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Challenges for place-based policies: lessons learned from the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments in functional urban areas in Poland

Extended abstract

Introduction: The introduction of a place-based approach to the programming of the EU 2014-2020 cohesion policy required the creation of new territorial governance structures, the identification of new areas of intervention and the development of new mechanisms for the distribution of funds. The implementation of a new cohesion policy tool, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs), dedicated to supporting the sustainable development of cities and their functional areas, played a key role in this process.

This paper focuses on identifying the main challenges for introducing PBPs in functional urban areas (FUAs) in the context of lessons learned from the implementation of ITIs in Poland.

Materials and methods: The research was divided into three stages. In the first stage, using desk research method, and based on an analysis of legal acts, programming and strategic documents, the main assumptions and effects of ITIs implementation in Polish FUAs were identified. In the second stage, these were compared with the perspective of actors involved in the implementation of it is. Three dimensions were analyzed in detail: cooperative, institutional, and programming. This part of the study was based on the results of a questionnaire survey in which 150 municipalities from 50 FUAs participated. In the third stage, recommendations were formulated to improve the effectiveness of implementation PBPs in FUAs.

Results: In formulating legislative, programming and institutional solutions for the implementation of ITIs in 2014-2020 cycle, particular attention was paid to: the form of formalizing inter-municipal partnerships reflected in the delimitation of the area of intervention, the development of territorial governance mechanisms and the principles of strategic planning. In the 2021–2027 programming period, the main changes in the rules for implementing ITIs concerned: the reformulation of guidelines for developing ITI strategies, introducing multi-level governance mechanisms, and increasing the participation of external stakeholders.

The results of the survey indicate that the reorientation of cohesion policy towards more integrated actions tailored to the needs of specific FUAs had far-reaching consequences for: 1) multi-level governance through the intensification of establishing and formalizing

cooperation between municipalities at both the horizontal and vertical levels; 2) strategic planning through the requirement to develop a long-term strategy tailored to specific territorial characteristics; 3) the distribution of financial resources towards the integration of funds and programs in order to achieve synergies in investments supporting the endogenous potential of territories. The key issues for the effective implementation of ITIs included: meeting formal and legal requirements, reformulating existing cooperation schemes, and integrating spatial and financial actions on a supra-local scale.

Conclusions: Multidimensional analyses have identified the main success factors for PBPs implementation in FUAs, including the strengthening of institutional capital through by developing effective multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance mechanisms; the need to formulate a long-term strategic vision based on existing capabilities and future potential, and the use of participatory tools. The results of the study provide decision-makers with guidelines for programming of cohesion policy interventions in 2028-2034.

Key words: place-based policies (BPBs), Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs), functional urban areas (FUAs), inter-municipal cooperation, territorial governance, multi-level governance, strategic planning, EU cohesion policy

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