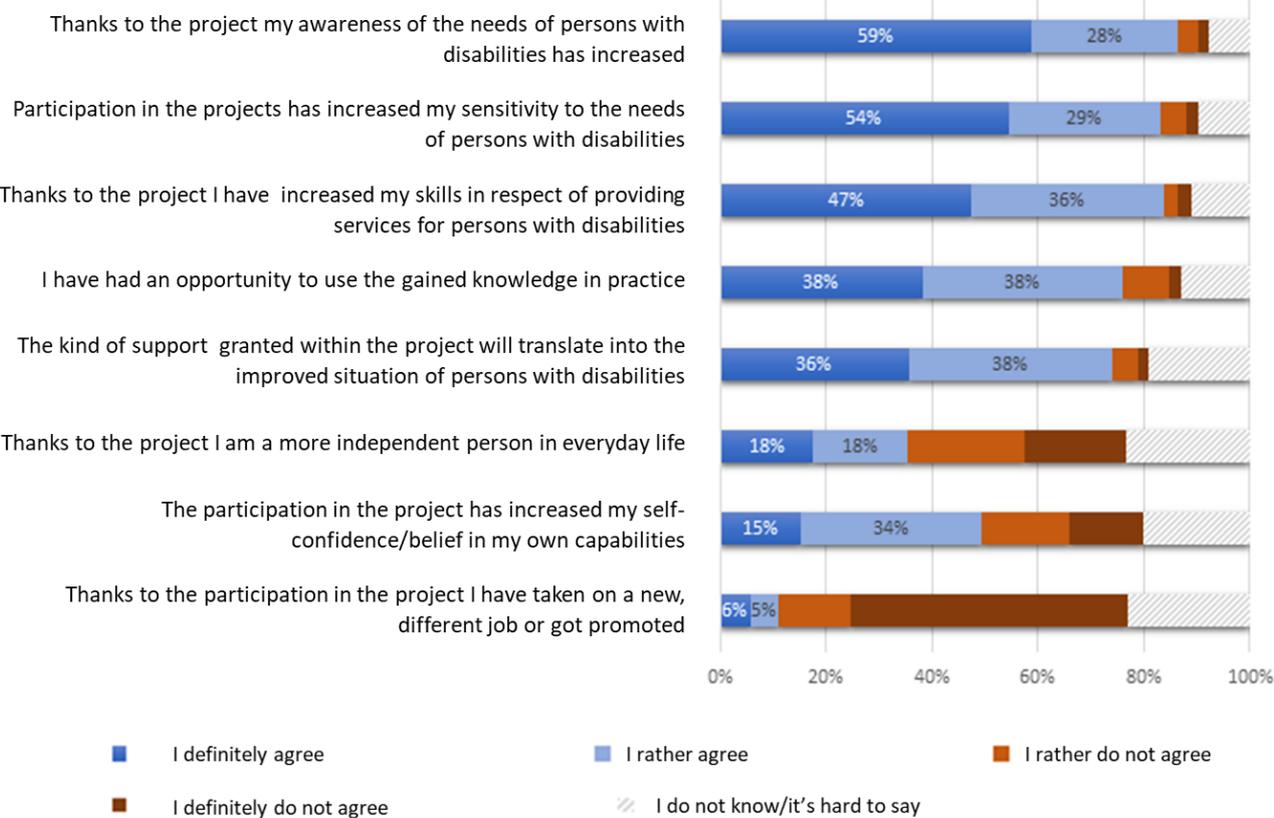
- ➡ Clearly visible effects have been also observed at the level of **changes in awareness in both institutions engaged in the Programme implementation and beneficiaries** as well as in **ultimate support recipients**. ⬇️

Were the following additional effects related to functioning your institution as a project promoter observed in the course of project implementation? - beneficiaries



Source: CAWI with beneficiaries, n=146

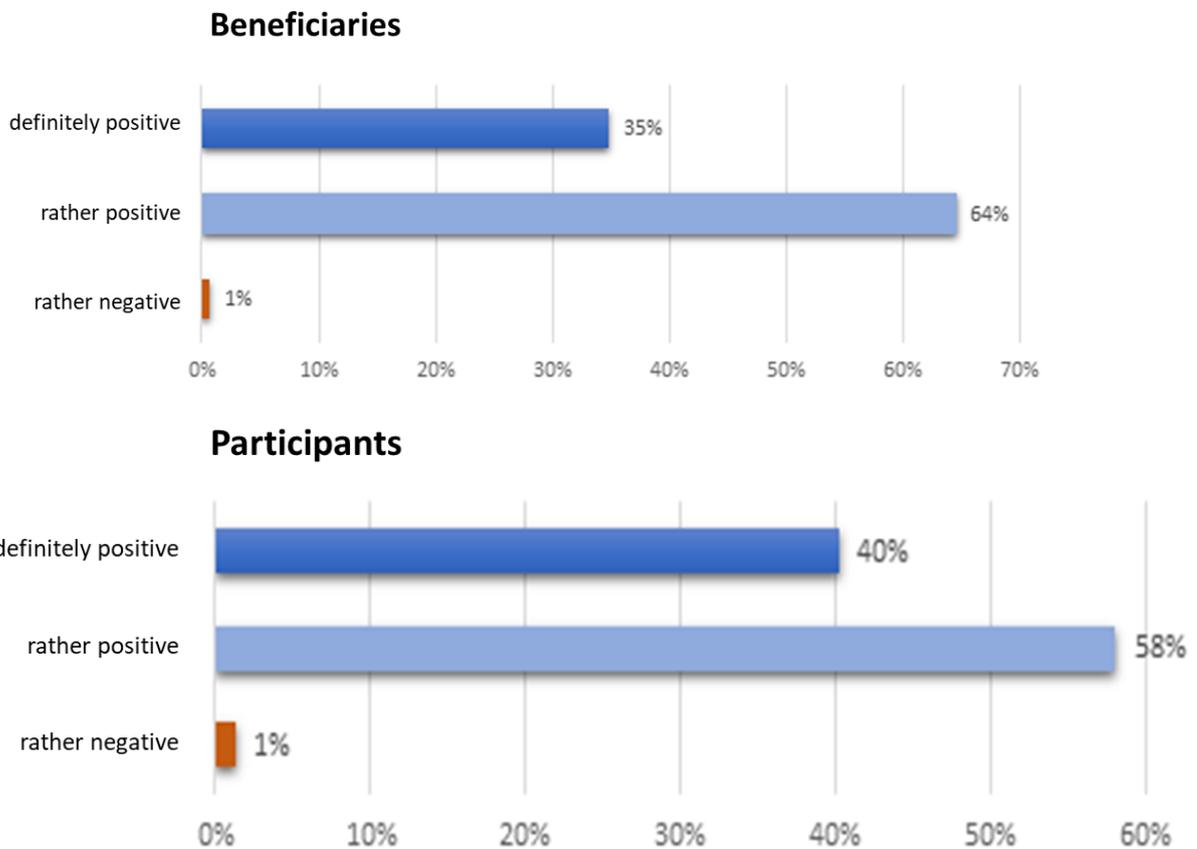
Below you can find the statements which – to a different extent -refer to your participation in the project. Please tick to what extent you agree or do not agree with each of them - participants



Source: CAWI with participants, n=1290

- ➔ The analysed projects have had **the biggest impact on an increase in awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities** – as much as 59% of male/female participants definitely agree with such a statement.
- ➔ **Also male/female participants who are persons with disabilities most frequently indicate this effect** as the most significant to them (55% of male/female participants being persons with disabilities definitely agree with this statement).
- ➔ The Accessibility Plus Programme is assessed as **positive or very positive** by both **beneficiaries and participants of the projects implemented under the Programme.** ⬇️

What is your opinion on the Accessibility Plus Programme?



Source: CAWI with beneficiaries, n=138; CAWI with participants, n=833

Key challenges conditioning effective implementation of the Programme:

- ✓ Lack of a **multiannual and stable budget** (it concerns part of activities funded from national resources).
- ✓ **Restrictions resulting from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic** issued over 2020-2021 have been a significant hindrance for performed activities.
- ✓ Immense **scale of needs** (particularly it concerns undertaking infrastructural activities) and an **insufficient financial allocation** to these objectives – the problem is additionally deepened by **the increase in prices** of goods and services directly related to accessibility.
- ✓ **Insufficient number of experts** with appropriate knowledge and competence regarding the problem of accessibility in a broader sense.

Architecture

- ➡ The activities undertaken are oriented at **an objective and are addressed relevantly**.

- Changes regarding the **necessity of taking account of accessibility standards as early as at the stage of designing** newly-erected buildings should be regarded as the most important ones in this area.
- It is a revolutionary change, which will have the **biggest impact on the accessibility of a built environment** in a long term (along with changes introduced into the mode of educating architects).
- Unfortunately, **the scale of needs in this area is much larger** than implementational and financial capacities planned in the Accessibility Plus Programme.

Transport

- **The implementation of a considerable part of the tasks** planned in this area has been **started**.
- **The main hindrances** have appeared in implementing a training project targeted at transport employees and in delivering COMBO carriages.
- As compared to other areas of the Accessibility Plus Programme, an **important facility in the area of transport is the TSI PRM** (Commission Regulation (EC) regarding accessibility of vehicles and railway infrastructure). Well-founded and unambiguously-defined standards in the area of railway infrastructure facilitate undertaking many activities related to providing accessibility.

Education

- As for the area of education, it is worth paying particular attention to a **visible change in the approach and awareness** of needs typical of persons with disabilities.
- The **amendments** introduced in the **act regarding education law** should be assessed positively.
- Nonetheless, the scale and financial resources are **definitely insufficient** as for existing challenges.
- At the same time it is necessary to clearly indicate **financial risks** related to project implementation, including, among others, the above mentioned **increase in prices**.

Health

- Despite delays, resulting mostly from the COVID-19 pandemic, the main project implemented in this area – **'Accessibility Plus for Health' might contribute to a systemic change in healthcare** in respect of its increased accessibility.
- The biggest limitation of the project is its **insignificant scale** as compared to **immense needs of the sector**.
- The **complexity of ventures** is also of great importance - combining infrastructural, digital, competence and organisational investments.

- ➔ The planned **continuation of the venture** within the new financial perspective also deserves a positive assessment.

Digitalisation

- ➔ A key element, which should translate into **positive sustainable changes** in a long term, is passing the 'Act on digital accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public entities'.
- ➔ The results of audits point at the **first positive effects** of the requirements introduced. A **systematic improvement of accessibility of websites** of public entities is still in progress.
- ➔ As the **main barriers** for increased digital accessibility of public entities, it is possible to indicate an **insufficient level of knowledge and experience** in this respect, especially among smaller local government units, as well as a **lack of financial resources** for adjusting offices to the new requirements.
- ➔ it should be stated that the initiatives of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister - taken in favour of **substantive and technical support granted to public entities** as for implementing solutions fostering their increased digital accessibility- should be assessed as **particularly utile**.

Services

- ➔ A vast majority of the initiatives planned in this area is still at the **preliminary stage**.
- ➔ An important effect of implementing activities undertaken in this part of the Programme is a **change in approach**, observed mainly **among administrative employees at the central and local levels and in culture institutions**.
- ➔ Visible implementation risks concern mainly the **sustainability of social services**, which results from their project implementation system.
- ➔ The **biggest risks** related to unimplemented assumptions have been observed in the activity referring to work in the administration (due to too small a scale of initiatives undertaken as compared to the ambitiously-defined objective).

Competitiveness

- ➔ The initiatives undertaken could be assessed as **relevant in view of the needs** in the area of accessibility.
- ➔ Interventions undertaken within the area **result from coherent logic**.
- ➔ They take account of both direct **support for projects aimed at working out innovative products** addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and **indirect support** aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness of entrepreneurs and at building **the innovation ecosystem in the area of accessibility**.

- In the context of generally **low supply of projects** within competitions dedicated to the problem of accessibility, it is necessary to continue and to expand the scope of activities aimed at increasing the **capacity of enterprises for developing products which take account of the needs of persons with disabilities.**

Coordination

- An appropriate substantive preparation and a high- standard culture of cooperation of the unit responsible for coordinating the Programme - **Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy** should be regarded as one of the **strongest cells** in the area of coordination.
- However, locating the Polish Access Board within the framework of a standard structure in one of the ministries **weakens considerably its coordination position and limits real opportunities for exerting an impact** on other entities.
- The Access Board has been regarded as a **systemically necessary entity.**
- Apart from the institutional aspect, it is necessary to **positively assess legislative amendments** implemented within the area under discussion as well as **changes in awareness** which have been made by among others, performing educational and informative activities.

Key recommendations:

- ✓ To **update the objectives and scope of particular activities** as well as **implementation indicators** with regard to the assumed effects of the Accessibility Plus Programme.

The Programme update process should undergo in the way which ensures including all the interested parties and builds responsibility for achieving more precise or modified) effects of particular initiatives. To achieve that it is necessary to provide a platform for dialogue between administration representatives, experts and the community of organisations acting in favour of persons with disabilities.

- ✓ In the course of the update it is necessary **to analyse** in detail the **objectives which the Programme is to achieve in the context of limited resources** for its implementation. A possible solution is to increase the financial allocation or to make the effects assumed in the Programme realistic.
- ✓ **To continue and to implement new initiatives for building up a potential** of competent staff in both administration and other institutions (universities, NGOs).

It is also necessary to start up new initiatives for strengthening know-how among entities which are potentially able to provide services related to accessibility and encouraging for getting engaged in implementation of the Accessibility Plus Programme.

- ✓ **To improve the coordination of informative and promotional activities** in respect of promoting the Accessibility Plus Programme, including **more powerful promotion of the Programme brand**, and to **conduct activities disseminating knowledge of the complaint mechanism** with regard to a lack of accessibility of public institutions.

Also, it is worth considering the introduction of an obligation for institutions of the implementation system and for beneficiaries to inform that apart from taking advantage of EU funding they implement provisions of the Programme.