

THE STRUCTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF APPLYING FOR EU FUNDS IN POLISH VOIVODSHIP CITIES – COMPARISON OF THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES 2007-2013 AND 2014-2020

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Purpose: The article compares the structure and effectiveness of obtaining financial resources for EU projects in provincial cities from two financial perspectives: 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

Design/methodology/approach: The comparative analysis used secondary data obtained from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) regarding cumulative values for the years 2015 and 2023. The following categories were considered: the number of submitted applications for co-financing, the number and value of signed co-financing agreements, and the effectiveness of obtaining funds.

Findings: From the 2014-2020 financial perspective, the process of obtaining and distributing funds considered local conditions, which was the result of the use of the place-based policy concept, increasing the available regional financing. Some activities related to human capital development have been transferred to regional programs. The most expensive projects were implemented under OPIE. In both periods, a small share of soft projects in the structure of the value of contracts and a high value of projects implemented regionally were noted, with a simultaneous reduction in the number of beneficiaries and the value of contracts, which, however, improved the effectiveness of applying for EU funds.

Research limitations/implications: The study focuses only on provincial cities. Results may not represent smaller towns and rural areas, which may have different experiences and challenges. The effectiveness of obtaining funds is assessed based on the number of signed contracts relative to the number of submitted applications. However, this does not consider the quality of implemented projects and their long-term effects, which are also important in assessing the real effectiveness of cohesion policy.

Social implications: Due to the issues raised related to development programming, it may arouse the interest of people responsible for development policy, potential beneficiaries, and the local community.

Originality/value: The text refers to classic works on the theory of regional development and spatial inequalities but focuses on the specific context of Polish voivodeship cities and their experiences with obtaining EU funds.

Keywords: EU funds, EU projects, financial perspective, voivodeship cities.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Poland's membership in the European Union and its cohesion policy creates additional development opportunities for beneficiaries using funds allocated for the development of countries belonging to the community. Regional policy pursued by the Polish authorities focuses on strategic planning and management at both the national and local levels. Beneficiaries implementing development projects with EU funding demonstrate adaptability, which is the key to running a business and obtaining resources from outside the organization. Dedicated in terms of territory and area, obtainable financial resources obtained by the beneficiaries contribute to equalizing the level of socio-economic development in the regions, as well as between regions in the country (Kaźmierska, 2017; Słodowa-Hełpa, 2005). They also act indirectly by implementing the main goal of cohesion policy, which is equalizing inequalities between countries.

The article emphasizes that the observation of the redistribution of EU funds *ex post* in various fields and areas allows us to learn what changes occur during the planning and implementation of development projects (Dorożyński, 2013; Gawlikowska-Hueckel, 2002). Comparing the structure of areas to which financial resources are allocated, as well as the ability of entities to obtain financing, allows us to detect changes in the implementation of development policy by state bodies. The article compares the structure and effectiveness of obtaining financial resources for EU projects in voivodeship cities from two financial perspectives: 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

2. Redistribution of EU funds in the implementation of cohesion policy in Poland

Socio-economic development, whether it takes place at the local, regional, or national level, occurs in the context of diverse spaces. In the literature on the subject, there are classic works devoted to the unevenness of spatial development, which constitute the foundation of the theory of regional development. Differences in development between the city and its surroundings were studied by Perroux (1955). The concept of growth poles was developed by Boudeville (1966) who identified them as groupings of dynamically developing and strongly interconnected activities. In the works of Hirschmann (1985) one can find statements about the inevitability of uneven development processes, and the concept of cumulative causality, proposed by Myrdal (1957), emphasized this unevenness, explaining them with an initial change in one of the factors, which led to increasing interregional differences. Friedman (1972), the creator of the theory of polarized development, dealt with asymmetric relations between the

central area and the periphery. The literature on the subject provides numerous evidence that development processes differ in centres and peripheries, but are closely related (Gawlikowska-Hueckel, 2002; Szółek, 2006; Domański, 2008; Adamus, 2009; Czyż, 2009; Gaczek, 2009; Kudłacz, 2009).

The European Union's cohesion policy is intended to eliminate development barriers, by the principles of solidarity and social cohesion. Less developed areas should receive additional support under the income redistribution mechanism (Dorożyński, 2013). The allocation of funds supporting development comes down to the issue of dividing funds into different areas of activity and decisions regarding the spatial orientation of the intervention (Hausner, 2001; Gorzelak, 2004). EU funds are distributed by a place-based policy approach, which adapts financial instruments to the specific needs and opportunities of regions and promotes the involvement of local communities, authorities, enterprises and non-governmental organizations (Kaźmierska, 2017).

There are two main development strategies: the equalizing strategy, which assumes that excessive socio-economic differences constitute the main barrier to development, and only support concentrated on the least developed areas will allow for equalizing the level of socio-economic development, and the polarization-diffusion strategy, which focuses on removing barriers hindering the competitiveness and growth potential of all territorial units, with priority for the areas of large cities (Churski, 2009).

The first full financial perspective in which Poland participated covered the years 2007-2013. The key document defining the conditions of support and the system for implementing financial resources from the EU budget was the National Cohesion Strategy - National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007-2013 (NSRF). In this perspective, instruments for managing EU funds were separated at the national and regional levels, introducing Regional Operational Programs (RPO) for each of the 16 voivodeships, managed by voivodeship local government authorities. In the next financial perspective for 2014-2020, this division of financial instruments was continued and support for individual areas was maintained.

The effective use of EU funds, referred to as absorption capacity, depends on many interrelated factors, such as the conditions for making funds available, the level of socio-economic development and the ability to effectively obtain and use the allocated funds (Słodowa-Helpa, 2005). Proper preparation of documents at all levels, efficient project identification, compliance with EU requirements and effective functioning of institutional structures are of key importance. These activities are aimed at stimulating the development of regions, activating multiplier mechanisms and supporting structural changes and economic development in Poland.

The EU financial perspectives differed in the size of the allocation. In the period 2014-2020, Polish beneficiaries will receive funds for EUR 77 billion, i.e. 14.5% more than in the previous period (Table 1). The areas covered by individual operational programs were not 100% identical

in both perspectives, which can be noticed when analyzing the program assumptions of individual financial tools.

Table 1.

Allocation of EU funds divided into operational programs in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives.

Instrument name 2007-2013	Allocation in billion euros		Instrument name 2014-2020	Allocation in billion euros	
Operational Programme Innovative Economy (OPIE)	8,7	13%	Operational Programme Smart Growth (OPSG)	8,6	11%
			Operational Programme Digital Poland (OPDP)	2,3	3%
Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment (OPIE)	28,3	42%	Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment (OPIE)	27,4	36%
Operational Programme Eastern Poland (OPEP)	2,4	4%	Operational Programme Eastern Poland (OPEP)	2	3%
Operational Programme Human Capital (OPHC)	10	15%	Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (OPKED)	4,7	6%
Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA)	0,5	1%	Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA)	0,7	1%
Regional Operational Programme (ROP)	17,3	26%	Regional Operational Programme (ROP)	31,3	41%
Sum:	67,2	100%	Sum:	77,0	100%

Source: <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/dowiedz-sie-wiecej-o-funduszach-europejskich> (as of June 30, 2024).

The number of operational programs has changed. Two new programs have emerged from the previous Innovative Economy Operational Program: OPSG and OPDP. Operational Programme Human Capital (OPHC) changed its name to Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development (OPKED). Development and, what is worth noting, the pool of funds was reduced compared to the previous period. The name was also changed in the operational programme concerning the area of Eastern Poland (OPEP). The financial structure of the allocation changed later, mainly due to an almost twofold increase in the value of funds allocated for intervention in the regions, which accounted for 41% of all funds.

3. Research methodology and assumptions

The subject of the study was the structure and effectiveness of obtaining EU funds in two financial perspectives: 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. The structure of EU funds was determined according to the type of tool, i.e. the operational program from which funds were obtained. In both perspectives, we dealt with similar areas for which it was possible to obtain funds, but with a different number of operational programs, which is why the structure had a different number of elements in both financing periods. Data were collected for the years 2015 and 2023, and the numerical values for these years express the cumulative values for the entire programming periods, for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives, respectively.

The subject of the study was voivodeship cities, i.e. 16 voivodeship capitals understood as the seats of voivodes, as well as two additional cities in which the assemblies of the Lubuskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeships are located, i.e. Zielona Góra and Toruń, respectively. To make it more precise - the entities that obtained financial resources for the implementation of projects were both local government units and entities from the public and private finance sectors, as well as any other entities authorized to apply for funds and located in each city.

The study assessed the structure of the following characteristics regarding applying for EU funds:

- the number of submitted applications for co-financing that were verified positively in formal terms, i.e. they met all the requirements to have the status of a submitted application,
- the number of signed contracts, i.e. those applications for funding that passed the substantive assessment and were eligible for financing,
- value of signed contracts, which included general eligible project costs,
- effectiveness of obtaining funds, understood as the ratio of the number of signed contracts to the number of submitted applications for funding.

4. The structure of EU funds obtained in voivodeship cities

Interest in EU funds can be assessed based on the number of submitted applications for funding. It can certainly be assumed that an entity that can implement EU projects is also able to submit a funding application that will pass a formal assessment. While in the 2007-2013 perspective, entities from voivodeship cities most often applied for funds from three programs dominating the structure: IEOP, OPHC and ROP, in the next perspective only two operational programs enjoyed above-average popularity, and these were: OPSG and ROP (Table 2). In the 2014-2020 perspective, the share of applications submitted under the ROP increased significantly and the percentage of applications submitted under OPIE increased slightly.

The most noticeable change concerned OPHC, which was renamed OPKED in the next perspective. In the 2007-2013 perspective, the lowest share of submitted applications under the OPHC program was 12.97% and concerned Kraków, but the highest values reached almost 50% - in Gorzów Wielkopolski (47.66%) and Olsztyn (42.99%). In turn, from a later perspective, not only did the amount of allocation for human capital-related projects decrease twice, but the interest of entities in this program decreased significantly. It dropped in provincial cities to just a few percent. The highest recorded values are 6.03% in Gorzów Wielkopolski (also 4.12% in Zielona Góra) and 4.45% in Olsztyn, i.e. almost the same cities that were characterized by high shares of applications for funding under OPHC. Looking at the table,

it can be said that the interest of entities from voivodship cities was largely redirected from OPHC to ROP.

Compared to the 2007-2013 perspective, there was also a noticeable increase in the number of applications for funding from OPEP. This could be related to the fact that the level of effectiveness of obtaining funds in the previous perspective in this case was quite high, and entities encouraged by the vision of success were more willing to apply for funds from this program. Previously, in the structure of submitted applications, only Lublin exceeded 1% of the share of applications for the development of Eastern Poland in the total number of applications. The later programming period brought a dramatic change. Almost every third application from Rzeszów and every fifth application from Lublin and Białystok concerned competition from OPEP, and in the remaining cities - Kielce and Olsztyn, the share of applications from OPEP amounted to several percent.

Table 2.

Structure of the number of submitted applications for funding in large cities in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives

City	Applications for funding 2015 [%]						Applications for funding 2023 [%]						
	total	OPIE	IEOP	OPHC	OPEP	ROP	total	OPIE	OPSG	OPPC	OPEP	OPKED	ROP
Wrocław	100	1,5	56,8	16,9		24,8	100	2,2	46,8	0,1		1,3	49,6
Bydgoszcz	100	1,8	37,9	22,9		37,4	100	4,0	55,9	0,4		1,8	37,9
Toruń	100	1,4	32,1	25,7		40,8	100	4,6	41,1	0,6		2,8	50,9
Lublin	100	1,2	23,9	19,6	1,2	54,3	100	1,2	21,8	0,1	17,6	1,4	57,9
Gorzów Wlkp.	100	1,2	22,2	47,7		28,9	100	10,3	24,7	1,4		6,0	57,5
Zielona Góra	100	0,9	29,7	35,4		34,0	100	4,3	38,8	0,7		4,1	52,1
Łódź	100	1,1	28,9	35,3		34,7	100	1,7	26,9	0,2		1,2	70,0
Kraków	100	1,1	62,8	13,0		23,1	100	2,3	60,5	0,2		2,0	35,0
Warszawa	100	1,3	70,1	16,7		11,9	100	2,8	55,5	0,1		1,8	39,9
Opole	100	1,7	29,7	24,3		44,3	100	5,5	24,1	0,8		2,8	66,8
Rzeszów	100	1,1	47,1	25,8	0,7	25,3	100	1,8	36,5	0,2	28,6	1,7	31,2
Białystok	100	1,1	23,5	36,4	0,9	38,2	100	1,3	15,6	0,1	16,2	2,3	64,6
Gdańsk	100	2,5	37,6	32,8		27,1	100	3,2	59,5	0,8		4,4	32,2
Katowice	100	1,2	37,5	22,9		38,4	100	3,3	31,7	0,4		3,3	61,3
Kielce	100	1,0	35,3	29,9	0,6	33,2	100	1,7	13,4	0,2	13,2	1,7	69,8
Olsztyn	100	0,8	14,4	43,0	0,4	41,4	100	1,4	13,6	0,1	11,7	4,5	68,7
Poznań	100	1,3	62,9	14,7		21,1	100	3,5	61,7	0,3		1,4	33,2
Szczecin	100	2,3	29,7	31,5		36,4	100	6,0	37,6	0,5		4,0	51,8

Source: Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office.

Signing the co-financing agreement indicates that the submitted co-financing application has been positively verified in the substantive assessment and the applicant has decided to start implementing the project. This means that the submitted project has received funding and can be implemented. Looking at the structure of the number of submitted applications and the number of signed contracts, one can see a similarity in the distribution of shares among individual operational programs. The largest part of the contracts signed in the 2007-2013 perspective were agreements concluded under the ROP, IEOP, where possible, and also under OPEP. Similarly to the structure of submitted applications for funding, the share of signed contracts under OPHC was lower in all cities than in the previous perspective. This situation is

not surprising because the allocation under OPHC in the older perspective was twice as large as the funds allocated for OPKED in the newer perspective.

Table 3.

Structure of the number of co-financing agreements in large cities in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives

City	Number of co-financing agreements 2015						Number of co-financing agreements 2023						
	[%]						[%]						
	total	OPIE	IEOP	OPHC	OPEP	ROP	total	OPIE	OPSG	OPPC	OPEP	OPKED	ROP
Wrocław	100	3,6	45,3	10,5		40,6	100	3,1	29,2	0,1		1,3	66,2
Bydgoszcz	100	3,2	30,0	16,2		50,6	100	6,3	40,3	0,1		2,2	51,0
Toruń	100	2,1	22,9	17,9		57,1	100	4,9	22,5	0,5		3,8	68,4
Lublin	100	1,9	17,0	10,6	2,2	68,2	100	1,5	10,5	0,0	13,9	0,7	73,3
Gorzów Wlkp.	100	2,9	20,7	33,9		42,6	100	13,5	15,5	2,5		5,0	63,5
Zielona Góra	100	1,7	25,9	22,9		49,5	100	6,9	23,5	0,6		6,3	62,8
Łódź	100	2,1	23,1	23,4		51,3	100	2,3	19,2	0,1		1,0	77,4
Kraków	100	2,1	52,7	9,7		35,4	100	3,7	51,1	0,1		1,9	43,2
Warszawa	100	3,0	73,7	10,2		13,1	100	4,8	38,1	0,0		1,8	55,2
Opole	100	3,2	23,5	13,9		59,3	100	5,7	14,9	0,2		2,9	76,4
Rzeszów	100	2,1	39,1	14,6	1,5	42,7	100	3,2	21,7	0,2	30,3	1,3	43,3
Białystok	100	2,5	21,0	25,9	2,2	48,5	100	1,7	7,7	0,1	13,7	1,8	75,0
Gdańsk	100	7,0	37,5	23,0		32,5	100	6,9	50,5	0,3		3,0	39,3
Katowice	100	2,4	37,2	14,1		46,3	100	7,0	23,3	0,2		2,9	66,6
Kielce	100	2,2	27,5	18,5	1,2	50,5	100	2,3	7,1	0,2	9,7	1,7	79,0
Olsztyn	100	1,5	5,8	25,5	0,9	66,4	100	2,3	6,3	0,3	9,0	2,3	79,7
Poznań	100	2,3	58,2	9,8		29,7	100	6,4	54,2	0,2		1,8	37,4
Szczecin	100	5,5	23,0	19,6		51,9	100	8,3	21,4	0,5		3,1	66,7

Source: Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office.

The redirection of funds for the implementation of human capital projects to regional programs resulted in a higher share of contracts financed from provincial programs than in the previous perspective. Some cities have significantly increased the percentage of contracts under RPO. The largest increase in the percentage was recorded in Warsaw, from 13 to 55%, i.e. by 42 percentage points. This fact may be due to Warsaw's function as the capital. An increase above 20 percentage points was also observed in Kielce, Białystok, Łódź, Wrocław, Gorzów Wielkopolski and Katowice. Differences between the financial perspectives are also visible in the analysis of the percentage of contracts concluded under programs that were intended to support the development of Eastern Poland. In the 2014-2020 perspective, in Lublin, Rzeszów and Białystok as well as in Kielce and Olsztyn, the share of contracts under OPEP increased significantly, e.g. in Rzeszów from 1.54 to 30.29%, in Lublin from over 2% to 13.86%, and in Białystok from 2.22% to 11.44%.

Information on the number of submitted applications and co-financing agreements has been supplemented with data on the value of co-financing agreements. Their value was determined as the amount of eligible expenditure of all projects. It is worth mentioning that entities from the surveyed cities implemented projects for a total amount of over PLN 46 billion in the 2007-2013 period. In the next programming period, the amount was over PLN 98 billion, i.e. over 105% higher. In both perspectives, projects worth the highest amount were implemented by entities from Warsaw, and their value - over PLN 18 billion in the period 2014-2020 - accounted for over 18% of the value of projects implemented in large Polish cities.

The value structure of the implemented projects in both perspectives was similar. It is worth noting that the largest financial resources came from the Infrastructure and Environment Operational Program and regional operational programs (Table 4). The OPIE, under which large infrastructure projects were implemented, was less popular (fewer applications for funding were submitted and fewer contracts were signed than in other programs), but at the same time, the projects were of high value. In both analyzed periods, entities from Warsaw are a great example, where the largest part of project financing came from the OPIE, with a small share of funds from regional programs. In the period 2007-2013, Gdańsk was also in a similar situation. When analyzing the structure of project values according to financing tools, what is also normal is the negligible share of project financing from the program intended for the development of "soft skills" - OPHC in the period 2007-2013 and OPKED 2014-2020. In the case of the latter, it did not even exceed 1.5% in any of the cities.

Table 4.

The structure of the value of co-financing agreements in large cities in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives

City	Value of Co-financing Agreements 2015 [%]						Value of Co-financing Agreements 2023 [%]						
	total	OPIE	IEOP	OPHC	OPEP	ROP	total	OPIE	OPSG	OPPC	OPEP	OPKED	ROP
Wrocław	100	53,8	9,9	2,5		33,8	100	28,2	40,0	0,1		0,9	30,8
Bydgoszcz	100	7,6	29,8	7,3		55,3	100	34,3	33,2	0,2		0,9	31,4
Toruń	100	40,2	16,8	5,0		38,0	100	21,8	11,0	0,2		1,2	65,7
Lublin	100	22,6	7,7	4,4	22,3	43,0	100	13,6	23,9	1,0	22,4	1,3	37,9
Gorzów Wlkp.	100	50,0	7,5	5,6		36,9	100	49,7	12,8	0,9		1,0	35,5
Zielona Góra	100	14,8	8,2	9,1		67,9	100	35,8	10,8	0,4		1,3	51,7
Łódź	100	28,4	18,5	15,1		38,1	100	39,3	18,7	0,1		1,6	40,4
Kraków	100	10,9	37,3	5,8		46,0	100	37,5	33,8	0,0		0,8	27,8
Warszawa	100	40,5	37,4	6,5		15,7	100	75,4	12,3	0,0		1,4	10,9
Opole	100	20,5	5,1	4,2		70,2	100	29,6	11,0	0,4		1,2	57,7
Rzeszów	100	13,9	16,0	5,2	18,4	46,5	100	13,5	11,9	0,2	22,8	1,2	50,5
Białystok	100	12,6	11,9	5,7	31,1	38,7	100	9,1	22,2	0,5	31,7	1,3	35,3
Gdańsk	100	76,5	8,5	3,4		11,6	100	59,5	13,9	0,3		0,5	25,8
Katowice	100	28,7	27,1	8,3		35,9	100	40,3	17,1	0,1		1,2	41,4
Kielce	100	23,9	9,9	5,9	24,3	36,0	100	9,4	11,3	1,3	19,9	2,4	55,8
Olsztyn	100	11,4	1,7	6,8	18,7	61,4	100	25,0	7,7	0,2	25,6	0,7	40,8
Poznań	100	23,2	29,6	4,9		42,3	100	27,9	33,6	0,1		0,5	37,7
Szczecin	100	36,4	8,3	7,9		47,4	100	42,9	9,9	0,4		1,1	45,7

Source: Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office.

5. Effectiveness of obtaining EU funds in provincial cities

The effectiveness of obtaining EU funds, defined as the quotient of the number of signed financing agreements and the number of submitted applications for financing, is an indicator that allows us to find out what percentage of projects submitted by entities from individual cities were successful. The entities from Opole, Toruń, Lublin and Kielce were characterized by the highest effectiveness in both analyzed periods (Table 5). Comparing both financial

perspectives, it is evident that effectiveness has increased in almost all cities. The exception was Poznań, where a drop in effectiveness was recorded by just over 2 percentage points (from 42.09% to 39.71%). The largest increase in the success rate was observed in Gorzów Wielkopolski - a change of 22 percentage points (from 35.38% to 57.47%), in Białystok – an increase of 17.08 p.p. (from 40.23% to 57.31%) and in Szczecin – an increase of 16.51 p.p. (from 38.13% to 54.64%).

Table 5.

Effectiveness of obtaining EU funds in large cities in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives

City	Effectiveness 2015						Effectiveness 2023						
	total	OPIE	IEOP	OPHC	OPEP	ROP	total	OPIE	OPSG	OPPC	OPEP	OPKED	ROP
Wrocław	36	84	29	22		59	49	68	30	50		50	65
Bydgoszcz	42	72	33	30		56	49	76	35	17		59	66
Toruń	50	73	36	35		70	56	60	31	50		77	76
Lublin	49	82	35	27	94	61	60	76	29	25	47	30	75
Gorzów Wlkp.	35	88	33	25		52	57	75	36	100		48	64
Zielona Góra	40	75	34	26		58	51	83	31	40		79	62
Łódź	40	75	32	26		59	53	73	38	22		46	59
Kraków	35	64	29	26		53	43	69	36	22		40	53
Warszawa	33	79	35	20		37	43	73	30	20		45	60
Opole	50	94	39	28		67	64	67	40	14		65	73
Rzeszów	43	79	35	24	100	72	46	82	27	50	49	33	64
Białystok	40	91	36	29	100	51	57	77	28	50	48	45	67
Gdańsk	33	90	32	23		39	43	93	37	14		30	53
Katowice	38	79	37	23		46	41	87	30	22		35	44
Kielce	46	100	36	28	100	70	55	76	29	60	40	54	62
Olsztyn	42	72	17	25	100	67	52	82	24	133	40	26	60
Poznań	42	73	39	28		59	40	74	35	29		53	45
Szczecin	38	91	29	24		54	55	76	31	50		43	70

Source: Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office.

The trend indicating an increase in the effectiveness of entities from large cities in obtaining EU funds for the implementation of projects may indicate that these entities are increasingly better prepared to apply for European funds. Many entities have gained organizational skills and experience in project implementation. There are business environment entities on the market that specialize in advising when applying for EU funds. It is also important to reduce the complexity of the procedures accompanying the process of applying for funding.

Analyzing the effectiveness from the point of view of the tool used to apply for financial resources, it can be noticed that the effectiveness increased when applying for funds from OPKED. In the period 2007-2013, on average every fifth application for funding received funding. However, the effectiveness of obtaining funds from the OPEP decreased. In the period 2007-2013, entities from Rzeszów, Białystok, Kielce and Olsztyn obtained funding for each submitted application. In the 2014-2020 perspective, only half of the projects received financing under OPEP. In the period 2014-2020, the effectiveness of entities from these large cities in applying to OPIE and regional operational programs decreased to a small extent.

The structures of interest in and obtaining funds for EU projects were essentially similar in both perspectives, which was probably influenced by the structure and allocation of EU funds. Nevertheless, there were noticeable differences that are worth mentioning. The most important similarities and differences between the two financial perspectives according to the categories analyzed in the article are included in Table No. 6.

Table 6.

Similarities and differences according to the categories examined in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives

Category	Similarities	Differences
Number of applications for funding	The greatest interest is in OPSG/ICOP and ROP.	Decreased interest in OPKED (compared to OPHC). A slight increase in interest in OPIE. Increasing interest (OPEP, ROP).
Number of contracts		Reducing the share of OPKED (compared to OPHC). Increasing the share of ROP and OPEP.
Value of contracts	A large share of OPIE - with a relatively small number of projects, but of high value. A large share of the ROP. A small share of OPHC/OPKED.	Reducing the share of OPKED compared to OPHC.
Effectiveness		Overall, increasing the effectiveness of fundraising. Increasing the effectiveness of cities in obtaining funds from OPKED (compared to OPHC), and to a small extent from OPIE (compared to EIOP). Decreased effectiveness of obtaining funds from OPEP.

Source: own study.

In the case of OPKED (formerly OPHC), there was a decrease in interest in the program, a decrease in the share in the number of signed contracts, but also a decrease in the value of signed contracts. However, the effectiveness of entities in applying for EU funds has increased. In the case of OPEP, opposite processes could be observed than in the case of the previously described OPHC/OPKED - the effectiveness of applying for financial resources decreased, but at the same time, the interest in the program increased. OPIE and ROP also enjoyed increased interest. In this last category of programs, there was also an increase in the number of signed contracts while their value decreased.

Conclusion

Acquiring resources to maintain and develop operations is one of the key aspects of the organization's operation. The European Union's cohesion policy enables public and private entities to implement projects in various areas under national and regional financial instruments. State and local government authorities at the regional level can conduct development policy by organizing and supervising the allocation of financial resources under individual support

instruments. While maintaining the principle of subsidiarity and the assumptions of public policies based on the concept of place-based policy, the structure of the use of financial resources under operational programs may be changed to optimally support the development of organizations, regions and the entire country. The article aimed to compare the structure and effectiveness of obtaining EU funds for projects implemented in provincial cities from two financial perspectives: 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

By reading the article you can see that the process of organizing the process of obtaining funds, as well as the allocation of funds in the 2014-2020 financial perspective, took local conditions into account more than in the previous period. The assumptions of the place-based policy concept influenced the increase in available financing under regional instruments already at the stage of planning the division of the financial resources. In both perspectives examined, there were both national and regional operational programs. It should be noted that in the period 2014-2020, the number of national programs changed. The Operational Program Human Capital changed its name to the Operational Program Knowledge Education Development while reducing the target group and the amount of financing. Some activities related to human capital development have been moved to regional programs. The Innovative Economy Operational Program was replaced by the Smart Growth Operational Program and the Digital Poland Operational Program.

When analyzing the structure of obtaining EU funds, the focus was on the following categories: the number of submitted applications for funding, which indicated the entities' interest in obtaining funds, the number of signed funding agreements and their value, which characterized the implemented initiatives, and the effectiveness of entities in obtaining EU funds. The most important similarities between both financial perspectives include the greatest interest in competitions under OPSG, OPIE and ROP, as well as the fact that the most expensive projects were implemented under OPIE. The latter conclusion is not surprising, because this financial instrument was dedicated to large investments in technical infrastructure. In both periods, a relatively small share of soft projects in the structure of the value of contracts was also observed, i.e. under OPHC and OPKED, as well as a relatively high share in the structure of the value of contracts of those projects that were implemented regionally.

Isolating the differences between the perspectives, attention should be paid to the reduced interest, reduction in the number and value of contracts, but at the same time increasing the effectiveness of obtaining funds in the field of soft projects (OPKED). The opposite situation - an increase in the structure of operational programs in the interest and number of contracts and a decrease in effectiveness - was recorded in OPEP. A similar nature of changes in the interest, number and value of contracts was observed in regional programs, but in this case, the effectiveness of obtaining funds increased slightly and remained at a high level. Based on previous observations, it can also be concluded that the reduction in the allocation of financial resources under operational programs resulted in a reduction in the number of potential beneficiaries, a reduction in the group of interested entities, a reduction in the number and value

of contracts, but improved the effectiveness of applying for EU funds. However, maintaining a similar amount allocated to the operational program and the group of potential beneficiaries (as was the case in OPEP) increased interest and increased the share in the structure of signed contracts, but resulted in a reduction in the effectiveness of entities.

The conclusions drawn from the analysis are as follows. Purposeful relocation of financial resources based on observations from previous periods, dictated by the records of regional demand analyses, improved the effectiveness of applying for funding both when the pool of available funds decreased (OPKED) and increased (ROP). The effectiveness of obtaining funds for EU projects was probably influenced by the experience of entities from earlier perspectives, the simplification of procedures for submitting applications for funding and the general increase in knowledge about the possibilities of obtaining external financing under the broadly understood cohesion policy in the European Union. The presented issue does not exhaust the topic but only signals the need for further consideration. Particularly interesting may seem to be issues related to observing the effectiveness of entities in obtaining financial resources under the current financial perspective or institutional solutions that are intended to direct financial support to entities operating within specific fields and in specific areas.

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