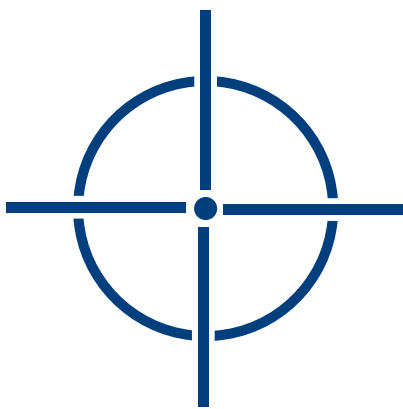


IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

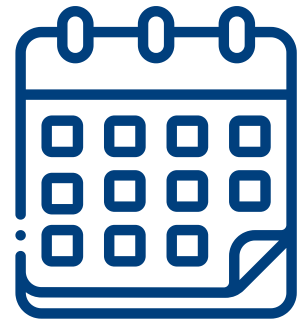
Objective of the study



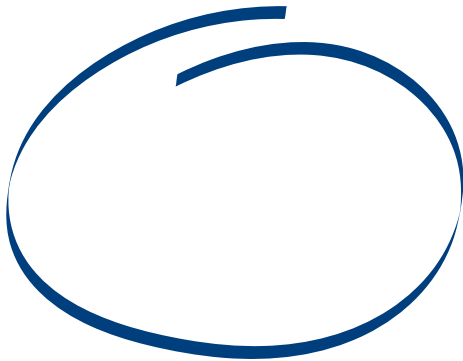
Main objective of the study was to assess the impact of the interventions implemented under the UP 2014- 2020 in the field of education and training on improving the quality of human capital and increasing access to high quality educational services.

Date of implementation

The study was an ex-post evaluation carried out in the period July 2023 - February 2024.



Scope



The evaluation covered all cohesion policy programmes of the 2014-2020 perspective that implemented interventions related to education and training. In particular, all activities implemented under thematic objective 10 (CT10) and selected activities under objectives CT9, CT8 and CT2 were covered by the study.

Research contractors

The study was carried out at the request of the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy by a consortium of Piotr Fuchs Smart Research, IDEA Instytut Ltd., Pracownia Rozwoju Przemysław Kozak.



Piotr Fuchs Smart Research



Pracownia
Rozwoju

IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

Research areas



The study was carried out using theory-based evaluation and a complementary counterfactual impact evaluation.



At the structuring stage of the study, it was decided to prepare separate intervention logics for the different stages of education:



- pre-school education,



- general education,

- vocational education,

- higher education,

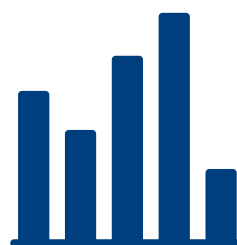
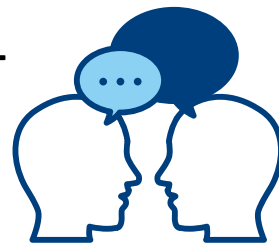


- adult learning.

Methodology of the study

A range of methods were used to implement the study, ensuring triangulation of the research process:

- desk research,
- surveys among territorial self-government units,
- surveys with beneficiaries of support,
- individual in-depth interviews,
- case studies,
- counterfactual and statistical analyses,
- workshops/expert panel.



IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The most important conclusions from the study - all research areas

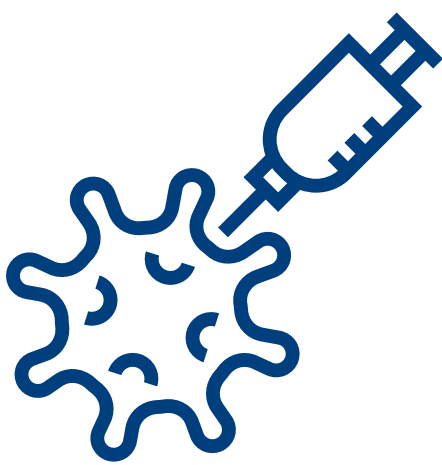


The total value of interventions in the field of education and training in the studied period amounted to approximately PLN 43 billion, which represents approximately 7% of the total value of cohesion policy interventions in Poland.

Most funds were spent in the area of adult learning (approximately PLN 19.9 billion). In total, nearly conducted 28 000 projects were co-financed.

The intervention can be regarded as well targeted and properly addressing the needs and challenges in the area of education and training.

The recipients of the support were accurately selected, and the instruments planned within individual areas resulted logically from the needs and challenges identified at the diagnostic stage.



An important barrier to the implementation of interventions in the field of education and training was the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021). The pandemic temporarily delayed project implementation. However, it should be emphasised that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was of a temporary nature and did not negatively affect the final effectiveness of the intervention (understood as the achievement of the assumed objectives and indicators).

The vast majority of beneficiaries (70%) implemented other complementary projects in the field of education and training. The highest share of complementary projects was recorded in the area of higher education. The complementarity of EU projects implemented in the field of education occurred mainly between projects co-financed by the ESF under national (OP KED) and regional (ROP) programmes.



IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

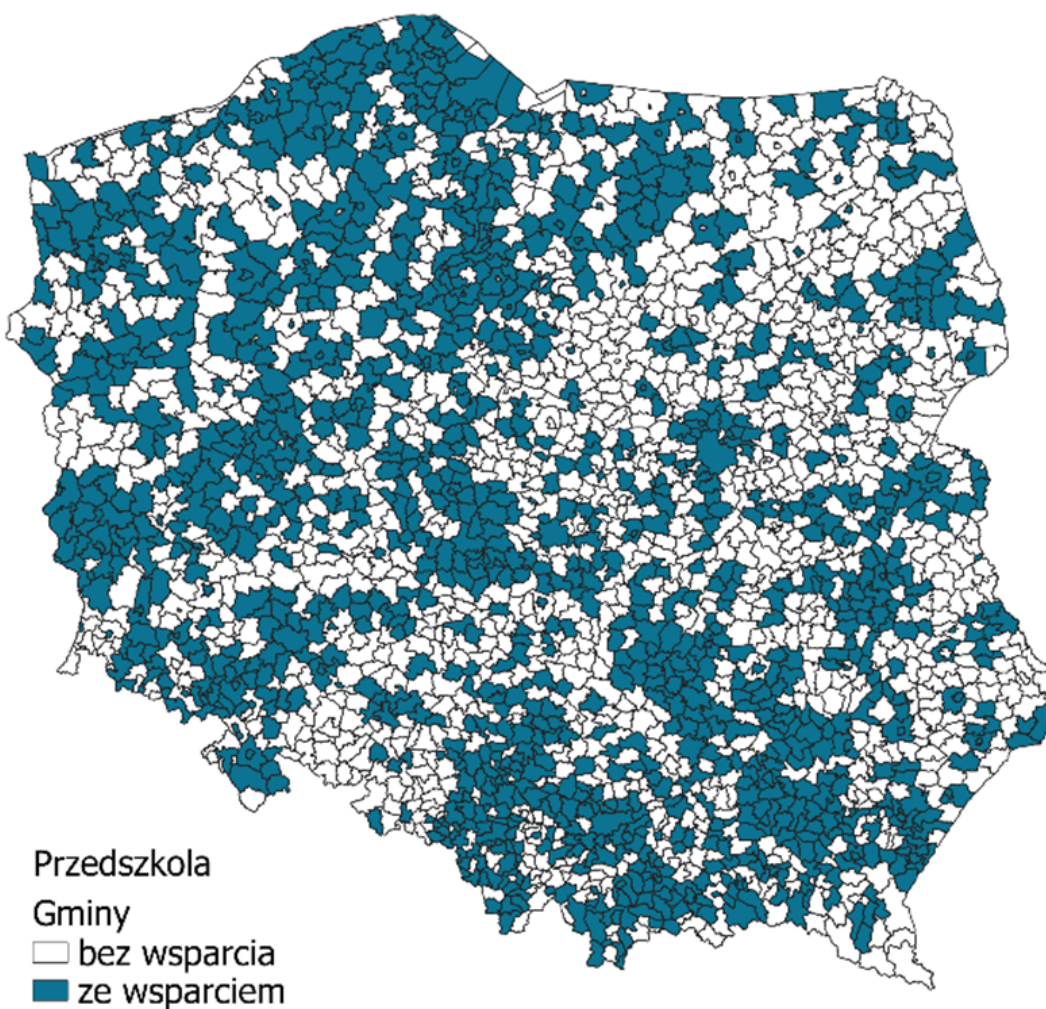
The most important conclusions from the study - pre-school education



In the area of pre-school education, 76,600 new pre-school education places were created under ESF projects, the vast majority of which are permanent and effectively used (especially in the case of projects implemented by municipalities).

Counterfactual analysis showed a significant impact of the intervention on increasing access to pre-school education.

Map 1. Municipalities supported under the 2014-2020 perspective where the new pre-school education places were created



The pre-school education services offered in supported kindergartens are adjusted to the needs of citizens.



IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The most important conclusions from the study - general education



The intervention in the area of general education allowed for the improvement of infrastructure and equipment in schools, although the scale of this type of intervention, in relation to the very high needs, was definitely insufficient. Thanks to the investments, the quality and accessibility (for people with disabilities) of general education improved.

The total number of pupils supported in the development of key competences during extra-curricular activities was approximately 1.6 million. The quality of these classes was satisfactory and the classes themselves were assessed as effective in terms of developing key competences and universal skills.



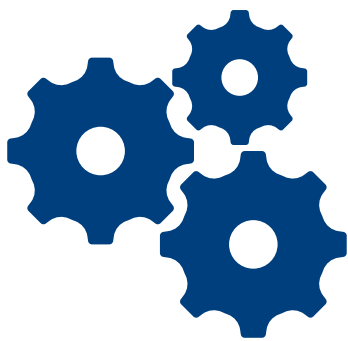
Approx. 145,000 teachers participated in in-service training thanks to projects implemented under the ROP.

Statistical analysis showed moderate positive impact of cohesion policy interventions on the quality of general education reflected by the results of external examinations in mathematics.



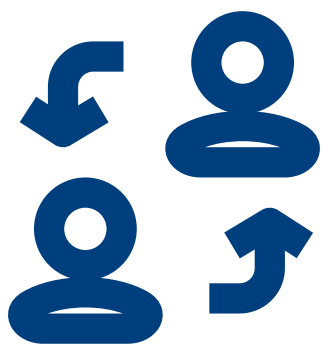
IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The most important conclusions from the study - vocational education



The infrastructure and equipment of vocational schools was improved, although the scale of this type of intervention, in relation to the very large needs, was definitely insufficient.

The effectiveness of ESF projects within the ROP in improving the labour market situation of graduates can be assessed positively.



Projects implemented under the ROP have not significantly contributed to the implementation of sustainable changes in the vocational education offer in individual schools/schools covered by the support. In particular, they did not contribute to the extinction of education in surplus/non-perspective professions.

The projects under the ROP contributed to the improvement of the quality of vocational education most often within the professions/qualifications that were already offered by the supported vocational schools even before they joined the projects.



The intervention contributed to the moderate extent to strengthening of cooperation between vocational schools and employers, both at the national (OP KED) and regional level. So far, cooperation between schools providing vocational education and universities is very rarely practised.

IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The most important conclusions from the study - higher education



In the area of higher education, support was provided mainly under the OP KED (93% of the intervention value).

The support contributed to an increase in the number of students and university staff participating in competence enhancement programmes. Over 400 000 students improved their competences. Particular added value was provided by the practical components of the implemented projects, such as internships, courses and classes carried out in cooperation with employers.



The intervention accurately addressed the needs of HEIs (in particular thanks to the possibility to implement integrated projects) and accurately complemented the standard activities financed from their budgets.

The intervention contributes to a better adjustment of the educational offer of HEIs to the needs of the labour market.



Beneficiaries in the area of tertiary education more often than other beneficiaries experienced difficulties in the implementation of projects (31% of universities declare experiencing difficulties, while for all beneficiaries of educational projects the percentage is 18%).

IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The most important conclusions from the study - adult learning



The intervention in the area of adult learning was coherent and logically structured focusing on two main aspects:

1) the design and implementation of solutions leading to greater educational activity of adults,
2) the financing of educational and training activities and solutions supporting the quality of educational services.

An additional element of the intervention was the financing of various forms of adult learning supporting the achievement of objectives in other areas remains significant, nevertheless it should be noted that a precise assessment in this respect remains difficult (among others due to the divergence in the manner of measurement and value of key EUROSTAT and BKL indicators).



The effectiveness of the measures should be assessed as relatively high, although the evaluation at the level of implementation of detailed solutions and the direct effects achieved remains highly variable.

The study showed low usability of the ZSK/ZRK system to date. The funding of the development of language and ICT competences under the ROPs was poorly matched to the needs of the final recipients.



The sustainability of interventions should be considered rather low potentially - for many activities there is a serious risk that without the support of EU funds these activities will not be implemented, or at best will be severely curtailed.

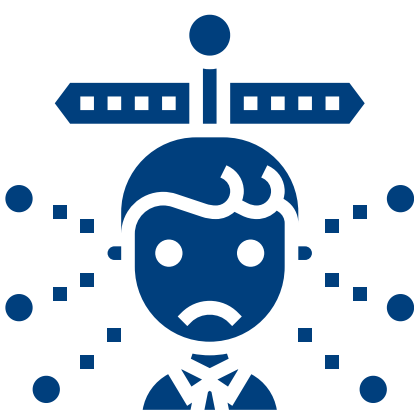
IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

Selected recommendations (1)



In the area of pre-school upbringing, it is recommended to focus on increasing the quality of pre-school upbringing. At the same time maintaining a form of support in the form of creating new pre-school education places. However, the creation of new places for pre-school education should be preceded by a reliable diagnosis of local needs.

In the area of general education, it is recommended to apply more extensive/alternative forms of support for municipalities which have problems to obtain EU financing by their own and at the same time have high educational needs. It is also advisable to launch support for municipalities in the field of education management in organisational and financial terms.



In the area of vocational education, the area of vocational counselling should be strengthened, especially in the final years of primary school, as a method of reducing the demand for education in surplus/unpromising occupations.

In the area of higher education, it is advisable to continue support for the implementation of “comprehensive projects” while making the rules and procedures for introducing changes to such projects in more flexible and simpler way.



IMPACT OF THE COHESION POLICY 2014-2020 ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

Selected recommendations (2)

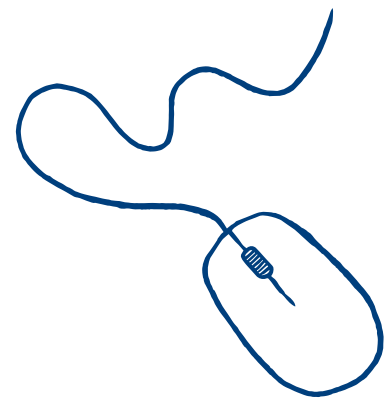
In the area of adult learning, it is advisable to identify a coordinator/leader of activities concerning the development of adult learning in Poland and to develop a participatory model of coordination, as well as to implement solutions to ensure greater usability of the ZSK and ZRK systems.



At the same time, the whole education system should be better prepared for the increased influx of immigrant children/youth from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to schools and institutions in Poland. Improving the mental condition of children and young people and the large number of children/young people with special educational needs (including children with disabilities) in schools, will also be a key challenge in the area of education for the coming years.

Final research report

We encourage you to read the full version of the report and other studies available on the website of the National Evaluation Unit:
www.ewaluacja.gov.pl



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