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Performance of a consulting service and assessment study 'Ex-ante Evaluation of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2014–2020'

Final Report

Ordering Party: Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Province

Contractor: Consortium of Ecorys Polska Spółka z o.o. and Agrotec Polska Sp. z o.o.



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List of abbreviations

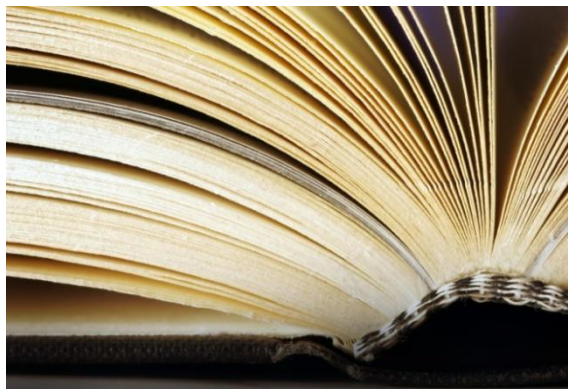


**PROGRAM
REGIONALNY**
NARODOWA STRATEGIA SPÓJNOŚCI

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Part I. Introduction

This report was prepared by the consortium of Ecorys Polska and Agrotec Polska on behalf of the Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Province as part of the project Performance of a consulting service and assessment study 'Ex-ante Evaluation of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2014–2020'. The report summarises work performed at the programming stage. Namely, a team of assessors tried to assess if the planned public interventions are socially and economically justified, and will result in the desired development objectives being achieved, the identified socio-economic needs fulfilled, and problems resolved.

I.1 Subject and Aim of the Evaluation Study

The subject of the ex-ante evaluation is the project for a Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province for the period 2014–2020 (Regionalny Program Operacyjny Województwa Mazowieckiego — RPO WM). Owing to the nature of the project and simultaneous performance of the consulting service, the assessment study report is a summary of the development of the RPO WM project.

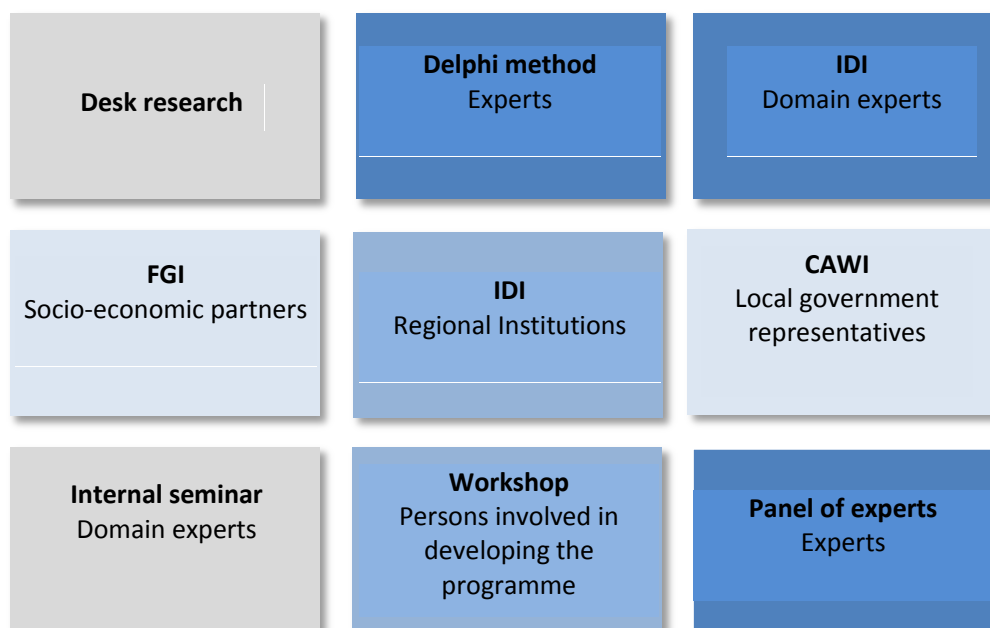
The main aims of the ex-ante evaluation of RPO WM 2014–2020 are the assessment of the intervention logic adopted in the operational programme and improvement of the quality of the RPO WM 2014–2020 project.

I.2 Research Methods Applied

The data collection methods used in the ex-ante evaluation of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2014–2020 have been presented below. A detailed description is included in the annex to this report. The annex contains a list of respondents and information about samples used in the quantitative research.

The team of assessors would like to point out that only a small amount of the primary data collected (Delphi survey, interviews, panel of experts) was reflected in the presented assessment study. The reason why only a small amount of collected information and opinions was used is that the RPO WM project continued to evolve throughout the duration of the research study. The collected opinions concerned earlier versions of RPO WM and, consequently, became outdated after changes had been introduced. This is particularly true in case of the latest changes, which involved adjusting the RPO WM to new guidelines for the content of operational programmes.

Figure 1. Data collection methods used in the evaluation



Source: own work

Apart from the data collection methods, a range of analytical methods were applied. The said methods are also described in Annex 2 to the report.

1.3 Research Questions

Research questions were divided into six main areas. These areas correspond to the chapters in this report. Issues covered by area 2 (the second main research question) were largely addressed in the description of the intervention logic of specific axes in Annex 5.

Research question 1. As a form of public intervention, does the operational programme appropriately address the identified socio-economic challenges and needs?

- 1.1 Validity of public intervention in specific priority axes of the programme
- 1.2 Appropriateness of the socio-economic diagnosis
- 1.3 Prioritisation of socio-economic challenges and needs identified in the diagnosis
- 1.4 Relevance and appropriateness of the analysis of socio-economic trends referred to in the diagnosis
- 1.5 Appropriateness of the proposed objectives in the context of the identified economic challenges and needs
 - 1.5.1 Do the problems (issues) indicated in the diagnosis translate proportionally into the objectives of the priorities and the programme?
 - 1.5.2 Have specific issues been given appropriate weight?

1.5.3 Has the principle of thematic concentration been appropriately applied?

1.5.4 Have the problems identified in the diagnosis been omitted and, if so, why?

Research question 2. Will the intervention logic proposed in the programme make it possible to achieve the intended development objectives?

2.1 Analysis and assessment of causal links between the actions planned under the programme, their products and the expected results

2.2 General assessment of the impacts of the operational programme on the socio-economic situation of the country or region, including the likely positive and negative impacts of the programme as yet unforeseen in the project

2.3 Analysis of alternative methods of implementing the intended objectives

2.4 Application of the principle of thematic concentration (justification and consistency with the intervention logic, and in particular with the programme's objectives)

2.5 Internal coherence of the objectives and actions to be undertaken under the priority axes, as well as between specific priority axes in order to assess the extent and scope of their complementarity, including the expected synergy effects

2.6 Appropriateness of the manner in which the territorial dimension of interventions and the principle of the integrated approach to socio-economic development are taken into account, with particular attention to interventions aimed at problem areas

2.7 Appropriateness of specific forms of support

2.8 The expected impact of key projects on the objectives of the priorities and the programme

2.9 Empirical and theoretical justification of the causal links that form the basis for the intervention logic of the programme and priority axes (whether the intervention logic of the programme is based on generally accepted socio-economic theories and on empirical evidence in the form of scientific research, evaluation research, analyses, studies, etc. referred to in the programme)

2.10 Feasibility of achieving the target values of performance indicators (products and results) in the context of the proposed intervention logic, including the allocated financial resources, taking into account external factors

2.11 Impact of other policies, strategies and programmes implemented at the regional, national and EU level as well as other external factors relating to the current and projected socio-economic situation on the assumptions and objectives of the programme

2.12 External conditions that affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the operational programme, including preconditions under the principle of ex-ante conditionality, in accordance with the proposal for a general regulation:

2.12.1 Validity of the preconditions applied for the programme: Will fulfilment of the proposed initial indicators increase the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation?

2.12.2 Extent and degree of fulfilment of the preconditions: Have the conditions proposed for the programme been fulfilled? To what extent? Can the remaining preconditions to be taken into account be fulfilled by the set deadlines (assessment of actions to be taken in

order for the conditions to be fulfilled)?

2.12.3 Other important external conditions not taken into account under the principle of ex-ante conditionality: Are there any other unfulfilled external conditions that significantly affect the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation? How will failure to fulfil the important external conditions affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the operational programme? Can the other important external conditions be fulfilled? When?

Research question 3. Are the assumptions and objectives of the programme consistent with the major policies and strategies pursued at the EU, national and regional level, including, in particular, the Europe 2020 strategy, the Common Strategic Framework and the Partnership Agreement?

3.1 Consistency of the assumptions and objectives of the operational programme, including development challenges and needs defined in the diagnosis, with the objectives of the major regional, national and EU policies: To what extent will the expected results contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives of these policies?

3.2 Consistency of the operational programme with the recommendations of the Council of the European Union indicated in the proposal for a general regulation (Article 48(3)(d))

Research question 4. Are the objectives of horizontal policies (the principles of equality between women and men, non-discrimination and sustainable development) taken into account in the operational programme? Does the programme contribute to the achievement of these objectives? To what extent?

4.1 The degree and extent to which horizontal policies are taken into account in the programming process:

4.1.1 Has account been taken of the gender equality principle and the principles of non-discrimination (in particular with respect to accessibility for disabled persons) and sustainable development when preparing the diagnosis and the entire programme?

4.1.2 Have entities engaged in the promotion of horizontal policies been involved in the programming process?

4.2 The expected contribution of the operational programme to the achievement of the objectives of horizontal policies:

4.2.1 Are specific actions or instruments aimed at implementing horizontal policies provided for in the programme?

4.2.2 What is their expected efficiency and effectiveness?

4.3 The manner in which horizontal policies are taken into account in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme

Research question 5. Is the existing institutional system (including human resources) sufficient to achieve the operational programme's assumptions and objectives? To what extent?

5.1 Administrative capacity, including human resources, of institutions involved in the management and implementation of the operational programme

5.2 Risk areas and barriers to the efficient and effective implementation of the programme

5.3 Organisational structures and solutions within and between institutions in the implementation system (inter alia, coordination of activities, mechanisms for coordinating and monitoring the complementarity and synergy of effects of undertaken actions, internal and external communication, electronic data interchange systems)

5.4 Assessment of undertakings planned to reduce administrative burdens

Research question 6. Do the operational programme's assumptions enable efficient and effective implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes?

6.1 Appropriateness, transparency, statistical reliability, aggregability, availability and robustness of performance indicators (product and result performance indicators)

6.2 Selection of indicators (and their value) for the assessment of the achievement of milestones (appropriateness of the selection — whether the indicators provide adequate information on the implementation progress; feasibility of achieving the indicators by set deadlines; availability of the necessary data; external factors that may affect the achievement of result indicators; whether indicators selected as the basis for making financial corrections, if any, are representative of actions undertaken under specific priorities)

6.3 Methods enabling timely provision of the appropriate amount of data, inter alia, for annual reports

6.4 Sources and methods of data generation and methods ensuring high quality of collected data

6.5 Needs regarding access to data necessary for the effective implementation of the evaluation process, including, in particular, data necessary for methodologically advanced assessment studies performed, inter alia, by means of counterfactual methods (identifying relevant information gaps and suggesting other methods of collecting the necessary data)

6.6 Human resources, institutional potential, and monitoring and evaluation system (risk areas and barriers to the efficient and effective implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes)

I.4 Description of the stages of the evaluation and cooperation with the Managing Authority

The project consisted of two stages — a consultative part and an evaluation part. Work relating to

both parts was to a large extent carried out in parallel. Although most recommendations formulated during the consultative stage were taken into account in the RPO WM project during the programming, many changes were made to the guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Regional Development and the European Commission during this process. As a result, the RPO WM project and, consequently, the ex-ante evaluation report needed to be amended. Thus, the assessors and the Managing Authority were cooperating in constantly changing circumstances.

During the consultative stage, the team of assessors participated in meetings, worked out answers to current questions and carried out partial assessments of selected fragments of the RPO WM project. At the stage of preparing the assessment study report, the team of assessors submitted working analyses designed to facilitate further intervention programming.

The team of assessors had been assessing subsequent versions of the RPO WM project since June 2013. The evaluation process was participatory in nature, which means that the assessor was able to analyse and keep track of all changes made to the programme.

It must be noted that the work on the operational programme was already well advanced when the agreement with the assessor was signed. It is not the case that a mere outline of the programme existed at the time the participatory evaluation began — after the agreement had been signed, the assessor received a nearly complete version of the RPO WM 2014–2020 project. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that the programme was actually rewritten from scratch.

The first stage of work focused on performing a full socio-economic diagnosis that would provide a good basis for developing an investment strategy, in particular for selecting specific objectives. To this end, the team of assessors worked together with the RPO WM Managing Authority, indicating appropriate sources of statistical data and studies on selected socio-economic problems in Masovia. Areas that required supplementing were discussed. A dividing line was also taken into account so as to limit the scope of the diagnosis to the areas that could be supported at the regional level.

Cooperation at the next stage, which involved selecting specific objectives and investment priorities, was limited to the assessor's assessment of the thematic concentration and the consistency of the specific objectives with the socio-economic diagnosis.

The subsequent important stage of work involved selecting appropriate monitoring indicators showing the extent to which the objectives have been achieved. At this stage, the assessor closely cooperated with the RPO WM Managing Authority. The assessor repeatedly assessed if the indicators were adequate and measurable and if the current baseline values were available. The assessor was also involved in setting target values on the basis of unit costs understood as the expenditure necessary to increase the value of an indicator by one unit. The assessor and the team responsible for RPO WM monitoring at the Managing Authority worked in parallel. Thus, the results obtained could be verified. In case of discrepancies, the results were discussed and the calculation method was examined. Ultimately, the results obtained were reconciled. As the estimates largely drew on the experience gained in previous programming periods, the collected information could be used to plan appropriate funds to be allocated for specific investment priorities (taking into account the costs necessary to produce specific products).

The experience gained when implementing EU funds in previous perspectives was drawn on at the stage of performing the diagnosis, prioritising development challenges and distributing the resources between investment priorities.

The assessor was consulted to determine whether the RPO WM project was consistent with the major national strategies. Although, according to the assessor, consistency had generally been

ensured, areas that required minor changes were also indicated. The analysis was performed using consistency matrices, in which content relating to the same issues in the RPO WM project and the national strategies was compared.

Subsequently, parts of RPO WM concerning the implementation system were refined, including issues aimed at enhancing the implementation of the programme by reducing administrative burdens for beneficiaries. To that end, a meeting was held during which the assessor presented and systematised types of barriers identified by beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries on the basis of results of assessment studies performed in previous programming periods. On this basis, the team involved in the programming process at the MA discussed possible ways of addressing the reported problems, which was reflected in RPO WM.

The monitoring and evaluation system was also discussed during a workshop held by the assessor, in which MA representatives participated. Apart from the description of the monitoring and evaluation system included in RPO WM, an evaluation plan and a project of a programme for training and dissemination of assessment study results were also discussed. At this stage of the consultations, the assessor took the opportunity to propose appropriate assessment studies compliant with evaluation requirements laid down by the European Commission for the 2014–2020 programming period.



Part II. Ex-ante Evaluation Report — Description of Research Study Results

II.1 Overall Assessment of the Programme Project

The overall assessment of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2014–2020 is a summary of assessments in the areas covered by the evaluation. Put very simply, these areas are: appropriateness of the socio-economic diagnosis, internal coherence of the programme, external consistency, monitoring and evaluation, consistency with horizontal policies and the implementation system. The subsequent chapters of the report include the assessment of these elements of the programme and a description of the process of programming and cooperation with the assessor in accordance with the assumptions of the participatory evaluation model. The research study results are summed up below.

1. Although the diagnosis in the last assessed version of the programme is very synthetic due to limitations on the size of the operational programme and may provide an incomplete picture of the issues on the basis of which the investment priorities were selected, all the earlier stages of work on the programme when the diagnosis was being developed and discussed cannot be omitted. While being involved in this process, the assessor was able to examine all working versions of the socio-economic diagnosis and to suggest that missing aspects be completed or selected analyses be deepened. Taking all this work into account, it may be concluded that all the issues vital for ensuring that public intervention is appropriately targeted were addressed in the diagnosis of the socio-economic situation. Although the diagnosis performed for the purposes of the programme does not list or prioritise the socio-economic challenges and needs identified in the region, these problems were identified correctly — they are referred to in different parts of the full version of the diagnosis (i.e. the one from before the synthesis). It may also be noted that the strength of the diagnosis is the correct way in which it combines the thematic (sector) approach with the spatial approach and the inclusion of horizontal issues, including sustainable development.
2. Correct identification of socio-economic needs in the region translated into the appropriateness of the proposed specific objectives of the programme, which address the identified problems and development challenges. Obviously, not all areas could be covered by the aid due to the need to concentrate resources.
3. Public intervention is justified in all the problem areas identified in the programme. We assessed the validity of public support in these areas on the basis of references to selected socio-economic theories, results of empirical studies (including in particular assessment

studies performed in connection with support programmes in the period 2007–2013) and regional, national and EU strategic documents. Areas in which public support should not be granted were not identified.

4. Internal coherence of the objectives and actions was maintained. There are synergies between specific axes, and the actions provide comprehensive support as far as combating the problems identified in the region is concerned. The adopted socio-economic theories and the results of empirical studies conducted so far confirm the existence of causal links between the socio-economic problems identified in the region and the proposed types of intervention. For some areas of support, we suggested alternative solutions or changes. In particular, the assessor suggested that the level of thematic concentration be increased, which was taken into account by the MA when working on the programme. The above will contribute to the achievement of better results. During the reconstruction of the intervention logic, the assessor also suggested a range of modifications, in particular with regard to the indicators. Due to the sheer number of modifications made to the programme, not all of the changes were listed in the final report.
5. Most forms of support were appropriately selected. For two investment priorities, the assessor suggested considering the application of Financial Engineering Instruments (IP 1.2 and IP 3.4). Since the RPO WM project was amended as suggested, the assessor does not consider it necessary to formulate recommendations regarding the forms of support used as part of the programme.
6. The estimate of the RPO WM 2014–2020 project indicates that specific actions to be implemented in the next financial perspective will have an adequate and optimal impact on the achievement of the RPO WM's specific objectives.
7. We consider the explanation of the way in which the territorial approach was applied proposed in the programme to be exhaustive, accurate and convincing. RPO WM is clearly consistent both with strategic documents at the EU level and with national strategies. Aspects to be supplemented were indicated at the stage of elaboration of the RPO WM project, and the changes introduced increased the documents' degree of consistency.
8. The RPO WM implementation system is based on previously created structures and reliable mechanisms. Although it was adapted to the new conditions for the implementation of EU-funded programmes, the system draws on the experience gained in previous programming periods, which we see as a merit.
9. Although the description of the RPO WM monitoring and evaluation system is general, the system covers the most important elements. Nevertheless, it will need to be further developed at a later stage after the Ministry of Regional Development publishes appropriate guidelines.

In the subsequent chapters, we address in detail the issues to be amended. Nevertheless, this does not affect our overall positive assessment of the RPO WM project.

II.2 Assessment of the Diagnosis

II.2.1 Overall Assessment of the Diagnosis

Although the current diagnosis is very synthetic, the assessor became acquainted with the full version of the diagnosis of the socio-economic situation in the region in the course of the participatory evaluation. Having assessed its full version, the assessor concludes that the diagnosis is adequate and based on reliable sources and appropriately selected data. Data used in the diagnosis are up-to-date and based on time series that make it possible to track socio-economic changes in specific areas. Socio-economic trends were accurately determined, and the causal links between the presented problems and challenges and the expected effects and results were described in detail in Annex 5.

The operational programme template¹ proposed by the Ministry of Regional Development clearly indicates that it is important to take account of justifications for investment priorities selected by the region when preparing the diagnosis. Therefore, the following two key issues needed to be verified:

- whether each selected IP is reflected in the diagnosis,
- whether the diagnosis does not contain excessive information on problems that will not be covered by public intervention.

These elements were verified and modified in consultation with the assessor during the elaboration of RPO WM. The diagnosis was expanded when issues that the proposed public intervention will later address were insufficiently described and shortened when public intervention was not planned in a given problem area. Subsequently, the entire diagnosis was verified once again and considerably shortened in order to adapt the content and size of the programme to the above-mentioned template.

II.2.2 Assessment of the Diagnosis in terms of the Intervention Logic of the Programme

As was mentioned above, the diagnosis performed for the purposes of RPO WM is appropriate and reliable. During the participatory evaluation, the assessor indicated issues to be improved. As regards the assessment of the diagnosis of axis 1, the assessor pointed out that information on the necessity/possibility of implementing new business models for SMEs (in particular for the purpose of their internationalisation) was missing in the analysis. The diagnosis also did not make explicit the need to promote entrepreneurship and foster the creation of new firms. On the basis of the assessor's recommendations, the socio-economic diagnosis and types of projects covered by the support were updated for the Innovation and Entrepreneurship area. The need to implement investments that strengthen R&D infrastructure required for R&D research, in particular for the purpose of smart specialisation of the region, was highlighted in the diagnosis and section 2.A.1.

According to the socio-economic diagnosis of the province, priority axis 2 is justified. The analysis identified such problems as low ICT use in Masovian companies (measured in terms of presence or absence of ERP and CRM equipment) and small share of e-trade in company trade. The diagnosis also points to the need to develop such solutions in public service — education, health care and Masovian

¹ Template for the operational programme 2014–2020 in Poland with comments, Ministry of Regional Development, 2013

offices. The need to expand the range of services provided by the offices by means of digital technologies is indicated as well. Problems identified in the diagnosis also justify the need to strengthen ICT-based solutions as part of e-government, e-education and e-health (IP 2.3).

The diagnosis presented in the subsection on energy was verified during the elaboration of RPO WM. The assessor's suggestions concerned, inter alia, rearranging the list of energy sources and information on the production of energy from renewable energy sources. Furthermore, information unrelated to the actions to be undertaken under this priority, i.e. information on energy-saving opportunities in the propulsion, household appliance and residential lighting sectors, was removed.

The statistical description in priority axis 4 — *Society and environment friendly economy* — was found to be incomplete. Ways to supplement it were suggested, in particular with regard to the level of natural and artificial retention. During the elaboration of the RPO WM project, an incomplete description of natural disturbances was also supplemented, inter alia, by adding data on drought affected areas. Observations made by the assessor during the elaboration were taken into account.

The diagnosis of the situation covering the intervention under priority axis 5 — *Development of a regional transport system* — appropriately presents the deficiencies and challenges relating to transport infrastructure in Masovia, which thematically corresponds to the possibilities arising from the dividing line. During the assessment of the appropriateness and coherence of the diagnosis, three problems and the resulting needs not reflected in the scheduled interventions were discussed. The problems concerned railway infrastructure. Ultimately, however, it was decided not to finance this infrastructure at the regional level.

One of the diagnosed problems is low traffic safety, in particular in built-up and heavily congested areas. This problem was exhaustively described in the diagnosis. On the basis of the assessor's suggestions, a conclusion was introduced that there is a need to reduce traffic volume in built-up areas by diverting transit traffic away from towns.

Information on the accessibility of peripheral centres was supplemented on the basis of sources suggested by the assessor. The analysed problem is related to the ongoing and scheduled development of expressway network and A2 motorway in the province. The main problem is the insufficient number of lower-class roads supplementing the above roads. Another problem is the insufficient number of high-capacity ring roads in Warsaw, the neighbouring areas and the remaining towns in the region. There are also insufficient two-level interchanges and grade-separated pedestrian crossings. This issue was described in the diagnosis.

The remaining issues concerned:

- the description of the failure to adapt the road network, in particular provincial roads, to load-bearing capacity standards and to increasing traffic volume,
- statistical information on transit traffic and the related traffic disruption on lower-class roads.

Owing to the restrictions on the size of specific sections of the operational programme, not all issues could be sufficiently expanded. References to railway transport were removed following the Provincial Government's decision not to finance railway infrastructure under RPO WM and to negotiate support for this area at the national level.

Labour market problems and the resulting needs, which will be addressed by the scheduled interventions under axis 6 — *Labour market development* — were appropriately, coherently and exhaustively presented in the diagnosis on the basis of current data and socio-economic trends.

Also the diagnosis of the situation in the area of social inclusion, covered by actions under priority axis 7 — *Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty* — was complete and coherent, and enabled ongoing monitoring of the impact of the interventions on socio-economic changes with respect to the base year. However, there are doubts as to the sources of data on the identified needs and challenges in the area of action under priority 9.7 — internal documents of the Masovia Centre of Social Policy (Mazowieckie Centrum Polityki Społecznej) or reporting data of the Marshal's Office. As regards official statistics, there is a clear lack of reliable data on the deficit in the area of social and health services to be provided under this Investment Priority.

The diagnosis of the issues under priority axis 8 covers the major problems, which were accurately described.

The assessor suggested that chapter 1.4 — Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and priorities — be supplemented. The recommendation was taken into account by the Managing Authority and relevant references to the socio-economic diagnosis were included.

II.3 External Consistency

The Europe 2020 strategy, Partnership Agreement and the Development Strategy for the Mazowieckie Province until 2030 are the basic documents for programming EU aid as part of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2014–2020. As detailed recommendations on changes aimed at enhancing consistency with the Europe 2020 strategy, CSF and the National Regional Development Strategy were submitted to the Managing Authority during the work, in accordance with the terms of cooperation in the participatory model, the assessors do not consider it necessary at this stage to formulate further recommendations — a high degree of consistency with regional, national and EU strategic documents was ensured in the RPO WM project. The results of the assessment of consistency with these documents are summarised below.

II.3.1 Assessment of the Impact on the Europe 2020 Strategy

The assessed RPO WM project is consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy. During the elaboration of the RPO WM project, the assessor suggested that the project be slightly supplemented, in particular by introducing references to the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Priority axis 1 of RPO WM is consistent with all three objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. As far as the smart growth objective is concerned, RPO WM is primarily consistent with the EU flagship initiative 'Innovation Union', especially as regards support for smart specialisation in Masovia. As far as sustainable growth is concerned, priority axis 1 of RPO WM is consistent with the initiative 'An industrial policy for the globalisation era', especially as regards support for business environment institutions and internationalisation of business activity in Masovia. As far as the inclusive growth objective is concerned, RPO WM seems to be consistent with the initiative 'An agenda for new skills and new jobs', primarily as regards improving the quality of human resources and, to a lesser extent, decreasing the number of early school leavers. During the work, the assessor recommended:

- introducing provisions on smart specialisation,
- expanding references to support for new businesses,

- expanding the description of actions to promote entrepreneurship through business incubators,

which was taken into account in the next version of the RPO WM project.

Priority axis 2 of RPO WM is consistent with the first objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. smart growth, and the flagship initiative 'European Digital Agenda'.

Priority axis 3 of RPO WM is consistent with the second objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. sustainable growth, and the flagship initiatives 'Resource efficient Europe' and 'An industrial policy for the globalisation era' (e.g. as regards support for energy efficiency of SMEs).

Priority axis 4 of RPO WM is consistent with the second objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. sustainable growth, and the flagship initiative 'Resource efficient Europe'. Also as far as the prevention of natural disasters is concerned, RPO WM seems to be consistent with this flagship initiative. Furthermore, the priority axis concerned is consistent with the third objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. inclusive growth, and the flagship initiative 'European platform against poverty' (as regards investment in healthcare and social infrastructure).

Priority axis 5 of RPO WM is consistent with the second objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. sustainable growth, and the flagship initiative 'Resource efficient Europe' (as regards the improvement of the regional communication network and its connections to TEN-T).

Priority axis 6 of RPO WM is consistent with all three objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. As far as RPO WM is concerned, the smart growth objective is mainly connected to the EU flagship initiative 'Youth on the move' (as regards the acquisition of professional experience and labour market mobility). As far as sustainable growth is concerned, in turn, the assessed RPO WM project is consistent with the initiative 'An industrial policy for the globalisation era' (inter alia, as regards support for adaptation and modernisation processes in the region). As far as the EU objective inclusive growth is concerned, RPO WM seems to be primarily consistent with the initiative 'An agenda for new skills and new jobs' (e.g. as regards job creation) and the EU flagship initiative 'European platform against poverty' (as regards support for labour market participation, especially of older persons).

Priority axis 7 of RPO WM is consistent with the third objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. inclusive growth, and the flagship initiative 'European platform against poverty'.

Priority axis 8 of RPO WM is consistent with the first objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. smart growth, and its flagship initiative 'Youth on the move' as well as the third objective of this strategy, i.e. inclusive growth, and its two flagship initiatives, namely 'An agenda for new skills and jobs' and 'European platform against poverty'.

II.3.2 Assessment of Consistency with CSF and the Partnership Agreement

The Common Strategic Framework (CSF) is an important document for programming EU aid, also as regards the planning of the European cohesion policy for the period 2014–2020. The assessors consider the RPO WM 2014–2020 project to be consistent with the Common Strategic Framework. Priority axis 1 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objectives 1, 3 and 8 of the Common Strategic Framework. RPO WM is consistent with objective 8 of CSF as regards support for business development through business incubators. Priority axis 2 of RPO WM is fully consistent with thematic objective 2 of the Common Strategic Framework.

Priority axis 3 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objectives 4 and 6 of the Common Strategic Framework. Consistency with objective 6 is achieved through changes in the organisation of urban transport proposed under this axis, which contribute to the reduction of air pollution. The priority axis concerned is also consistent with thematic objective 7 as regards the development of public transport, bicycle paths and pedestrian traffic.

Priority axis 4 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objectives 5, 6 and 9 of the Common Strategic Framework. Priority axis 5 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objective 7 of the Common Strategic Framework. Priority axis 6 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objectives 8 and 9 of the Common Strategic Framework. A particularly high level of consistency with objective 9 of the CSF has been achieved as regards support for the development of health services. Priority axis 7 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objective 9 of the Common Strategic Framework. Priority axis 8 of RPO WM is consistent with thematic objective 10 of the Common Strategic Framework.

The Partnership Agreement is an important document with which operational programmes implementing EU cohesion policy should be consistent. As the Partnership Agreement was not ready yet when the operational programme project was assessed, further considerations were based on the European Commission's position in that regard. We believe that this position will be a key factor in determining the final shape of the Partnership Agreement for the period 2014–2020.

In the position on the development of the Partnership Agreement and programmes for the period 2014–2020 in Poland, Commission services set out four funding priorities and related thematic objectives. The RPO WM project is consistent with the funding priorities set out in the Commission's position.

The first funding priority set out by the Commission, Modern network infrastructure for growth and jobs, is consistent with priority axes 2, 3 and 5 of RPO WM. Actions listed in the RPO WM project are fully consistent with the Commission's position and elements of the first priority set out in this position not listed in RPO WM were omitted due to the adopted dividing line. The second funding priority set out by the Commission, i.e. Innovation-friendly business environment, is consistent with priority axes 1, 2 and 6 of RPO WM. The third funding priority set out by the Commission, i.e. Increasing labour market participation through improved employment, social inclusion and education policies, is fully consistent with priority axes 6, 7 and 8 of RPO WM. The fourth funding priority set out by the Commission, i.e. Environment-friendly and resource-efficient economy, is fully consistent with priority axes 3 and 4 of RPO WM.

II.3.3 Assessment of Consistency with the Objectives of National and Regional Strategies

The main areas of impact of the National Regional Development Strategy are competitiveness, cohesion and efficiency of the country/management. An analysis of the areas of impact of RPO WM carried out at the stage of elaboration of the programme project revealed several inconsistencies with the National Regional Development Strategy. The inconsistencies concerned:

- links between the main objective of the programme and the objectives of the priority axes as well as the selection of the thematic objectives,
- fulfilment by RPO WM 2014–2020 of the recommendations of the National Regional Development Strategy regarding thematic and geographical concentration,
- spatial mobility in the context of effective use of human capital,
- RPO WM's contribution to the development of an efficient transport network for diffusing growth impulses,
- rural issues not being included in the description of the priorities.

During the elaboration of the RPO WM project, the above elements were taken into account as recommended by the assessors.

The National Spatial Development Concept primarily involves territorial development balancing, i.e. putting emphasis on stimulating the development of growth poles (agglomerations and large urban centres), while at the same time building diffusion channels — mechanisms for diffusing growth impulses from urban centres to peripheral areas — and creating the absorption capacity of these impulses in areas requiring modernisation. The concept also involves stimulating development based on endogenous resources of peripheral areas. In the light of the above, the objective of the national spatial development policy is as follows: 'To efficiently use the country's area and its territorially diversified development potentials to achieve the general development objectives — competitiveness, increased employment, efficiently functioning state and long-term social, economic and territorial cohesion' (National Spatial Development Concept, p. 68).

Subsequently, the National Spatial Development Concept sets out six complementary objectives of the national spatial development policy, namely 1) to increase the competitiveness of the major urban centres, 2) to enhance internal cohesion, 3) to increase the country's territorial accessibility, 4) to protect the environment and landscape, 5) to increase energy security and strengthen the country's defence capabilities, 6) to restore and preserve spatial order. Each of these objectives is to contribute to the implementation of the above-mentioned development model. When assessing RPO WM's consistency with the National Spatial Development Concept, the assessors checked the extent to which the intervention logic of the National Spatial Development Concept (polarisation — diffusion — absorption — endogenous potential) had been adopted in the programme. According to the National Spatial Development Concept, as far as the said logic is concerned: 'Urban areas and rural areas are, therefore, regarded as complementary elements of a dynamic system that constitute an integral socio-economic and spatial whole' (National Spatial Development Concept, p. 8).

To a large extent, RPO WM correctly implements the development model provided for by the National Spatial Development Concept. The National Spatial Development Concept places emphasis on building links between country and town (see p. 8), which is particularly important in the

Mazowieckie Province. Rural areas located away from the capital that do not form part of the area of impact of subregional centres are a source of concern. Usually, these areas are also characterised by a low employment rate and a low level of socio-economic development. In this context, it must be stressed that although RPO WM may significantly contribute to breaking the barriers to development in these areas, this cannot be achieved by the programme alone — cooperation between different institutions and, above all, the involvement of different EU funds, including CAP, is necessary.

In the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2014–2020, it is clearly stated that areas of support under RPO are determined on the basis of the project for the Development Strategy for the Mazowieckie Province until 2030 Smart Masovia (Inteligentne Mazowsze), which is also the key programming document. The actions described in the Strategy are designed to turn the following vision into reality: 'Masovia is a region characterised by territorial cohesion, competitiveness, innovativeness, high economic growth and excellent living conditions'. The main objectives of the analysed document are to decrease imbalance in development in the Mazowieckie Province and to increase the significance of the Warsaw Metropolitan Zone in Europe. These objectives may be achieved by implementing actions under the priority strategic objective (i.e. Development of export-oriented production in the high and medium-high technology industry and the agri-food industry and processing), supported by actions under three strategic objectives (i.e. 1. Increasing the competitiveness of the region through the development of economic activity as well as transfer and use of new technologies. 2. Improving the accessibility and territorial cohesion of the region and shaping spatial order. 3. Improving the quality of life and using human and social capital to create modern economy) and two framework strategic objectives (i.e. 1. Ensuring a diversified energy supply for the region's economy while at the same time guaranteeing sustainable management of natural resources. 2. Using the potential of culture and cultural heritage as well as natural environment assets to foster economic development of the region and improve the quality of life).

Below, we assess if RPO WM 2014–2020 is consistent with the Strategy in terms of the extent to which the operational programme implements the three strategic objectives and two framework strategic objectives.

Strategic objectives

1. Increasing the competitiveness of the region through the development of economic activity as well as transfer and use of new technologies

The RPO WM 2014–2020 project is consistent with the analysed strategic objective. Actions undertaken as part the objective have been planned in particular under priority axes 1 and 2. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of priority axes 6 and 8. They cover direct support for enterprises themselves (mainly SMEs), development and transfer of new technologies, and indirect impact by providing staff with the knowledge and competence required to perform the task concerned.

2. Improving the accessibility and territorial cohesion of the region and shaping spatial order

The RPO WM 2014–2020 project is also consistent with the second analysed strategic objective. Two specific objectives of RPO aim to improve the accessibility and territorial cohesion of the region and shape spatial order, namely 'Regeneration of urban space designed to address identified social problems' under priority axis 4 and 'Improving regional road network's connections to TEN-T and increasing internal and external accessibility' under priority axis 5. The above objectives are consistent with the strategic objective 2.

3. Improving the quality of life and using human and social capital to create modern economy

Finally, the RPO WM 2014–2020 project is consistent with the last analysed strategic objective. Actions aimed at improving the quality of life and using human and social capital to create modern economy are covered by priority axes 4, 6, 7 and 8. The actions cover support for the required infrastructure, development of the required competence, acquisition of qualifications and financing for business activities that come under the analysed strategic objective.

Framework strategic objectives

1. Ensuring a diversified energy supply for the region's economy, while at the same time guaranteeing sustainable management of natural resources

This objective is reflected in RPO WM 2014–2020 as under priority axis 4 of the programme, it is planned to increase the share of unconventional energy sources, including renewable energy sources, in total energy production, which, given the current predominance of conventional sources, determines future diversification.

2. Using the potential of culture and cultural heritage as well as natural environment assets to foster economic development of the region and improve the quality of life

Owing to an insufficient amount of funds remaining for the implementation of thematic objectives 5–10 of ERDF after allocations for priority areas had been made, the above-mentioned areas were omitted in the RPO WM project. The omission is justified given that fragmentation of funds would not make it possible to achieve tangible results. Analyses carried out in collaboration with the assessor led to the conclusion that the strategic objective aimed at using the potential of culture and cultural heritage as well as natural environment assets to foster economic development of the region and improve the quality of life should be financed outside RPO WM.

II.3.4 Assessment of the Fulfilment of Ex-Ante Conditionalities

Thematic ex-ante conditionalities for RPO WM, for whose fulfilment local authorities are co-responsible, were identified (determination of the Regional Innovation Strategy, submission of waste management plans and investment plans in the transport sector). The assessment of their fulfilment is presented in table 24. As far as identified thematic conditionalities that had not been fulfilled at the regional level are concerned, the table does not include any description of actions to be taken to fulfil the ex-ante conditionalities, any list of responsible bodies or timetable. The above should be provided in table 26.

It is recommended to provide a description of actions to be taken to fulfil the applicable thematic ex-ante conditionalities in table 26. A model table was specified in the *Template for the operational programme 2014–2020*. The RPO section on the fulfilment of thematic ex-ante conditionalities should be completed on the basis of a uniform contribution prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development.

No description of the fulfilment of general ex-ante conditionalities was included in RPO WM. According to the Template for the operational programme 2014–2020, owing to the broad scope of regional programmes, it will be necessary to refer to all general ex-ante conditionalities and most thematic ex-ante conditionalities on the basis of a self-assessment contained in the Partnership

Agreement (although the responsibility for the fulfilment of most conditionalities lies at the central level).

It is recommended to provide a description of the fulfilment of general ex-ante conditionalities in the form of table 24, *List of ex-ante conditionalities applicable to the programme and assessment of their fulfilment*, whose model was specified in the *Template for the operational programme 2014–2020*, and subsequently according to the self-assessment in table 25, *Actions to be taken to fulfil the applicable general ex-ante conditionalities*. General conditionalities will be fulfilled at the national level — as declared by the Ministry of Regional Development, all operational programmes will receive a uniform contribution to this section from the Ministry. The RPO section on the fulfilment of general ex-ante conditionalities will be completed on the basis of a uniform contribution prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development².

II.4 Intervention Logic and Internal Coherence

In this part of the report, we refer mainly to the issues covered by the second main research question. The intervention logic is reconstructed in Annex 6.

II.4.1 Assessment of the Intervention Logic of the Programme

Actions to be undertaken under the Investment Priorities to implement Thematic Objective 1, 'Support for research, technological development and innovation', and Thematic Objective 3, 'Increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises', are deemed to be coherent and logically structured, and should in the long term bring measurable results in the form of a higher level of innovation in the Mazowieckie Province. Five investment priorities (1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4) were identified under Priority Axis 1 of RPO WM, *Innovation and entrepreneurship*. At the same time, the priorities are correctly linked to Thematic Objectives 1 and 3.

Implementation of Thematic Objectives 1 and 3 is deemed to be strategically important for implementing the remaining objectives of RPO WM as efficient use of research facilities and resultant innovations, a high level of cooperation between administrative, scientific and business institutions and a high level of internationalisation of business activity are prerequisites for increasing the competitiveness of the region or implementing modern information and communication technologies. Results of numerous empirical studies conducted with respect to both the micro-economic and macro-economic level [World Economic Forum reports from 2010, 2011 and 2012] point to the above-mentioned links between expenditure on research and development and a higher level of innovation, and between the level of innovation and international competitiveness. The scope and nature of actions under RPO WM 2014–2020 covered by Priority Axis 1, *Innovation and entrepreneurship*, are primarily determined by identified problems faced by Masovia. These problems constitute major barriers preventing the efficient growth of innovation in the region.

We believe that the main problems linked to Thematic Objective 1 were correctly identified. The

² Cf. the Template for the operational programme 2014–2020, Ministry of Regional Development, September 2013, p. 44.

assessor suggested some changes in indicators (1 modification concerning the strategic result indicator, 4 modifications concerning direct result indicators and 1 modification concerning the product indicator) and provided reasons for making them. The suggestions were submitted in a separate document. The final result of undertaken investment activities is the achievement of 3 direct result indicators. These are the result indicators of axis 1, namely *R&D expenditure* and *Use of research results*, and a new direct result indicator proposed by the assessors, i.e. *The number of R&D projects implemented using the funded infrastructure*.

We believe that the addition of the direct result indicator *The number of R&D projects implemented using the funded infrastructure* [units] will allow for a more comprehensive assessment of actions under Investment Priority 1.1 and make it possible to quantify the results of actions aimed at increasing the number of R&D projects implemented with the funds. We consider that a reference to the number of projects implemented using funded R&D infrastructure will also make it possible to assess actions designed to foster cooperation between scientific centres and enterprises. These actions are a key factor in implementing Investment Priority 3.4, which aims to develop links between enterprises and R&D centres. The indicator *The number of R&D projects implemented using the funded infrastructure* [units] is included in the Operational Program Smart Development and related projects implemented as part of the Polish Research Infrastructure Roadmap. In addition, this indicator is linked to the *Development Strategy for the Mazowieckie Province until 2030. Smart Masovia*, which highlights the need to build a science sector that will support the development of an innovative and competitive economy, and the importance of the transfer of knowledge and innovation between units.

We believe that the main problems linked to Thematic Objective 3 were correctly identified in RPO WM 2014–2020. The assessor suggested that the target direct result indicators be adjusted and provided reasons for making the changes. As support for the development of SMEs in the region is to be provided under the priority, in particular for fostering innovation and for creating new infrastructure and developing the existing one with a view to fostering economic development, including the construction or modernisation of the communication system in the investment area, direct result indicators and strategic result indicators linked to these actions were suggested. This was due to the fact that the indicator *Enterprises that cooperated in innovation activities* was not linked to all actions. Since investment activities undertaken under Investment Priority 3.1 are intended to increase employment, we suggest introducing an employment indicator in lower-level documents³. The suggested intervention logic was discussed in detail in Annex 5.

As far as the identified Problem 4 is concerned, 4 basic investment activities covered by Priority Axis 1 were developed. They are: 1) Support for international economic cooperation between export-oriented enterprises, 2) Economic promotion of the region and specific areas, 3) Promoting and supporting international cooperation between enterprises, business environment institutions and R&D centres aimed at implementing joint innovation projects, 4) Promotion of the activities and potential of the regional R&D zone. These actions are logically consistent, compliant with the guidelines arising from the dividing line, linked to Thematic Objective 3, 'Increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises', and Priority Axis 1, *Innovation and entrepreneurship*, and highly likely to be effectively implemented.

The final result of the investment activities under Investment Priority 3.2 is the achievement of the direct result indicator we recommended, namely *The number of foreign trade contracts signed by enterprises that received support for internationalisation* [units]. The suggested direct result indicator

³ Direct result indicators need not be presented in the operational programme.

corresponds to the indicator *The number of supported international information and promotion projects* and *The number of enterprises that received support for the internationalisation of activities* [units]. It should be assumed that the development of systemic support for the internationalisation of enterprises will lead supported companies to seek cooperation with foreign enterprises more actively. Thus, it may be concluded that the number of foreign trade contracts signed by enterprises covered by the aid constitutes a measurable result of the actions under Investment Priority 3.2.

As far as Investment Priority 3.4 is concerned, the measurable result of undertaken actions will be the achievement of the product indicator we recommended, namely *The number of supported business environment institutions — entrepreneurship centres* [units]. Such a product will constitute measurable verification of investment activities under Investment Priority 3.4. Since investment activities undertaken under Investment Priority 3.4 will result in an increase in the number of supported business environment institutions, we suggest introducing the above-mentioned indicator in lower-level documents. The final result of investment activities under Investment Priority 3.4 is the achievement of 1 direct result indicator, namely *The number of enterprises supported by business environment institutions* [units] — the result indicator set out in RPO WM 2014–2020.

It should be noted at this point that the sector of business environment institutions has been developing rapidly in recent years. In 2000, the sector comprised 266 entities, in 2004 as many as 517 institutions, 694 in 2007, 717 in 2009 and 821 in 2012 [K.B. Matusiak, 2010]. The development of business environment institutions was largely due to EU support (2004–2013) allocated for the establishment and development of such institutions and for the financing of their activities [Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2012].

As regards the assessment of the intervention logic of Priority Axis 3, *Shift towards a low-carbon economy*, the addition of other indicators to direct result indicators was suggested. Taking into account the objectives of the programme, i.e. support for the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors and the use of renewable energy sources, the assessor suggested linking direct result indicators to target recipients of results. As far as the recommended draft intervention logic is concerned, the following two indicators from the Common List of Key Indicators were suggested:

- additional renewable energy production capacity,
- estimated reduction in the greenhouse gas emission.

It was argued that the strategic results of the undertaken intervention would be best measured as 'primary energy consumption', 'share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (in %)' and 'greenhouse gas emissions' as this would provide information on the actual state of modernisation of generation sources and transmission networks. The indicators were taken into account.

The assessor also suggested indicators reflecting the actual impact of granted support on increasing the level of business activity in the area of energy efficiency⁴:

- decrease in the amount of electricity/heat consumed by supported enterprises,
- estimated reduction in the greenhouse gas emission.

The indicators were adopted in lower-level documents as direct result indicators need not be presented in the operational programme.

The main problems linked to Thematic Objective 2 and Thematic Objectives covered by interventions

⁴ *Poland's Energy Policy until 2030*. The Ministry of Economy and Labour. Document adopted by the Council of Ministers on 10 November 2009.

under Priority Axis 4, *Society and environment friendly economy*, were correctly identified. Importantly, actions selected under the Investment Priorities and identified target product and result indicators are valid.

The ex-ante evaluation of the intervention logic of Priority Axis 5, *Development of a regional transport system*, points to causal links — based on reliable theoretical and empirical grounds — between most types of operations planned. It should be noted, however, that increasing the attractiveness of the regions bordering Masovia from the east and from the west may negatively affect the indicator of the region's potential accessibility by road transport. An increase in the volume of goods and passengers in the transit traffic should be expected in the province. Although the indicated risk factor does not undermine the validity of planned investments, it may affect the validity of the direction of the investments in the non-contest procedure.

Further concentration of migration in the Warsaw Metropolitan Zone is a factor that should be taken into account when selecting optimal investments. The direction of passenger traffic at specific time intervals entails the prioritisation of road investments around Warsaw. In line with the assessor's suggestions, these issues were taken into account in the RPO WM project.

The intervention logic of Priority Axis 6, *Labour market development*, is correct and based on reliable theoretical and empirical grounds. It must be stressed that the risk factor involving lack of synchronisation of actions undertaken at the national level under the Operational Programme POWER (Program Operacyjny Wiedza, Edukacja, Rozwój; Operational Programme Knowledge, Education and Development) to increase the level and quality of employment services' operations with the implementation schedule for interventions under RPO WM 2014–2020 and the risk factor involving lower-than-estimated labour market dynamics will have significant impact on the value of the result indicator linked to direct employability of persons covered by the aid. The latter risk factor may also negatively affect the target value of the long-term result indicator. A stronger-than-expected economic slowdown creating a weak market for the sector of micro-enterprises may entail a risk that the target value of the long-term result indicator linked to the survival of supported newly created micro-enterprises will not be achieved.

Taking into account the intervention logic of Priority Axis 7, *Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty*, it must be concluded that actions selected under Investment Priorities 9.4, 9.7 and 9.8, and identified target product and result indicators are valid. The intervention logic is based on reliable theoretical and empirical grounds. The adopted product indicators, direct result indicators and long-term result indicators measure the results of planned actions. However, it is recommended that the direct result and long-term result indicators under Investment Priority 9.7 be supplemented at a later stage of work if relevant indicators are added to the Common List of Key Indicators. As regards the type of intervention that ensures better access to specialist clinics for persons at risk of exclusion and covers the development of early childhood development support services for children at risk of disability and their families, only product indicators are used to measure the results in the current version of the programme. The said indicators should be supplemented at a later stage of work after appropriate indicators are added to the Common List of Key Indicators.

The intervention logic of Priority Axis 8, *Education for the development of the region*, is correct and based on reliable theoretical and empirical grounds. Two main Investment Priorities were identified under the analysed Axis, namely 10.1. *Reducing early school-leaving and ensuring equal access to good-quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education* and 10.3. *Enhancing access to and supporting lifelong learning, improving the skills and qualifications of staff and jobseekers and increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems, inter alia, by improving the quality of vocational education and training, and creating and developing systems of learning*

through vocational training practice in close collaboration with employers, which are correctly linked to Thematic Objective 10 and two main problems in this area identified in Masovia, i.e. intra-regional disparities in the accessibility and quality of pre-primary education and general education and lack of regional labour market relevance of education.

Implementation of Thematic Objective 10 is deemed to be particularly important for implementing the remaining objectives of RPO WM 2014–2020 as primary school, junior high school and secondary school education generates human resources that ensure a high level of scientific research and resultant innovations in the future. As was repeatedly stressed, the above is a prerequisite for, for example, increasing the competitiveness of the region or implementing modern information and communication technologies. Education is crucial to economic development. Firstly, it increases staff productivity. Secondly, it makes it possible to take part in the international exchange of knowledge and modern technologies [cf. e.g. Vandenbussche, Aghion, Meghir 1992]. Thirdly, it creates an environment conducive to innovative research.

As far as Investment Priority 10.3 is concerned, it was observed that some interventions do not translate into product indicators. The said indicators may be supplemented at a later stage of work after appropriate indicators are added to the Common List of Key Indicators.

It must be stressed that the risk factor involving lack of synchronisation of actions undertaken at the national level under the Operational Programme POWER with the implementation schedule for interventions under RPO WM 2014–2020 and the potential risk factor involving the increasing migration of young people and persons in a difficult professional situation (i.e. potential participants in lifelong learning) affect the value of the strategic result indicator.

II.4.2 Assessment of Alternative Methods of Achieving Objectives

The analysis of priority axes linked to Thematic Objectives 1–4 leads to the conclusion that no alternative scenario for achieving results that address the needs and challenges indicated in the diagnosis may be developed. It was concluded that the scope of investment priorities to be implemented fully corresponds to the possibilities arising from the dividing line. As far as Axis 3 is concerned, it might be considered if it is necessary to finance solar collectors in view of the fact that the cost of generating a production capacity of 1 MW is three times higher than in the case of other sources, e.g. biomass or biogas.

When looking into alternative methods of achieving the objectives of Priority Axis 4, *Society and environment friendly economy*, the selection of the Investment Priorities seems to be justified. The indication of the priority of small retention in rural areas, which is related to the planned restriction of financial resources available in the next financial perspective as part of local authorities' operations under the Rural Development Programme (pursuant to the Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, project of 26 July 2013), must be positively assessed. During the participatory evaluation, the assessor indicated types of intervention whose removal should be considered due to fragmentation of allocated funds and low target value of indicators that does not generate socio-economic change, as well as types of intervention in which an increase in the amount of allocated funds should be considered. It was recommended that the following Investment Priorities be abandoned: *Expansion and modernisation of water supply networks* (Investment Priority 6.2) and *Investments in social economy infrastructure, in particular infrastructure related to organising jobs for excluded persons and persons at risk of social exclusion*

(Investment Priority 9.1). It was recommended that the amount of funds allocated for projects for the construction and expansion of small retention structures (Investment Priority 5.2) be increased. It was argued that the needs set out in the Small Retention Programme for the Mazowieckie Province exceeded the projected amount of allocated funds many times over and most of the tasks set out in the programme would be implemented only in one province. Consequently, it would not be possible to implement them as part of the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment, and, therefore, only a small part of tasks set out in the Small Retention Programme for the Mazowieckie Province could be implemented. In line with these recommendations, funds were concentrated on a limited number of objectives under Axis 4. The amount of funds allocated under Investment Priority 5.2 (small retention and amelioration) was increased to EUR 50 million. The assessor suggested that funds allocated for the construction, expansion and modernisation of water supply networks together with water treatment equipment be transferred from Investment Priority 6.2 to Investment Priority 5.2, arguing that the implementation of this type of intervention would be threatened by the lack of a Master Plan for the Vistula basin (tender was announced by the National Water Management Authority in August 2013). The work is scheduled for completion on 15 July 2014. Implementation of investments in this area may be postponed if the above document is not drawn up. In line with this recommendation, the amount of funds allocated under Investment Priority 6.2 was decreased to EUR 6 million. Furthermore, it was decided that water supply networks will be expanded and modernised only if wastewater management is in place.

A range of significant types of intervention were planned under Investment Priority 6.1, inter alia, the organisation of separate collection of waste. The assessor recommended that the amount of allocated funds be increased at the expense of other Investment Priorities as the allocation originally projected would be sufficient to finance only 15–30 Centres for Separate Collection of Municipal Waste (out of over 300 centres planned in the province). The assessor argued that concentrating funds on that task would make it possible to implement tasks set out in the Provincial Waste Management Plan. This was also the case with another type of intervention, namely closure and rehabilitation of landfills that fail to meet environmental protection requirements. The cost of closing a landfill with an area of 1 ha is around PLN 1.3–1.4 million. For landfills with an area ranging from 1 to 3 ha, the cost is around PLN 1.4–1.5 million. The projected allocation would be sufficient to finance the rehabilitation of around 15–25 landfills. Twice or three times as many landfills need to be rehabilitated. Similarly, it was recommended that the amount of funds allocated for expanding and modernising waste management plants and replacement plants to meet the standards for regional municipal waste processing plants be increased as the amount originally projected would be sufficient to increase the processing capacity of mechanical biological waste treatment plants by an estimated 60 000–150 000 Mg with a shortage estimated in the Provincial Waste Management Plan at nearly 850 000 Mg. The recommendation was taken into account during the subsequent stages of work on the RPO WM project. Allocated funds were concentrated on a limited number of objectives under Axis 4 — EUR 80 million will be allocated for the action *Expanding and modernising regional municipal waste processing plants and replacement plants to meet the standards for regional municipal waste processing plants*. The remaining types of actions were removed.

The assessor also pointed out that the amount of funds to be allocated for investments in healthcare infrastructure designed to address the needs identified in the region and deficits identified at the national level was insufficient. In line with this recommendation, the amount of funds allocated for this type of operation under Investment Priority 9.1, Priority Axis 4, Specific Objective 6 was increased to EUR 30 million. It was also decided that support would only be granted for *Investments in healthcare infrastructure designed to address the needs identified in the region and deficit areas identified at the national level*.

As far as Priority Axis 5 is concerned, all types of intervention require support in the light of the socio-economic diagnosis and provincial strategic documents.

The analysis showed the validity of increasing the amount of funds allocated for certain types of intervention due to a lack of support at the national level. The results of a report compiled by the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences⁵ show that strengthening investments aimed at improving access to Warsaw from peripheral centres, especially districts located outside a 90-minute isochrone, is becoming a priority in the Mazowieckie Province. In line with the assessor's suggestions, preference will be given to projects aimed at implementing this objective.

Concentrating investments along the east–west line will help increase the capacity mainly for transit goods. The adoption of this priority entails support for ring roads around towns located along the transit route. Increasing the potential accessibility in terms of the volume of passengers creates alternative challenges relating to the directions of interventions aimed at roads built consistently around the Warsaw Metropolitan Zone. It should be considered if interventions implemented in the province at the national level (national roads, motorways, etc.) will not be sufficient to ensure potential accessibility by transit traffic and if it would not be worthwhile to consider consistently increasing the potential accessibility in terms of isochrone for the inhabitants of the region's districts. Given the multifaceted nature of internal potential accessibility of the province by road, it should be considered whether or not to prioritise its increase — either by facilitating the transit of goods or by increasing spatial mobility of the inhabitants of the region's peripheral districts. Synergy between these two directions would be possible if funds were targeted at enhancing the fleet and railway network enabling faster connection between peripheral districts and the Warsaw Metropolitan Zone. Nevertheless, it was decided not to finance railway infrastructure as part of RPO WM.

As far as the analysis of Axis 6 is concerned, the assessor recommended that allocated funds be transferred between specific Investment Priorities depending on identified risks. In particular, the assessor pointed to risks involved in implementing Investment Priority 8.10 *Active and healthy ageing* due to poor sustainability of preventive and rehabilitation programmes at which most of the funds were targeted. The assessor believes that concentrating allocated funds on preventive and rehabilitation programmes that will no longer be sustainable after the programming period is not a cost-effective solution. It was recommended that the amount of funds allocated for that Investment Priority be decreased. In line with this recommendation, in order to concentrate the intervention, the Managing Authority decided not to implement this investment priority and negotiate support for this area at the national level.

At the same time, the assessor pointed out that due to the key significance of maintaining employment at the time of economic slowdown and the need to control substitution effect to a greater extent than in the current programming period, it would be worthwhile to consider increasing the amount of funds allocated for Investment Priority 8.9. However, due to insufficient funds, it is not possible to increase the funds allocated for this priority. The Managing Authority increased the amount of funds, granting the second largest allocation for Investment Priority 8.9 as far as Thematic Objective 8 is concerned, which, according to the assessor, is within the capacity of the programme.

As far as Priority Axis 6 is concerned, the list of planned interventions eligible for implementation at the regional level under the dividing line is nearly exhaustive. Nevertheless, the results of assessment

⁵ Op. cit.

studies call into question the long-term employment effectiveness of self-employment subsidies (especially if risk factors have been identified) and the sustainability of subsidised jobs⁶.

The analysis of complementarity between types of intervention under specific Investment Priorities does not indicate a risk of fragmentation of allocated funds. Interventions to be supported permit the creation of complementary sets appropriate for a given category of target groups. All of them indirectly or directly contribute to the achievement of the long-term result, namely the increase of employment effectiveness.

The analysis showed the validity of decreasing the amount of funds allocated for certain types of intervention due to comprehensive support at the national level. The validity of implementing training projects targeted at the SMEs sector should be considered in terms of adaptability to changes, strategic management of change, etc. Actions to be undertaken under this priority at the national level may generate sufficient companies' demand for these services and ensure that the commercial market satisfies this demand in a way that does not entail direct EU support. The ex-ante evaluation of Priority Axis 7, *Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty*, shows that there is no alternative method of reconstructing the intervention logic of the Programme. As far as the Axis is concerned, an exhaustive set of types of intervention was applied from among the possibilities arising from the dividing line. The planned areas of action were established in a comprehensive and complementary manner that fully justifies the wide range of impact. The logic proposed in the project for the Programme offers the highest chance of creating synergies with the remaining Thematic Objectives of the European Social Fund. Due to the fact that the target value of strategic result indicators and product indicators was not specified in the assessed version of the Programme, it is difficult to fully analyse the alternative methods of implementing the intended objectives of Priority Axis 7, the reason being that it is impossible to estimate to what intended socio-economic change the planned interventions will lead.

Two specific objectives are implemented under Priority Axis 8, namely 'Increasing the accessibility and improving the quality of pre-primary education and general education' and 'Improving the quality of vocational training for young people and education and training for adults', which correspond to Investment Priorities 10.1 and 10.3. The planned interventions seem to accurately address the identified problems. Other types of actions that would also contribute to implementing the objectives of RPO WM 2014–2020 can of course be identified. For example, other types of intervention under Investment Priority 10.1 include, inter alia:

- support for foreign language teaching;
- reducing disparities in access to good-quality primary and secondary education through programmes targeted, inter alia, at pupils from rural areas who commute to school;
- actions to promote pre-primary education in communities where low participation in education is the result of awareness barriers;
- psychological and pedagogical care;
- developing social competences;
- actions to support children and young people returning to education after they left school early.

As far as Investment Priority 10.3 is concerned, the following could also be implemented:

- individual educational paths (inter alia, training vouchers) in the context of participation in the labour market;

⁶ Study of the effectiveness of achieving result indicators of the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital, PAG Uniconsult 2012

- promotion and development of lifelong learning training activities carried out using active methods (including e-learning);
- vocational courses, courses in professional skills, flexible forms of general and vocational education;
- dual system of education (theory and practice).

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the principle of thematic concentration, it is not recommended that new types of intervention be introduced as alternative actions do not result in the objectives being achieved more efficiently.

The assessor suggested limiting the number of planned actions, arguing that in view of the significant number of planned interventions (8), the relatively low — as far as the entire Priority Axis 8 is concerned — amount of funds allocated for Investment Priority 10.1 will be sufficient to extrapolate a relatively low amount of expenditure for specific types of projects. This was also the case with Investment Priority 10.3 (9 types of operations were planned), although the situation was less extreme. To sum up, the assessor suggested decreasing the number of planned actions (in particular under Investment Priority 10.1), which was taken into account by the Managing Authority.

II.4.3 Assessment of Proposed Forms of Support

24 investment priorities are to be implemented under the projected investment. In the case of 9 priorities, repayable financial instruments (loans and/or guarantees) are to be used for all or some kinds of projects that will be submitted by the beneficiaries. In line with the assessor's recommendations, the scope of application of financial instruments was significantly extended. Originally, Financial Engineering Instruments were to be used in 6 out of 28 investment priorities.

Obviously, it must be taken into account that this is only a tentative suggestion that will be modified after an ex-ante evaluation of financial instruments has been carried out pursuant to Article 32 of the general regulation.

Table 1. Assessment of proposed forms of support with regard to investment priorities

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Form of support	Assessment
1. Innovation and entrepreneurship	1. Support for research, technological development and innovation	1.1. enhancing R&I infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence and supporting centres of competence (...)	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		1.2. promoting business R&I investment and establishing cooperation networks between companies and research centres (...)	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied
	3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sector	3.1. promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new companies, taking account of business incubators	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied
		3.2. developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular for their internationalisation	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		3.4. increasing SMEs' capacity for growth and innovation	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Form of support	Assessment
2. Increasing Masovia's e-potential	2. Enhancing access to and use and quality of information and communication technologies	2.2. developing ICT products and services and e-commerce, and increasing the demand for ICT	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied
		2.3. strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
3. Shift towards a low-carbon economy	4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	4.1. promoting the production and distribution of renewable energy sources	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied
		4.3. supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in public infrastructures and the housing sector	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied
		4.5. promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of areas, in particular in urban areas, including support for sustainable urban transport and appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Form of support	Assessment
4. Society and environment friendly economy	5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	5.2. promoting investments that address specific risks and ensure natural disaster resilience and development of natural disaster management systems	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
	6. Protecting the environment and promoting effective resource utilisation	6.1. addressing significant needs for investment in the waste management sector to meet the requirements of EU law	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		6.2. addressing significant needs for investment in the water management sector to meet the requirements of EU law	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
	9. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty	9.1. investing in healthcare and social infrastructure with a view to contributing to national, regional and local development, reduction of inequalities in terms of health status, and transition from institutional to community-based services	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		9.2. supporting physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities	Non-refundable aid (subsidy); financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Form of support	Assessment
5. Development of a regional transport system	7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	7.2. enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
6. Labour market	8. Promoting employment and labour mobility	8.5. ensuring access to employment for jobseekers and inactive persons, including local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		8.7. self-employment, entrepreneurship and job creation	Financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied
		8.9. adaptation of staff, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change	Financial instrument, e.g. debt financing, hybrid instruments	The form of support was appropriately applied

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Form of support	Assessment
7. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty	9. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty	9.4. active integration, in particular to improve employability prospects	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		9.7. facilitating access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including healthcare and social services of general interest	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		9.8. supporting social economy and social enterprises	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
8. Education for the development of the region	10. Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning	10.1. reducing early school-leaving and ensuring equal access to good-quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied
		10.3. enhancing access to and supporting lifelong learning, improving the skills and qualifications of workforce and increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems, inter alia, by improving the quality of vocational education and training, and creating and developing systems of learning through work-based activities and apprenticeship, such as dual education systems	Non-refundable aid (subsidy)	The form of support was appropriately applied

Source: own work

During the evaluation of RPO WM 2014–2020, it was recommended that the scope of application of Financial Engineering Instruments be expanded in the following investment priorities:

a) Investment Priority 1.2 (promoting R&I investment, developing links between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education institutions, supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production in key technologies).

The priority is targeted at supporting SMEs conducting R&D work during the final — pre-implementation and implementation — stage. As far as this priority is concerned, we believe that repayable support may be granted at least for implementation work as⁷:

- Implemented projects are commercial in nature and will generate revenue (a new product) or savings (a decrease in costs),
- It is possible to estimate the risk involved in the projects at the implementation stage,
- The repayment mechanism will rationalise entrepreneurs' behaviour, minimising the risk of unjustified demand⁸,

We believe that technological credits granted by the National Economy Bank (commercial credits with a technological bonus for the repayment of capital instalments), which address very similar objectives (implementation of R&D results), also justify the application of repayable financial instruments. Expanding the support to include pre-implementation work (development work) would require combining repayable support with subsidies or introducing a bonus mechanism (as in the case of technological credits).

According to a conducted survey, entrepreneurs are interested both in the new programming period and in instruments other than subsidies and consider taking advantage of them. While 96 % of entrepreneurs who intend to apply for support for fostering innovation and developing entrepreneurship prefer subsidies (this form of support is the first choice), 57 % consider using repayable financial instruments⁹. It is also worth noting that 43 % of the 440 respondents taking part in the survey confirmed that they would be interested in participating in RPO WM 2014–2020 contests if forms of support would be combined, e.g. subsidies would be combined with loans/guarantees (the entrepreneurs responded 'yes' and 'probably yes').

b) Investment Priority 3.4 (increasing SMEs' capacity for growth and innovation).

The priority is targeted at business environment institutions and provides for, inter alia, support for the purchase of basic equipment. Collected data, in particular the review of mechanisms regulating the functioning of the sector of business environment institutions, show that:

- The application of repayable financial instruments with respect to business environment institutions is deemed to be justified at least on theoretical grounds as some of these

⁷ Cf. W. Załęski, K. Gurbiel, *Analiza możliwości zastosowania zwrotnych mechanizmów finansowania inwestycji w perspektywie 2014–2020 (Analysis of the Applicability of Repayable Investment Financing Mechanisms in the 2014–2020 Financial Perspective)* op. cit.

⁸ This rationalisation will involve limiting opportunistic behaviour, i.e. the use of subsidies to finance projects which entrepreneurs could finance entirely from their own funds. Cf. P. Tamowicz, M. Przybyłowski et al., 'Efekty w zakresie innowacyjności — badanie oddziaływania projektów zrealizowanych w ramach poddziałania 2.2.1 SPO WKP ('Innovation Effects — a Study of the Impact of Projects Implemented as part of Sub-Measure 2.2.1 of the Sectoral Operational Programme Increasing the Competitiveness of Enterprises)', IBC Group, Warsaw, December 2009.

⁹ Results of a survey of potential beneficiaries of RPO WM 2014–2020.

institutions (e.g. entrepreneurship parks, business incubators, training and consulting centres) provide services in return for payment, thus earning a relatively steady stream of revenue, which may be used to repay liabilities,

- The application of repayable financial instruments may entail the rationalisation of behaviour of business environment institutions (better use of resources, intensification of the sale of services). Nevertheless, such adjustments could result in a significant commercialisation of activities (e.g. increase in rent rates up to the market levels), rendering such an offer less accessible to, for example, start-up companies,
- Given the current way in which business environment institutions operate, including their dependence on subsidies¹⁰, and the fact that some of them (as a result of having access to subsidies) have in fact over-invested, these entities' actual demand for repayable financial instruments might be marginal (they might not be able to repay liabilities).

Since the draft RPO WM was amended as suggested, the assessor does not consider it necessary to formulate recommendations regarding the forms of support used in the programme.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the potential beneficiaries taking part in the survey were asked about the areas in which they intend to implement projects financed by RPO WM 2014–2020 and the forms of support they consider applying for under those projects. As more than one answer could be selected, below we provide the distribution of the first and second choices.

Table 2. Forms of support considered by potential beneficiaries

Areas of support	Subsidy		Loan		Guarantee		Capital entry		Other	
	1st choice	2nd choice	1st choice	2nd choice	1st choice	2nd choice	1st choice	2nd choice	1st choice	2nd choice
Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship	76 %	31 %	2 %	21 %	0 %	4 %	1 %	4 %	1 %	6 %
Improving the quality and increasing the accessibility of e-services for citizens	62 %	29 %	2 %	16 %	0 %	3 %	0 %	2 %	1 %	7 %
Increase in energy efficiency, use of renewable energy sources	60 %	28 %	2 %	17 %	0 %	2 %	1 %	2 %	2 %	7 %
Regeneration of urban areas	51 %	26 %	2 %	13 %	0 %	2 %	1 %	2 %	3 %	6 %
Development of a transport network	51 %	27 %	2 %	12 %	1 %	2 %	1 %	2 %	3 %	5 %
Environmental protection and rational use of resources	60 %	29 %	2 %	16 %	0 %	2 %	0 %	3 %	2 %	6 %
Increasing labour market participation and professional mobility	63 %	32 %	2 %	14 %	0 %	3 %	0 %	2 %	3 %	7 %

¹⁰ The annual report compiled by the Polish Business and Innovation Centres Association shows that as far as the annual budget is concerned, measures other than subsidies (i.e. provided by final consumers — e.g. income from rental or the sale of services) accounted for: 19.7 % of the (investment) budget (science and technology parks), 23 % of the budget (academic business incubators), 78.3 % of the budget (business incubators), 9.5 % of the budget (technology transfer centres) and 23.3 % of the budget (training and consulting centres). Cf. A. Bąkowski, M. Mażewska (editors), *Ośrodki Innowacji i Przedsiębiorczości w Polsce. Raport 2012 (Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centres in Poland. 2012 Report)*.

Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty	59 %	31 %	2 %	13 %	0 %	2 %	0 %	2 %	3 %	8 %
Increasing access to and participation in education	70 %	36 %	1 %	15 %	0 %	2 %	0 %	3 %	3 %	8 %

Source: Own work on the basis of a survey of potential beneficiaries of RPO WM 2014–2020

II.4.4 Assessment of the Expected Impact of Proposed Actions on the Achievement of Objectives

The estimate of the RPO WM 2014–2020 project indicates that specific actions to be implemented in the next financial perspective will have an adequate and optimal impact on the achievement of the programme's specific objectives.

The scope and nature of actions under RPO WM 2014–2020 covered by Priority Axis 1, 'Innovation and entrepreneurship', are primarily determined by identified problems faced by the Mazowieckie Province. These problems constitute significant barriers preventing the efficient growth of innovation in the region. The major barriers hindering the growth of innovation in Masovia are above all:

- inefficient use of the existing R&D infrastructure;
- low level of utilisation of enterprises' innovative R&D activity;
- adverse (unfavourable) economic conditions for using new ideas;
- low degree of internationalisation of business activity in the region;
- low interest of the economic sector in cooperation with the science sector.

Actions to be implemented under Investment Priority 1.1 will make Polish economy more innovative in the long term, which is reflected in the National Development Strategy 2020 and the Strategy for Innovative and Effective Economy 'Dynamic Poland 2020'. Thus, it may be concluded that investment activities aimed at 'Supporting research infrastructure in scientific centres' will make it possible to conduct research in scientific centres in a more efficient manner and subsequently implement it in the business sector, which should contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the region and — in the long term — boost economic growth, including the inhabitants' income. Increasing research and development activity in R&D centres that address entrepreneurs' needs fosters innovation and reduces economic disparities in the region. At the same time, it offers a chance for further development of R&D centres themselves by changing their perspective and rendering them more attuned to business expectations. This involves organisational changes, also within research institutes themselves, and the creation of spin-offs, i.e. undertakings focused strictly on the commercialisation of scientific knowledge and technologies, or special purpose entities. Furthermore, the promotion of centres' activities plays a significant role in strengthening them.

Actions aimed at promoting cooperation between R&D&I entities in order to make full use of the existing research infrastructure are consistent with the objectives of the National Development Strategy 2020 and the Strategy for Innovative and Effective Economy 'Dynamic Poland 2020'. Funds allocated for the promotion of regional research centres and R&D projects will constitute real support for creating conditions for research and the development of science (with a focus on developing patents and later implementation), strengthen the resources of higher education institutions and research institutions and help increase the number of implemented projects. In the long term, the effects of actions undertaken to strengthen the research capacity of higher education institutions and research centres foster innovation and competitiveness of regions and entire

economies, as evidenced by empirical studies.

Actions implemented under Investment Priority 1.2 will help build a formal framework for research centres functioning within enterprises and their financing so that they are able to conduct industrial and development research whose scope and subject matter correspond to the actual needs of the business sector. This will make it possible to create synergies and establish spin-offs, which cross the border between science and economy. Such actions will stimulate the growth of competitiveness, especially in the SMEs sector. The above will also foster innovations for growth [Rosenberg 2004, Wong 2005, Griffith et al. 2004], which are a prerequisite for effectively competing on the international market [Schwab 2010, Sala-i-Martin et al. 2009].

Increasing the R&D activity of scientific centres and enhancing cooperation with the business sector under Investment Priority 3.1 fosters the growth of innovation and reduces economic disparities. At the same time, it offers a chance for further development of R&D centres themselves, by changing their perspective and rendering them more attuned to business expectations. Furthermore, the promotion of centres' activities plays a significant role in strengthening them. The promotion and internationalisation of research offers a chance for research organisations to cooperate with foreign centres. Thus, we believe that the actions aimed at supporting scientific centres' activities and their cooperation with enterprises are valid and crucial to the growth of innovation in the region. Another investment activity under Investment Priority 3.1 is the creation of new infrastructure and the development of the existing one with a view to fostering economic development. This activity also covers clean-up and development of infrastructure for investment areas. Properly prepared investment areas trigger a strong impulse for growth, attracting both greenfield and brownfield investments.

Actions implemented under Investment Priority 3.2 are designed to address the persistent negative balance of foreign trade. Enterprises in Masovia are oriented towards the import of goods and services. The relatively low value of exports may suggest that Masovian enterprises are not actively seeking foreign trade partners, the products they offer do not sell on foreign markets and companies themselves do not take measures to reverse the trend. Given that high competitiveness on foreign markets is the result of, inter alia, the increasing share of a given country/region in total exports of a trade group [Bell 1995, Miozzo 2006], actions aimed at expanding export activities of Masovian companies are of key significance. These actions are so significant that they determine the growth of competitiveness and innovation of the entire region [Global Competitiveness Report 2012–2013. World Economic Forum]. The increasing share of domestic enterprises in foreign markets is a critical determinant of the growth of competitiveness, compelling enterprises to take innovative measures to gain comparative advantages [Using standards to support growth, competitiveness and innovation, Guidebook Series How to support SME Policy from Structural Funds, European Commission, 2012]. Support for R&D activities aimed at implementing and promoting innovative measures for enterprises is a prerequisite for speeding up the internationalisation process [Using standards to support growth, competitiveness and innovation, Guidebook Series How to support SME Policy from Structural Funds, European Commission, 2012]. Such actions are necessary given that low expenditure on development is frequently insufficient to generate actual and long-term benefits — both financial and non-financial — from export activities. It is also important that undertaking R&D actions increases the chance of improving the situation of companies that decide to expand into foreign markets. These actions are also consistent with the objectives of Priority Axis 1 and complement actions undertaken under Investment Priorities 1.1 and 1.2. Thus, they are deemed to be fully justified. The said actions are also consistent with the provisions of the 'Long-term Development Strategy — Poland 2030. The Third Wave of Modernity — strategic area: Economic Competitiveness and Innovation' and the 'National Regional Development Strategy 2010–

2020 — objective: Supporting the Growth of Competitiveness of Regions'.

The first major action undertaken under Investment Priority 3.4 is designed to support activities aimed at fostering cooperation between administrative, scientific and business institutions so that institutions providing consulting and training services foster the growth of competitiveness. Studies [Amoros 2009, Sobel 2008, Baumol 2002] show that high-quality institutions contribute to the growth of entrepreneurship by creating favourable conditions for setting up new companies, conducting business activities and establishing cooperation. Furthermore, business environment institutions serve as important intermediaries in the transfer of innovation and knowledge, and provide information and substantive support to entrepreneurs. With the benefit of professional consulting services, enterprises are able to expand their activities, tap new markets or acquire new business partners. The above is particularly important in emerging countries and countries in economic transition, where high-quality enterprise support institutions have yet to emerge and entrepreneurs themselves have yet to attain an appropriate level of social capital and knowledge that would enable them to take full advantage of the existing opportunities offered by the free market. Support for the development of clusters, business environment institutions and formal structures fostering cooperation between institutions and enterprises determines the growth of competitiveness and innovation of the region [this is consistent with the main objectives of Priority Axis 1].

Implementation of Thematic Objective 2 is deemed to be strategically important for implementing the remaining objectives of RPO WM as high level of implementation and use of information and communication technologies in economy and state administration may contribute, for example, to increasing the competitiveness of the region and improving the quality of life of its inhabitants. Results of numerous empirical studies conducted with respect to both the micro-economic and macro-economic level [Electronic and Mobile Commerce reports, OECD 2013; Ensuring the Global Participation in the Internet Economy for Development, OECD 2013; Information and Communication Technologies and Productivity Growth, OECD 2012] point to the above-mentioned links between the level of implementation and use of ICT in the private and public sector as well as by individuals and a higher level of innovation (cf. Priority Axis 1), competitiveness and economic activity. It has been demonstrated that there is a positive and statistically significant link between the level of ICT implementation in economy and the level of GDP per capita, which is clearly reflected in the standard and quality of living of inhabitants [Information and Communication Technologies and Productivity Growth, OECD 2012]. The scope and nature of actions under RPO WM 2014–2020 covered by Priority Axis 2, 'Increasing Masovia's e-potential', are primarily determined by identified problems faced by the Mazowieckie Province. These problems constitute significant barriers preventing the efficient development of an economy based on state-of-the-art information and communication technologies, and the creation of an information society in the region [Webster 2007; OECD Internet Economy Outlook, OECD 2013, The Development and Diffusion of Digital Content, OECD 2013]. The major barriers hindering the creation of an information society based on high use of ICT in Masovia's economy and state administration are above all: high saturation of Masovian companies with basic ICT infrastructure coupled with a very low level of utilisation of advanced ICT solutions, in particular ERP (enterprise resource planning) and CRM (customer relationship management) systems as well as online sales channels (Problem 1), and inadequate level of e-services provided by public institutions, as illustrated by the low level of development of e-education, e-medicine (e-health) and e-administration. More widespread use of ICT in business will significantly speed up the economic activity of already existing companies and facilitate the search for new markets and business partners. All of the above will contribute to increasing the added value generated in the region.

Actions implemented under Priority Axis 3 will affect several areas of the region's economy.

Investment Priority 4.1 aims to increase the share of renewable energy sources in the province's energy mix, which will result in savings in ecological and energy resources. Indirect results of this action include, inter alia, an increase in energy security and the creation of new jobs. Actions undertaken under Investment Priority 4.3 will contribute to the reduction of heat and electricity consumption, which will generate financial savings. Actions implemented under Investment Priority 4.5 will contribute to the reduction of the adverse environmental impact of urban transport, furnaces and boilers. The shift towards a low-carbon economy and the resultant reduction in the emissions of greenhouse gases and other substances is regarded as a key step towards both environmental stability and long-term sustainable development. Actions undertaken to implement climate policy targets, in particular the reduction in the emissions of greenhouse gases and other substances introduced into the atmosphere need not entail an economic slowdown and will foster economic growth in the long term. Environmental protection projects may support economic growth, inter alia, by improving resource and energy efficiency and fostering technological innovation. The projects offer the opportunity to gain competitive advantage on international markets and contribute to the diversification of energy sources and energy generation methods, inter alia, by increasing the share of renewable energy sources, which will increase the security of energy supply. These actions will contribute to the achievement of the targets of the Climate and Energy Package by 2020 and improve air quality in areas where the permissible concentration levels in the atmosphere were exceeded.

Priority Axis 4, *Society and environment friendly economy*, is deemed to have a significant impact on the country's socio-economic situation. Actions aimed at preventing floods and droughts protect both the agricultural economy and the production economy against the adverse effects of such disasters. Actions designed to address the inadequate level of natural and artificial retention and poor condition of equipment may help reduce potential economic losses.

Improving the waste management system, water and sewage infrastructure and the healthcare system will improve the quality of life of the province's inhabitants. Actions aimed at regeneration, which will address social, economic and spatial problems, and improve the living conditions, will have the greatest impact on the socio-economic situation.

Priority Axis 5, *Development of a regional transport system*, will also stimulate the socio-economic development of the region and bring significant additional results at the local level. This is particularly important as modern road infrastructure at this level is a prerequisite for economic development¹¹. Although the economic effect varies from industry to industry (it is the strongest in the warehouse and logistics industry and much weaker when it comes to production)¹², the newly built road infrastructure will lead to industrial and manufacturing plants, which generate new jobs, being constructed along the roads¹³. Shortening the length of time necessary to get to work usually contributes to the reduction of the rate of depopulation of areas located away from development centres and fosters labour mobility.

¹¹ Button K., 1998, *Infrastructure Investment, Endogenous Growth and Economic Convergence*, The Annals of Regional Science, 35, p. 142–162.

¹² Komornicki T., 2007a, *Rola infrastruktury transportowej w rozwoju kraju — wyzwania wobec kohezji przestrzennej* (The Role of Transport Infrastructure in the Development of the Country — Challenges for Spatial Cohesion), [in:] T. Markowski, A. Stasiak (editors), *Rola polskiej przestrzeni w integrującej się Europie* (The Role of Polish Space in Integrating Europe), Bulletin of the Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning, Polish Academy of Sciences, 233, Warsaw, p. 63–86.

¹³ Krugman P., 1999, *Development, Geography, and Economic Theory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge—Massachusetts—London.

The impact of the intervention under Priority Axis 6, *Labour market development*, on the socio-economic development is not clear-cut as potential negative effects can be identified. In line with a new growth theory which holds that human capital is a production factor (E. Lucas (1988, 1990); R. Baro, X. Sala-i-Martin (1991)) and dual labour market theories (P. Doeringer and M. Piore (1980)), labour market instruments provided for in the RPO WM 2014–2020 project will help increase the qualifications of homeless persons and better adjust supply and demand on the regional labour market to ensure the maintenance of employment. Actions to be implemented under Investment Priority 8.5 will help increase the flexibility of employment services, reduce the scale of long-term unemployment, with particular focus on disadvantaged groups, and foster labour mobility with a view to adjusting supply and demand on the labour market. As part of the interventions implemented under Investment Priority 9.7, training and consulting tools and repayable financial instruments will be applied to foster the creation of sustainable micro-enterprises generating economic growth. Actions to be implemented under Investment Priority 8.9 will prevent the increase in unemployment by preventing job cuts. Furthermore, they will increase — also in the long term — enterprises' capacity to adapt, thereby increasing their sustainability and employment stability.

Interventions under Priority Axis 6 may have a negative impact in the case of subsidies for companies targeted at representatives of disadvantaged groups. Experience gained during the current programming period shows that the employment effectiveness of this form of support is marginal¹⁴. It must be assumed that these actions will not bring any real improvements. On the contrary, they will create artefacts and disturbances on the labour market. Employment subsidies and support for apprenticeships and internships may bring a similar effect. It may be argued that the lack of effectiveness of these forms of support in the current programming period was coupled with the distortion of competition on the labour market and a strong substitution effect. Thus, the impact of the above-mentioned areas of support on the situation on the labour market in Masovia will depend on the selectivity of the criteria for granting subsidies based on forecasts regarding micro-enterprises' survival also after the expiry of the sustainability period required by the application for funding.

Actions to be implemented under Priority Axis 7, *Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty*, primarily affect the social development of the region. They indirectly contribute to the economic growth by preventing social exclusion, generating new jobs in social economy enterprises, developing the social services sector and preparing social assistance clients for professional activation. Through the implementation of comprehensive projects, also aimed at families, interventions undertaken under Priority Axis 7 will prevent intergenerational transmission of poverty and the spread of pathologies according to the theory of cultural geography [Andolina et al. 2005], [Radcliffe 2006a].

Interventions under Investment Priority 9.4 directly improve the employability of persons at risk of social exclusion. They also improve human capital. Early detection of the risk of social exclusion and early prevention of relative material deprivation or low work intensity are prerequisites for social inclusion. Persons and families that are long-term unemployed, poor and dependent on social assistance lose the ability to cope, sink into passivity and learnt helplessness. The early prevention system increases the chance of social reintegration¹⁵. Crucially, actions undertaken under Investment

¹⁴PAG Uniconsult, *Badanie osiągniętych wartości wskaźników rezultatu komponentu regionalnego PO KL (Study of the Effectiveness of Achieving Result Indicators of the Regional Component of the Operational Programme Human Capital)*, August 2012.

¹⁵Charles Gore, Jose B. Figueiredo – International Institute for Labour Studies. *Social exclusion and anti-poverty policy*.

Priority 9.7 are designed to address the problems of lonely older or disabled members of a migrant society or the risk of social exclusion of persons taking care of dependent family members, who are forced to work part-time. There can be no doubt that alternative forms of care improve the employability of members of families that include a person with a disability. In accordance with the theory of social economy [Sachs 2009] and theory of economic sociology [Granovetter 1985], PES support provided under Investment Priority 9.8 generates economic growth in areas unattractive to capital based on competition and profit maximisation.

Implementation of Thematic Objective 10 is deemed to be particularly important for implementing the remaining objectives of RPO WM 2014–2020 as primary school, junior high school and secondary school education generates young staff that ensure a high level of scientific research and resultant innovations in the future. As was repeatedly stressed, the above is a prerequisite for, for example, increasing the competitiveness of the region or implementing modern information and communication technologies. Education is crucial to economic development. Firstly, it increases staff productivity. Secondly, it makes it possible to take part in the international exchange of knowledge and modern technologies [cf. e.g. Vandenbussche, Aghion, Meghir]. Thirdly, it creates an environment conducive to innovative research.

As early as 1992, Mankiw, Romer and Weil highlighted the key importance of human capital (an essential component of which is education) to growth when introducing modifications to the Solow model. The conducted study shows that enrolment ratio has a significant positive impact on the level of GDP per capita [Mankiw, Romer, Weil 1992]. Also the renowned Lucas model suggests that the joint accumulation of physical and human capital ensures sustainable economic growth. Finally, even if one pragmatically assumes that economic development is based mainly on technical advances, the rate of technical progress depends on the level of human capital (mainly on the number of highly qualified staff) employed in the R&D&I sector, where new technologies are developed [Romer 1990].

II.4.5 Assessment of the Consistency of the Budget Allocation with the Objectives

The proposed distribution of financial resources between specific thematic objectives is consistent with proposals for regulations on the implementation of EU funds¹⁶. However, the minimum allocations for specific thematic objectives set out for Masovia in the Partnership Agreement should be negotiated.

Above all, it is recommended that the amount of funds allocated for Thematic Objective 5 be increased. Taking into account the adopted dividing line, the increase in the amount of funds allocated for Thematic Objective 4 with respect to the amount proposed in the Partnership Agreement is justified.

The allocation for technical assistance under RPO WM 2014–2020 complies with the guidelines for the maximum ceiling for this objective (3.5 % of the allocation)¹⁷. In line with the requirements, the

¹⁶Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (proposal) and Regulation on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 (proposal).

¹⁷ *Template for the Operational Programme 2014–2020 in Poland with comments* — final, Ministry of Regional

entire amount comes from the European Social Fund.

Also the obligation to allocate at least 80 % of ESF resources for a maximum of four investment priorities¹⁸ was met. As far as RPO WM 2014–2020 is concerned, the four largest allocations for investment priorities (Investment Priorities 8.5, 9.4, 10.1 and 10.3) comply with the ring-fencing requirements set out in the proposal for the Regulation on the European Social Fund (Article 4(3)(a))¹⁹. However, it should be pointed out that after allocations compliant with the ring-fencing requirements are granted, only limited funds remain for the other Investment Priorities (around EUR 35 million for four Investment Priorities under two Thematic Objectives). Given that work related to the preparation of the implementation system is not in line with the potential effects, which will be marginal at the regional level if funds are spread too thinly, we suggest that these funds be concentrated.

The allocation reflects the order of importance of the specific objectives, i.e. the prioritisation of the objectives according to the region's development needs. The analysis of the consistency of the allocations with the specific objectives was carried out during the participatory evaluation. The analysis was described in the chapter on the alternative methods of achieving objectives. Arguments were provided for the necessity of increasing the amount of funds allocated for specific types of intervention, which had to happen at the expense of other actions. After considering those proposals, the Mazowieckie Province Government decided to change the allocations, in particular those granted under Priority Axes 4 and 7.

II.4.6 Assessment of the Integrated Approach to Socio-Economic Development

In view of the need to apply the integrated territorial approach in strategic documents, it was assessed if the territorial approach had been applied as part of RPO WM. The analysis was based on the following criteria:

- Explaining the purpose and manner in which the territorial approach was applied in the RPO project;
- Basing RPO on a territory-based diagnosis;
- Applying the mechanism of territorial diversification of objectives and intensity of undertaken actions adapted to spatial diversities identified in the diagnosis;
- Applying place-based instruments of dialogue such as ITI or CLLD and other forms of local and subregional partnership;
- Ensuring vertical and horizontal coordination when implementing RPO, taking account of the territorial and integrated approach requirement;
- Ensuring the monitoring of attained results in terms of the territorial approach.

We believe that the purpose and manner in which the territorial approach had been applied in the Programme was correctly and exhaustively explained. Three main results of applying the territorial approach were specified in the RPO WM project as added value to the thematic approach. The

Development, 2013, p. 20.

¹⁸ *Programowanie perspektywy finansowej 2014–2020 — Umowa Partnerstwa (Programming for the Financial Perspective 2014–2020 — Partnership Agreement)*, Ministry of Regional Development, October 2013, p. 100.

¹⁹ In the case of more developed regions, Member States allocate 80 % of ESF resources for each operational programme for a maximum of four investment priorities specified in Article 3(1) of the Regulation on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 (proposal).

integrated territorial approach is applied with a view to achieving territorial cohesion and spatial integration of public intervention, and to establishing a better basis for concentrating actions (optimising actions in space) through the analysis of the spatial distribution of attained results and adaptation of actions to territorial potentials. The assessor suggested adding an operational definition of territorial cohesion, which was included in RPO WM during the elaboration stage²⁰.

Another assessment criterion was basing RPO on a territory-based diagnosis. Based on the contents of Chapter 4, it could be concluded that the territorial approach was taken into account at the programming stage. The description in that section of the Programme shows that the thematic (sector) approach and spatial approach were combined in a well-thought-out and correct way.

As regards the application of the mechanism of territorial diversification of objectives and intensity of undertaken actions adapted to spatial diversities identified in the diagnosis, it should be pointed out that the RPO WM project includes a reference to the development strategy for the province, which sets out strategic intervention areas. All the strategic intervention areas set out in the strategy were taken into account in RPO WM, which will make it possible to take better advantage of RPO WM to achieve the strategic objectives of the region. When assessing place-based instruments of dialogue such as ITI or CLLD and other forms of local and subregional partnership, it should be borne in mind that ITI, RTI and partnership projects are to be applied. While Community-Led Local Development will not be applied, Partnership Projects are planned in RPO WM. This mechanism involves local communities in a flexible manner that allows them to contribute to solving identified problems. Partnership projects are to be promoted by awarding additional points at the assessment stage or by announcing dedicated contests.

The application of ITI and RTI in RPO is deemed to be justified and the integration in the thematic approach is deemed to be appropriate. However, as in the case of the diagnosis, the provisions of Chapter 4 are not reflected in the strategy and the description of priority axes. Apart from Chapter 4, the concept of ITI appears only in reference to technical assistance, reserves and the implementation system. The analysed material is not comprehensive enough to conduct a thorough assessment of ITI in terms of substance and administrative (implementation) aspects. We suggest that after the ITI Strategy is submitted, actions and sub-actions aimed at ITI as part of specific priority axes be specified. The analysis of the Programme showed that vertical and horizontal coordination that takes account of the territorial and integrated approach requirement will not be ensured when implementing RPO. A routine mechanism usually applied in regional operational programmes was ensured. As far as ensuring the monitoring of attained results in terms of the territorial approach, Chapter 4 of RPO WM gives due attention to the issues of monitoring the results of the territorial approach. Indicators for specific results in the territorial approach were not defined. From the provisions of RPO WM, it follows that non-formalised qualitative assessments (based on tacit

²⁰ No single operational definition of territorial cohesion has been adopted. As a rule, such a definition should be agreed upon by all interested partners. The 'Baltic' definition seems to be the most appropriate one for the purposes of RPO WM. The definition, which was drawn up using the objectives of the Baltic spatial policy, is presented below:

Territorial cohesion was defined as 'an overarching (macro) goal of different types of policies, prompting them to support an integrated territorial development' *ESPON (2013), Territorial Monitoring for the Baltic Sea Region. Draft Final Report | Version 30/06/2013. Part B. Scientific Platform and Tools Project 2013/3/9*. In this case, integrated approach means joint assessment of the impact of these different policies in the Baltic Region and the need for their horizontal and vertical harmonisation. The aim of thus understood integration of policies is the achievement of partial objectives relating to the state of the territory, which were agreed in strategic documents for the Baltic Region.

knowledge) and supervision of the Managing Authority involved will be applied rather than a systematic quantitative measurement relating to objectives and milestones.

II.5 Assessment of the Monitoring System and Evaluation of the Operational Programme (OP)

The monitoring system should provide data on programme implementation progress and show the degree to which the set objectives have been achieved. This information should contribute to efficient programme implementation. Progress tracking will enable quick identification of those areas that require additional support.

II.5.1 Evaluation of Indicators

While summing up the evaluation of indicators, it is important to stress that the selection of indicators has been simplified to a large extent thanks to the introduction of the Common List of Key Indicators (CLKI). The list eliminates some potential weak points of monitoring systems such as, for example, the problem of non-measurable indicators, but it also has some significant limitations, for example the issue of selecting indicators appropriate for the activities performed.

Since the product indicators proposed for the consecutive investment priorities are supposed to be based on the indicators from the Common List of Key Indicators (CLKI), their evaluation from the point of view of transparency, statistical credibility, aggregateness, accessibility, and robustness is no longer justified in our opinion. The evaluation of indicators was therefore supplemented by an analysis of the appropriateness of the proposed indicators taking into account the intervention logic.

Indicators of Priority Axis 1 have been well thought out, are adequate and enable the measurement of specific objectives' realisation. In the course of this analysis, it was proposed that many of the indicators inappropriate for the type of intervention be changed, e.g. we suggested the removal of *Enterprises which co-operated on the innovation project* in IP 1.1 as the indicator used to measure Specific Objective 1: Support for regional research infrastructure. This indicator was removed in the course of further work on the RPO WM project. In IP 1.1, we suggested the addition of the indicator *The number of R&D projects implemented using the funded infrastructure*, which is logically connected to the product indicator *The number of scientific units with R&D infrastructure funding*. Ultimately, the *Investment in research and development activities* indicator was approved. At the same time, product and direct result indicators were supplemented with: *Number of R&D projects executed thanks to the aid*.

The selection of indicators for Priority Axis 2 has been performed diligently, in accordance with the logic of the proposed investment priorities and on the basis of available data sources. Both investment priorities have assigned to them appropriate strategic result, product and direct result indicators, which enable the measurement of progress in implementing the most important activities under Priority Axis 2.

The selection of indicators for Priority Axis 3 has been performed correctly, but we would like to draw attention to some issues in this context. The (two) IP 4.1 strategic indicators are different than those proposed in the Partnership Agreement. These are: *Production of electric power and heat*

energy from renewable energy sources [GWh] and *Power generated by installations from renewable energy sources* (power and heat energy) [MW]. The base value for the first indicator has been determined, but this still needs to be done in case of the latter indicator. The strategic result indicators proposed for IP 4.1 are logically connected to the corresponding indicator listed in the Partnership Agreement — *Share of energy from renewable sources in the gross final energy consumption* [%].

The strategic indicators for IP 4.3 and IP 4.5 have been determined in an identical manner — the indicator *Total greenhouse gas emissions in carbon dioxide equivalent* [thousands of tonnes] corresponds to the one proposed in the Partnership Agreement. National statistics provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) were used as the source of data. The base value for this indicator should be provided.

Four product and direct result indicators were selected for IP 4.1. Two of them (direct result indicators) are consistent with the Common List of Key Indicators (CLKI), and these are common European indicators, while the other two (product indicators) are own indicators which sum up the values of the appropriate CLKI ones. The indicators have been selected in accordance with the intervention logic and they should help determine if all the product and results have been executed correctly for all types of interventions envisaged under the investment priority. The expert method of estimating target values of the result indicator *Estimated reduction in the greenhouse gas emission* for all types of interventions to be undertaken under Priority Axis 3 has been passed on to the RPO WM Managing Authority (MA) during the consulting meetings.

The system of indicators for Priority Axis 5 was deemed to be complete. Product indicators have been assigned to all types of interventions. The indicators are adequate — there is a correlation between the types of interventions undertaken and the expected product indicators. The product indicators measure progress in the change expressed by the strategic result indicator.

The system of indicators for Priority Axis 6 is also complete. The indicators cover all types of interventions and are adequate. The product indicators measure progress in the change expressed by the delayed result indicator. Exceptions to this are the product indicators *Number of micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises covered by the aid in the programme* and *Number of persons covered by medical prevention and rehabilitation programmes*.

The system of indicators for Priority Axis 7 was deemed to be complete. Product indicators have been assigned to all types of interventions. There exists a correlation between the types of interventions undertaken and the expected product indicators.

The problem identified in Priority Axis 8, IP 10.1 is the absence of any direct result indicator. Therefore, the Axis 8 system of indicators cannot be deemed complete. It is a fact, however, that education is an area where the use of such indicators is very problematic, as evidenced by CLKI in Thematic Objective (TO) 10.

II.5.2 Assessment of the Target Values for Indicators

The target values for monitoring indicators on the ERDF-financed axes can be deemed realistic given the assumptions made. We have to point out some issues involving the used target values that may result in these not being met or being greatly exceeded.

For IP 1.1, the indicator *Number of R&D projects executed thanks to the aid* was approved in Priority Axis 1. The target value of this indicator is very dependent on the structure of allocation between the competition and key projects, where the average cost differs by an order of magnitude (PLN 3 m versus PLN 31 m). As a result, taking into account the allocated funds, which amount to EUR 174 m, the target value assumed is equal to 23 key and 6 competition projects implemented. However, a reduction of the competition projects by just 1 (literally one, sic!), results in an increase of the target value by 10 projects. This means that, in practice, the target value may be achieved by giving up on individual key projects and replacing them with competition projects. In this context, we do not see any threat to the achievement of this target value. Due to the fact that the assessed document does not contain a list of the key projects, the assessor could not remark on their probable number. Hence, we would like to draw attention to the fact that, for example, the reduction of key projects by 3 results in doubling the target value.

We do not see any risk to achievement of the target values for indicators under Priority Axis 2. However, in our opinion, the unit costs are overestimated in most cases, which may result in the target values being exceeded. In our opinion, the unit cost has been significantly overestimated for the indicator *Number of ICT systems implemented in public institutions*.

In Priority Axis 3, the IP 4.1 indicator *Additional renewable energy production capacity [MW] (CI)* is noteworthy. The target value for this indicator may be deemed safe due to the fact that the ultimate increase in production capacity will be largely dependent on the structure of RES, which will be the financed area. In the context of the fact that the assumed differences in unit cost for the different RES types, and assumed structure, amount to nearly seven times that amount, the achievement of this target value does not raise any doubts. At the same time, one should take into account the possibility that costs of energy production from RES will go down significantly in the future (even if we only base this assumption on the changes that took place in recent years). As a result, the set value could be significantly exceeded.

The proposed system of indicators for Priority Axis 4 includes product and strategic result indicators. Indicators that will be used for the execution framework were also selected. The data used for estimating the target values of indicators were based on the data from the previous financial perspective. The absence of a Master Plan for the Vistula river basin is the main risk associated with achievement of the target values for low retention and amelioration. The investments planned in connection with low retention and amelioration should be covered by this planning document, which was commissioned by National Water Management Authority (KZGW) and should be approved in December 2015. According to the *Template of the programme project...*, indicators used for the execution framework should, in principle, be selected from the indicators used for monitoring the priority axis²¹. It was proposed that the milestones indicator be adopted for IP 9.2. *Number of revitalisation projects*. The target value of the current milestones indicator *Value of projects to be*

²¹ Cf. Template for the operational programme project, Ministry of Regional Development (MRR), September 2013, p. 15.

executed under the Local Revitalisation Programmes [EUR million] does not correspond to the target value of the indicator *Number of revitalisation projects*, where the average cost of one indicator unit was set at EUR 3.2 m, and therefore the target value for 5 projects would be EUR 16.1 m, which is a realistic value if EUR 15 m were allocated to the IP. However, the target value of the product indicator for IP 9.2: *Value of projects to be executed under the Local Revitalisation Programmes* [EUR million] is 0.47 (i.e. EUR 470 000).

The target values of product indicators for Thematic Objective 7 are deemed realistic and risk-free. The adoption of a system for project execution without competition and treating the planned investments as strategic will eliminate risks associated with the current programming period — lengthy procedures for selecting contractors, undertaking being too big for the beneficiaries and risks associated with ensuring permanent effects of the investment. Taking into account the fact that the time-consuming procedures of purchasing land for the planned new road construction investments have already been dealt with, and the investments do not affect any sensitive areas in the Warsaw Metropolitan Zone (WMZ), the risk associated with initiating this new road investment is deemed to be optimised. The average cost for the indicator takes into account risks associated with the fact that the cost of this investment may be considered so significant at the current programming stage that the contractors will not do an honest job.

The target values on the ESF-financed axes require supplementing.

II.5.3 Assessment of the Execution Framework

The product indicators selected for the priority axes execution framework should have the intermediate values (milestones) determined for 2018. The basic selection criterion is the close reference to the scope of the planned intervention. They should also be selected from among the monitoring indicators for the given priority axis.

Taking into account the above criteria, the selection of indicators does not really seem problematic. Two indicators have been selected for Priority Axis 1 — *Number of enterprises receiving aid* and *Number of R&D projects executed thanks to the aid*. The indicators are adequate for most of the activities performed under Axis 1. The indicator for the number of enterprises receiving aid is risk-free, because the Managing Authority (MA) has great influence on making sure the target value for this indicator is achieved. Additionally, the value of this indicator for 2018, taking into account the amount of allocated funds, can be determined quite accurately. On the other hand, the value of indicators for R&D projects executed thanks to the aid is much more difficult to determine, which we have already mentioned in the previous subchapter.

In the case of Priority Axis 2, the number of indicators was limited as a result of consultations with the assessor. Two indicators have been tentatively selected for the execution framework: *Number of public services accessible on-line with advancement level 3 — two-way interaction* [units] and *Number of public services accessible on-line with advancement level at least 4 — transaction* [units], however, due to the fact that these indicators are similar, one was finally selected, and it covers most of the executed activities. Their value in 2018 can be determined quite precisely, however they are to a large extent dependent on external factors that the Managing Authority (MA) has relatively little influence over. 2 indicators have been selected for Axis 3 — *Additional renewable energy production capacity* [MW] (CI) and *Number of projects that contribute to increasing energy efficiency of buildings*, which we consider to be appropriate.

The following indicators have been introduced for Priority Axis 4: for IP 6.1, *Processing capacity of a waste management plant* [Mg/annum]; for IP 6.2, *The length of constructed, extended or modernised sewage system* [km]; for IP 9.2, *Number of revitalisation projects*. These covered 58 % of funds allocated to the priority axis, and hence the requirement of covering a representative share of the axis was fulfilled, i.e. the indicators cover the results of most interventions undertaken for this priority axis.

The selection of indicators for Axis 5 execution framework is also acceptable; the indicators cover most activities planned under Axis 5, they are measurable, and their target value has been estimated correctly.

Justification for the selection of indicators for Priority Axes 6, 7 and 8 has been presented for the purpose of assessing the execution framework. This justification is acceptable.

II.5.4 Assessment of the Proposed Monitoring and Evaluation System

The monitoring and evaluation system for RPO WM has been described in general; it does, however, take into account the most important elements.

In accordance with the assessed RPO WM project, the programmed monitoring system RPO WM 2014–2020 will be the main source of information on the progress of programme implementation for the Managing Authority (MA). This system will allow for, among others, processing of data according to selected criteria and current control of the execution values of indicators, as well as financial management of payments and certification of expenditure. It was assumed that the measurement of the indicators at all monitoring levels will be conducted on the basis of data provided by the beneficiaries — with the exception of indicators that sum up the number or value of contracts, and data from assessment studies/analysis/statistical sources. The chapter on evaluation system provides the following basic information:

- method of performing the evaluation (by experts independent of the entities responsible for implementing RPO WM, who will co-operate with the evaluation unit separated specifically for this purpose from the Managing Authority (MA),
- main objectives of the assessment study, including a description of how the results will later be used,
- scope of the main assessment studies performed in connection with the proposal for a general regulation.

Hence, the recommendations listed in the *Template...* for this part of the operational programme have been fulfilled. The concept for the assessment plan has been presented in Annex 3.

II.5.5 The Sources of Data and Methods of Data Generation, and ways of Ensuring the High Quality of this Data

The RPO WM project contains a description of an IT system that will fulfil the EC requirements regarding compulsory data registration and storage for each project, with access provided to a system for accounting, storage and transmission of financial data and data on indicators for the purpose of project monitoring and reporting, and maintenance of the computer system that will be

used for any communication between the beneficiary and the relevant institutions (only by electronic means). The Ministry of Regional Development will be responsible for building the system for data collection and storage. Most issues will have to be addressed while developing the implementation documentation based on the specifications which are to be prepared at the national level.

In order to ensure the high quality of data and current monitoring of Programme implementation progress, it is recommended that a special unit is established to deal with the templates for indicator analysis and their periodic publication. Additionally, this unit would also be responsible for maintenance of the IT systems, data generation and processing — also on behalf of other departments. Such published analysis would facilitate decisions that need to be made about organising competitions, their criteria, and current monitoring of the concluded agreements. This is also important from the perspective of the Ministry of Regional Development and the European Commission, as the Managing Authority (MA) of RPO WM is accountable to these institutions for Programme implementation.

II.5.6 Access to Data required for the Effective Execution of the Assessment Studies

It is particularly important to ensure that measures are undertaken to provide timely access to relevant data due to the reporting requirements, among others, the obligation to submit annual programme implementation reports to the EC that include financial data, general and programme specific, indicators and quantified target values.

Taking into account the fact that in the future fund programming period, much more emphasis will be placed on support results and the resulting requirement to measure these results, it is recommended that studies based on counterfactual methods are used. Therefore, it needs to be ensured that data bases used for monitoring can be combined with public statistics, which will give a background reference for the changes underway. It is particularly important to gain access to those entities that did not receive funding. This, however, is an element that should be taken into account while preparing the implementation documentation.

The sources, methods of data collection and ways of ensuring high quality of this data have been proposed by the assessor in the initial concept of the assessment process (Annex 5). These activities include, among others: the need to maintain close factual co-operation with key institutions involved in the assessment process at the regional and national levels (ROT, KOT, GUS, KJE), better co-ordination of the assessment studies conducted by external institutions, and introduction of effective technical solutions (under the local IT system, among others). The proposed solutions will be the starting point for mapping of these processes at the regional level.

II.5.7 Human Resources and Institutional Potential, Monitoring and Evaluation System

Taking into account that, in accordance with Article 44 of CPR, the Managing Authority is obliged to submit annual reports on the most important results of the assessments and progress of scheduled assessment studies, including implemented recommendations, adequate human resources need to be assigned so that apart from current programming these new tasks can also be performed.

The RPO WM project contains the tasks of the monitoring committee and the role of the Managing Authority (MA) as the institution responsible for effectively managing the reporting process. The

scope of reports submitted to the EC and the reporting schedule, imposed under the general regulation, have also been described there. It also contains information about the monitoring and reporting activities at all institutional levels of project implementation (i.e. the beneficiary, the Managing Authority or another institution entrusted with these responsibilities by the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee).

The following are the main risks and barriers associated with the effective execution of monitoring and evaluation processes:

- it's impossible to perform counter-factual studies, because there is practically no access to entities that could act as a benchmark for the changes brought about as a result of the aid;
- imperfect IT system (which the KSI SIMIK is a good example of);
- absence of descriptions of data bases generated by the systems used to collect data from beneficiaries;
- beneficiaries do not fully comprehend how the indicator values are to be reported;
- the assessors are not fully independent from the people contracting their assessor services.

Efforts aimed at reducing these barriers will be undertaken mainly by the public administration.

II.6 Assessment of the Planned Conditions for Implementing the Programme

In this part of the study, the assessor's main task was to assess the administrative capacity, including human resource capacities, of institutions involved in the management and implementation of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province for the period 2007–2013 and the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital.

II.6.1 Assessment of the Adequacy of Human Resource Capacities and Administrative Capacity

In order to efficiently prepare for the next programming period, the best solution seems to be adjusting the already existing structures for the purpose of implementing funds in the 2014–2020 financial perspective. This solution should allow for efficient implementation of funds (i.e. shorten the time required to develop procedures, structures, etc.) and use of human, organisational and communication resources developed in the current perspective.

Thus, the institutional system of RPO WM 2014–2020 should make the maximum use of the human, organisational and communication resources developed in the current perspective. This solution is recommended due to:

1. Extensive experience gained by specific units when implementing ESF and ERDF. Nevertheless, in the context of the new financial perspective, differences between implementing support as part of RPO and the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital are at the same time a risk. The differences are due not only to the distinct scope and nature of projects (infrastructure projects versus soft projects) but also to distinct approaches to implementation and settlement. Thus, it will be necessary to

combine the knowledge and experience gained when implementing both funds and develop procedures that will be clear to beneficiaries who take advantage of resources from both funds as part of a single programme (RPO).

2. Highly experienced staff in specific units — experience both in the handling of applications and in technical aspects. Low turnover of staff is the strength of the management system of RPO 2007–2013 and the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital. Data on the outflow of staff involved in regional operational programmes show that the RPO of the Mazowieckie Province has the lowest level of staff outflow among all such programmes (around 1 % compared to, for example, 8 % in the Zachodniopomorskie Province²²). The declared average seniority of staff involved in RPO WM is 8 years. Nearly half of the staff have previous experience of handling EU resources. Most of the staff involved in RPO WM have been working in this capacity for over two years²³.
3. High human resource capacities in terms of employment — the number of staff in units involved in the implementation of RPO 2007–2013 and the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital is optimal. Only the RPO Managing Authority reported that, as at 30 June 2013, 21 new positions were required for it to be able to properly handle resources from structural funds. Given that the above amount represents nearly one-third of the current jobs, the unit is suffering from severe staff shortages²⁴. It may be assumed that the situation arose because units were required to simultaneously implement RPO 2007–2013 and carry out intensive preparatory work for the next financial perspective. RECOMMENDATION: More staff should be employed at the RPO Managing Authority. As far as the new financial perspective is concerned, the above is particularly justified as the commencement of the implementation of RPO 2014–2020 will coincide with the closure of the 2007–2013 financial perspective.
4. High human resource capacities in terms of knowledge on implementing funds — all the institutions involved in the implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework in the Mazowieckie Province made continuous efforts to improve their staff's qualifications, in particular as regards the implementation of EU funds and horizontal issues²⁵. Given the diversity of training activities and the number of persons undergoing training, it may be concluded that staff needs are met. The results of assessment studies conducted so far support this conclusion. According to beneficiaries of both the Masovian Unit of EU Programmes Implementation and the Provincial Employment Office, insufficient substantive knowledge is the weaker point of the staff. RECOMMENDATION: Organising substantive training for staff and enlisting the help of external experts in more difficult cases.
5. A flexible human resource management system developed in recent years, i.e. building staff capacity in areas which are the most time-consuming at a given stage of programme implementation, e.g. settlement and monitoring of projects.
6. High organisational capacity resulting from developed procedures and solutions streamlining

²² The administrative capacity of the institutional system of the National Strategic Reference Framework for the period 2007–2013 (2013), Warsaw covers the period from 30 June to 31 December 2012.

²³ Assessment of the impact of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Province 2007–2013 on the development of the Mazowieckie Province, 2012.

²⁴ Data based on surveys prepared by institutions implementing the National Strategic Reference Framework for the period 2007–2013 for the purposes of the Ministry of Regional Development.

²⁵ Ibid.

the implementation of RPO 2007–2013 and the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital.

7. Effective internal and external communication between units.
8. Short time remaining until the launch of the programme (implementation of new structures will be time- and cost-consuming, and may also delay the designation process).
9. The need to close the current financial perspective, which in view of significant changes in the structure will increase costs and require more time for greater resources.

II.6.2 Assessment of Administrative Structures and Solutions

The RPO WM project contains a clear and complete description of the institutional system of the programme. Reference is made to the scope of responsibilities to be fulfilled by specific institutions, in particular the Managing Authority. The most important solutions and tasks at all stages of programme implementation were presented — from its development and consultation, through implementation, including the selection and evaluation of applications for funding, and monitoring and evaluation, to issues relating to financial settlement and reporting.

Information on the most important entities involved in the implementation of RPO WM was included in the programme, i.e.:

- Managing Authority, which in the period 2014–2020 will also serve as the institution responsible for the certification of funds to the European Commission — the main tasks of both units were presented,
- Audit Authority,
- Institution responsible for receiving payments from the European Commission.

In line with the guidelines, the Ministry of Regional Development was indicated as the entity granting designations on behalf of the Member State. The main tasks of this unit were also described.

The Managing Authority allows for the possibility of entrusting some tasks related to the implementation of RPO WM 2014–2020 to Intermediate Bodies/Implementing Authorities. These institutions were not indicated in the RPO project. It was argued that separate agreements would be concluded between the institutions and the Managing Authority.

Information on the monitoring and reporting system was included in the same chapter. In accordance with the recommendations laid down in the *Template for the operational programme*, reference was made to EU and national regulations when defining the main rules for monitoring progress in programme implementation.

The description of the monitoring system includes complete information on types of audits and their scope, dates and the selection of samples to be audited.

In the section on the IT system, information was provided on both the central and local IT system. The latter will be created on the basis of the experience and lessons learnt from the programming period 2007–2013.

The proposal for a uniform manner of recording informational and promotional issues suggested in the *Template for the operational programme* for inclusion in projects for national and regional programmes was taken into account when drawing up the description of the information and promotion system.

The description of the financial management includes basic information on the rules and methods of regulating financial flows applied in RPO, including information on forms of payment, financial documents submitted to the European Commission and consultation and conciliation procedures.

In addition, the project evaluation and selection system was described in the chapter on the institutional system, including project selection procedures, main assumptions made when establishing the criteria for evaluating applications (together with examples of mechanisms ensuring that investments that contribute most to the achievement of the objectives of RPO WM 2014–2020 are selected).

The RPO project includes a description of the methodology for including social and economic partners in the development of RPO WM 2014–2020. This description takes account of all elements specified in the *Template for the operational programme*. The description of the process of developing the programme includes information on the method of selecting partners and their involvement in this programming stage (the methodology for including social and economic partners).

Although the description of the solutions designed to include appropriate partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme is very short, reference was made to all the ways in which the partners will participate in all stages of programme implementation. The manner in which technical assistance funds will be used to include appropriate partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be described in detail in implementation documentation as it will strongly depend on the guidelines on the eligibility of technical assistance expenditure.

II.6.3 Risk Areas and Barriers to the Efficient and Effective Implementation of the Programme

Risk areas and barriers to the efficient and effective implementation of the programme include the following:

- 1) Lack of legal acts or implementing documents regulating the implementation of funds under EU cohesion policy;
- 2) Fulfilment of ex-ante conditionalities;
- 3) Coordination of the implementation of ESF and ERDF resources, which will be a major challenge at the early stage of RPO WM implementation;
- 4) Communication barriers, flow of information not adjusted to changes between programming periods — new communication channels that will need to be developed in order to implement the new management system may not function effectively during the first stage of implementation;
- 5) Implementation of repayable financial instruments — the effectiveness depends on the parameters of the instruments to be implemented and formal requirements, which should be fundamentally different for subsidies and repayable financial instruments;
- 6) Debts incurred by local government units, including a very high burden on the Mazowieckie Province's budget due to 'janosikowe' payments (obligatory payments made by the most affluent local governments in aid of the less affluent local governments);

- 7) Passive attitude of beneficiaries — this may apply to all types of beneficiaries and result from the above-mentioned factors such as, for example, a high level of debts or low competitiveness of repayable financial instruments compared to financial products offered on the market;
- 8) Difficulties in establishing local government unit partnerships, also for the purpose of implementing integrated territorial investments. Another challenge will be to develop a model of cooperation in the area of integrated territorial investments that will make it possible to select projects with appropriate quality and impact. It is worth drawing on the experience gained in the current programming period when developing criteria for evaluating projects related to integrated territorial investments and developing procedures for evaluating applications for funding.

Activation of passive beneficiaries, in particular with regard to local government units, may be based on informational and promotional activities. In order to correctly target these activities, reasons for the low interest should be analysed on an ongoing basis, for example through ad-hoc studies. The introduction of mentoring programmes for districts that make little use of resources may also be considered.

II.6.4 Assessment of the Method of Reducing Administrative Burdens for Beneficiaries

As part of the evaluation process, a meeting was held between members of the team developing the programme and the assessor during which all burdens for beneficiaries identified in different relevant assessment studies were discussed. Difficulties and barriers occurring at all stages were analysed — from the preparation of the application to the settlement of the project. Reference was also made to the main areas in which problems had been identified: a) required documents, b) promotion and information, c) organisation of the implementation and technical issues, e.g. the functioning of the application generator. This meeting helped systematise the sources of difficulties for beneficiaries and provided an opportunity to discuss actions that could be taken by the Managing Authority, which was reflected in the RPO WM project.

Subsequently, during the participatory evaluation, the assessor pointed out the need to include issues relating to the reduction of administrative burdens for beneficiaries in the RPO WM project. These concerned the indication of the main sources of burdens in the period 2007–2013 and the addition of references to actions undertaken by institutions involved in the implementation of the regional component of the Operational Programme Human Capital.

A list of actions aimed at enhancing the relations with beneficiaries and reducing administrative burdens to be undertaken in the 2014–2020 financial perspective was presented in the RPO WM project. At the same time, it was stressed that the previously conducted actions would be continued.

The main actions to be undertaken to reduce burdens in subsequent years were also presented in the RPO WM project. These actions are consistent with the identified needs and barriers. The assessor presented a range of detailed solutions to be taken account of in implementation documentation. These include: computerisation of the relations with beneficiaries and methods for shortening the waiting time for a decision on project evaluation and the award of funding.

II.7 Assessment of Horizontal Policies

In accordance with the programme, the execution of RPO WM 2014–2020 shall contribute to the achievement of the following horizontal objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy: the principle of sustainable development, and the principle of promoting equal chances (level playing field) and preventing discrimination. The RPO WM project outlines the methods of implementing horizontal policies at the level of programming, application, criteria of evaluation, the evaluation itself, and control in accordance with the current operational programme template.

Due to the need to take into account and implement horizontal policies in RPO WM 2014–2020, it is correct and appropriate to select/indicate as priorities the ESF interventions aimed at extending support to discriminated groups and individuals (disadvantaged in terms of access to the labour market), increasing their professional potential and chances for employment. This concerns in particular activities aimed at providing direct support to discriminated — disadvantaged groups and individuals, i.e.: disabled persons, women who wish to return to the labour market after having raised children, but also direct support for activities aimed at the development of transport infrastructure, popularisation and promotion of lifelong learning, information and personal career advice, or models for reconciling professional and social roles.

II.7.1 Assessment of the Implementation of the Principles of Promoting Equal Chances and Preventing Discrimination

In the chapter implementing horizontal policies into the Programme, the stress was laid foremost on the policy actions preventing discrimination based on gender and disability.

One of the ESF intervention priorities, in direct response to challenges resulting from the principle of promoting equal chances, is the extension of assistance to discriminated individuals — disadvantaged in terms of access to the labour market, and increasing their professional potential and chances for employment. This assistance will be extended in particular by:

- increasing the level of employment of disabled persons;
- facilitating activities providing disabled persons with opportunities to raise their qualifications and obtain new ones;
- developing support services facilitating access to the labour market (e.g. transport, child care services);
- granting wider access to advisory services, personal career advice, information and consulting;
- creating a user-friendly system of support and development of instruments for job activation.

The gender equality principle has been taken into account in the following interventions:

- increasing the necessary employment of women and men, but women in particular because they constitute the disadvantaged group;
- increasing the professional qualifications of men and women, and in particular extending support to people with low or outdated qualifications, e.g. women who wish to return to the labour market and did not do so immediately after having children but went on maternity and parental leave;

- promoting the economic activity of men and women in response to market challenges, stimulating entrepreneurial spirit;
- finding balance between professional and private life by increasing access to child and dependents care services, which would enable these people to fully participate in education and the labour market, and promoting new forms of work organisation.

In the course of the assessment process, it was noted that there was no information available on any investment priorities associated with the policy objectives of promoting equal chances and preventing discrimination. This was resolved at a later stage in the RPO WM project. The financial parity has not been estimated (share of the funds allocated to horizontal policies in the total funds allocated), which is, however, justified due to the need to ensure flexibility while implementing the programme.

The RPO WM project did not justify the exclusion of specific measures preventing discrimination and inequality of chances from the axis co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) because it is assumed by default that infrastructure investments are non-discriminatory by nature. Instead, for each priority axis, the procedures for selection and execution, and the criteria for evaluation and access will contain a measure stating that these projects have to comply with the principles of promoting equal chances and preventing discrimination — this will be elaborated in detail in the implementation documentation. According to information contained in the operational programme template, the Managing Authority (MA) should ensure the execution of gender equality principle under the proposed programme implementation system by proposing specific solutions within the project selection and execution procedures, or the monitoring and evaluation system. This follows from the provisions of the framework regulation, which imposes an obligation to present the appropriate information as defined under Article 101.2 of CPR in the annual implementation reports submitted in the years 2017 and 2019, as well as the evaluation of specific undertakings aimed at promoting gender equality and preventing discrimination, including accessibility thereof to disabled persons. The measures referred to above have been addressed in the course of work on the RPO WM project.

The Programme project sufficiently takes into account the principle of promoting equal chances on the ESF axis at the programming, implementation, evaluation and control stages. Specific target groups, covered by horizontal interventions, have been identified, and areas, covered by horizontal objectives, have been indicated along with specific mechanisms for selection and monitoring of interventions, and control procedures. A detailed elaboration of the situation of enumerated social categories, in the areas indicated in the Programme, was performed as part of the socio-economic diagnosis.

The principle of keeping separate statistics was adopted for monitoring the consecutive social categories covered by the principles of non discrimination and equality of chances. The data used for indicators, according to the national statistics requirements, will be broken down by gender in cases indicated under Annex 1 to the ESF Regulation (*Common output and result indicators for ESF investments*).

Due to the envisaged future territorial scope of activities aimed at preventing social exclusion and discrimination, it is proposed that these issues be potentially expanded in specifications and/or in the course of monitoring and evaluation of lists of discriminated groups by including inhabitants of rural areas and inhabitants of areas under threat of depopulation, and the so called 'niche' groups under threat of exclusion: persons with psychiatric disorders, ex-convicts, people from large families, single parents, ethnic and national minorities, homeless people and other social categories targeted for assistance under IP 9.4 and IP 9.7.

II.7.2 Assessment of the Implementation of the Principle of Promoting Sustainable Development

The measures envisaged in the Programme project indicate that the principle of sustainable development is the main principle taken into account by the Mazowieckie Province while preparing strategic and operating documentation.

In the programme project, the principle of sustainable development has been taken into account on the following priority axes:

- Priority Axis 1 — *Innovation and entrepreneurship*, within the scope of eco-innovation support;
- Priority Axis 3 — *Shift towards a low-carbon economy*, within the scope of environmental protection requirements, effective resource utilisation and minimisation and adaptation to the effects of climate change;
- Priority Axis 4 — *Society and environment friendly economy*, within the scope of environmental protection, resistance to natural disasters, risk prevention and management.

Further on in the programme, the horizontal character of the principle of sustainable development is emphasized, hence on the priority axes enumerated above, it will be implemented in particular, but it will also have to be taken into account on all the priority axes of the programme and executed in each undertaking that receives financing from the programme funds. This will be enforced through a formal requirement that will be obligatorily checked at the stage of selection and execution of undertakings, with particular emphasis on infrastructural projects.

The method of implementing this principle has been presented at the level of programming, application, evaluation (criteria), the evaluation itself, and control. It was assumed that a diagnosis of the situation in the context of this principle in terms of occurrence, needs and challenges will be presented at the application stage. The degree of implementation of the horizontal policy objectives will be incorporated into the evaluation system. The assessor indicated that the programme does not specify the method of implementing the results of monitoring (audit) and evaluation of performance. This issue was addressed by introducing measures for organising designated competitions where access will depend on the execution of sustainable development policy objectives in case the share of projects with positive (not just neutral) impact is insufficient.

It was recommended in the course of the work that specific points be included in the terms of reference for the principle of sustainable development in order to ensure that beneficiaries fulfil its objectives both in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and ESF interventions by introducing preferences, for example, especially on Axis 5. The assessor's recommendations have been taken into account.

Due to execution under the Programme of Investment Priorities 4.5, 6.1. and 6.2, if it turns out that more characters can be added to the relevant section of the programme template, it is recommended that the number of fields for the principle of sustainable development activities be expanded by the following points:

- perceiving waste as a resource (including replacement of raw by recycled materials, recovered from waste), inter alia: striving to maximise waste utilisation instead of raw materials, waste management in accordance with the established hierarchy, and this includes focus on limiting waste generation;
- supply-chain optimisation;

- striving for introduction of recycling, including maximising water and energy savings;
- energy-saving building and construction;
- urban planning and infrastructural investments including the need to adapt to climate change, as well as environmental protection and resource efficiency, which, in turn, requires curbing of the 'urban sprawl' phenomenon.

II.7.3 The Envisaged Programme Input in executing Horizontal Policies

The Programme project makes it possible to estimate the input of projects executed under the ERDF for implementing the principle of sustainable development by concentrating activities within the four priority axes, using an allocation marker for the climate objectives and setting indicators for anticipated effects. The input of activities from the consecutive Priority Axes into the implementation of the principle of promoting equal chances and non-discrimination is, however, difficult to estimate on the basis of the Programme project due to the fact that indicators for monitoring subindicators by gender and by the categories of discriminated groups and persons covered by the aid and enumerated in the Programme project (e.g. Priority Axis 6 target groups) have not been taken into account in the target value. The fact that there is no target value for the indicator *Number of disabled persons covered by the aid* makes it impossible to estimate the input of the Programme into the implementation of the principle of promoting equal chances for disabled persons. The gaps indicated above are the result of the Managing Authority's decision to introduce the above mentioned subindicators only in the Programme Specification and the fact that there is no requirement to specify them, which the assessor deems to be justified.

In the case of the principle of sustainable development, access criteria and programme monitoring indicators have been listed as the basic instruments for executing the said policy objectives. The access criteria will be employed with respect to all infrastructural activities, while the monitoring indicators will only apply to those investment projects (IP) that cover areas indicated as dedicated to the principle of sustainable development. At the evaluation stage, it will be ascertained what is the impact of the Programme on implementation of the principle of sustainable development and assessment studies will be conducted to determine effective aid for sustainable economic and social development, and environmental protection.

In the case of the principle of promoting equal chances and non-discrimination, it was assumed that the instrument for implementation of the horizontal policy objectives will be the access criteria, monitoring indicators and domain contests specially dedicated to the discriminated target groups within the individual IPs. Under the monitoring and reporting system, it will be ensured that monitoring will be constantly performed and data will be collected about all the executed projects aimed at professional and social integration of disabled persons. It is envisaged that at the evaluation stage, studies will be conducted with the aim of assessing effectiveness of the aid granted to persons with different types and degrees of disability, and their future progress will be monitored after the project in which they took part has been completed.

At the project control stage, it will be verified whether all the measures for implementing the principle of the equality in the project have been fulfilled correctly.

Throughout the implementation stage, information and promotional activities will also be carried out in order to further popularise and implement the principle of the equality. The Managing Authority (MA) will also ensure that representatives of communities dedicated to promoting equality are invited to participate in the various programme bodies and committees.

In accordance with the Programme guidelines, the instruments for implementing the principle of gender equality will be realised at all the stages of programming work, including the assessment, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and control stages. At the implementation stage, it was determined that the projects will be based on diagnosis that takes into account the situation of men and women in a given area, and an assessment of the impact on the gender situation. Each project implemented under RPO WM 2014–2020 will contain a description of the impact on the gender situation. This element will be subject to factual evaluation.

At the evaluation stage, additional criteria, apart from the formal ones, will be used to assess project impact on gender equality. The monitoring system will take into account gender distinction. Its construction will enable future evaluation of the impact of consecutive activities on the implementation of the gender equality principle.

At the evaluation stage, the impact of RPO WM 2014–2020 on the implementation of gender equality principle will be studied. Additionally, data from the IT system used for storing data about project participants will allow for systematic and complex evaluation studies in the context of analysing this impact by gender, monitoring future progress of project participants as well as analysing the effectiveness of granted aid.

At the same time, information and promotional activities will also be carried out in order to further popularise and implement the principle of gender equality. The Managing Authority (MA) will also ensure that representatives of communities dedicated to promoting gender equality are invited to participate in the various programme bodies and committees.

The impact and effectiveness of these instruments is deemed to be fully sufficient as far as the principles of promoting equal chances and gender equality are concerned but insufficient from the point of view of the principle of sustainable development. It is true that occurrence, resource distribution and needs of the community will be taken into account at the application stage, however, according to the current programme guidelines, the method of implementing the project is not covered by these instruments — with the exception of those projects where indicators pertaining to this principle will have to be realised. The difficulties with monitoring the implementation of horizontal policies will particularly apply to those undertakings where the horizontal policies will be realised at at least a neutral level, without the so called positive action (zero-one access criterion) and the share of sustainable development measures will not be monitored at the level of indicators. In that case, it is advisable to introduce appropriate procedures in the project control system in order to assess compliance with horizontal policies.

II.7.4 Degree and Scope of Implementing Horizontal Policies in the Programming Process

As part of the diagnosis and in the context of the whole programme, the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination, and particularly equal accessibility to disabled persons, as well as sustainable development were all taken into account. The issues of equal chances and non-discrimination were discussed during meetings with consultants at the consultative stage of the ex-ante evaluation. This was broadly reflected in the social and economic diagnosis prepared for RPO WM but this content had to be reduced — just like the whole diagnosis — due to the requirement that the content had to be adjusted to the limits set in the operational programme template.

Organisations involved in the promotion of horizontal policies took part in the programming process. At an early stage of programming, the Managing Authority developed a Methodology for including

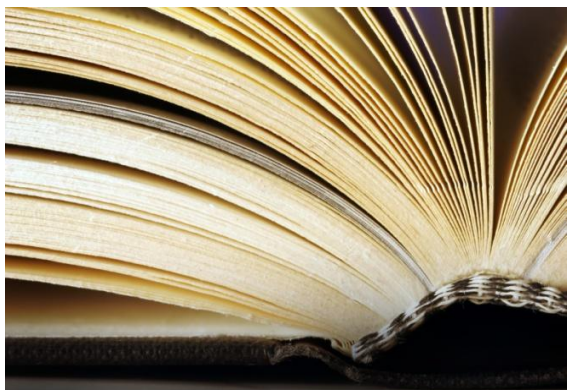
social and economic partners in the RPO WM 2014–2020 project. The editorial-programme team was divided into four sub-groups which were categorised by subject and representatives of the social and economic partners participated in their work. Horizontal policies fell within the scope of Sub-group 4, and representatives from the following organisations and institutions were invited to participate: Mazowiecka Rada Działalności Pożytku Publicznego (the Masovian Council for Public Benefit), Wojewódzka Społeczna Rada ds. Osób Niepełnosprawnych dla Województwa Mazowieckiego (Provincial Social Council for Disabled Persons in the Mazowieckie Province), Mazowieckie Centrum Polityki Społecznej (Masovian Centre for Social Policy) and many other organisations involved in environmental protection, social inclusion, gender equality and equal chances. It is therefore deemed that the horizontal policies have been sufficiently taken into account at the programming stage.

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