



Evaluation of the Impact of Supporting SME Competitiveness in the 2014-2020 Perspective



Study financed by the European Social Fund within the Technical Assistance of the Regional Operational Programme of the Lubelskie Voivodeship for the years 2014-2020.

The study covered the third Priority Axis of the RPO WL 2014-2020, Enterprise Competitiveness.

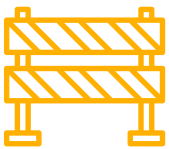
Objectives

The main objective of the study was to identify and measure the effects of SME support within the RPO WL 2014-2020 framework.

The specific objectives included:"



Evaluation of the effectiveness, utility, efficiency, and sustainability of support within the RPO WL 2014-2020 for the SME sector under PA 3;



Identification of factors that contributed to the achievement of objectives and barriers that hindered the achievement of intended effects in the SME sector under PA 3;



Determination of good practices and recommendations for actions aimed at the development of SME competitiveness in the 2021-2027 perspective;



Impact of PA 3 measures of RPO WL 2014-2020 on the implementation of the Regional Innovation Strategy of the Lubelskie Voivodeship until 2020.



The study was conducted in the period from July to November 2023. It covered the period from the approval of the RPO WL 2014-2020 (February 12, 2015) to June 30, 2023.

Evaluation

In the evaluation, the following research methods were used:



Analysis of existing data;

In-depth individual interviews (39);



Telephone and online surveys (1171);

Group interviews (2);



Case studies (10);

Panel of experts;



Counterfactual method;

Implementation workshop.

Promoting entrepreneurship

PI 3a, Measures: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 RPO WL 2014-2020

Main objective of the priority: **Better conditions for the development of SMEs**

Number of co-financed projects: **80**

Value of EU funding: **72.5 million PLN**

Key outcomes of the projects:

37,72 ha

of prepared
investment areas

33 companies

supported in the
area of research
and development

6 BSO*

supported in terms
of service
professionalization

32

new/improved
services provided
by BSO*

*Business Support Organizations

Key benefits of project implementation:

- ✓ New investments generating job opportunities;
- ✓ Increase in municipal revenues from taxes;
- ✓ Creation of favorable conditions for the implementation of highly innovative projects;
- ✓ Growth in the potential of Business Support Organizations (BSO);
- ✓ Better alignment of BSO service offerings to business needs;
- ✓ **81%** of companies declared achieving improved quality and efficiency of management, **68%** confirmed an increase in competitiveness in their main market of operation;
- ✓ **73%** of companies confirmed that their readiness to use external advisory services for actions aimed at improving competitiveness and management efficiency has increased.

Best practices:

- ✓ The approach adopted in Measure 3.1, heavily centred on the end result of attracting investors;
- ✓ The assistance that Local Government Units (LGUs) could expect from specialist service providers in project management;
- ✓ Targeting support from Measure 3.4 to institutions genuinely specialising in consultancy;
- ✓ Allowing businesses to utilise external resources for executing growth strategies.



Development and implementation of new business models for SMEs.

PI 3b, Measures 3.6 i 3.9 RPO WL 2014-2020

Main objective of the priority: **Increased level of foreign trade in the SME sector**

Number of subsidised projects: **23**

Value of EU co-financing: **74.3 million PLN**

Key outcomes of the projects:

1972 companies

receiving support

154 companies

entered foreign markets

139

signed foreign trade contracts

ORGANISED

38

economic missions

178

informational and promotional events

over

300

promotional and economic events

Key benefits of project implementation:

- ✓ Strengthening the regional economy's promotion system;
- ✓ Creating a positive image of the region to attract potential investors and business partners;
- ✓ Increasing the visibility of companies and establishing new business contacts;
- ✓ Enhancing the competitiveness of businesses.

Best practices:

Complementarity of the offer for organized (Measure 3.6) and individual (Measure 3.9) trips to fairs and missions aimed at entering foreign markets.

Supporting the creation and expansion of advanced capabilities in product and service development.

PI 3c, Measure 3.7 RPO WL 2014-2020

Main objective of the priority: **Increased application of innovation in SMEs**

Number of subsidised projects: **3862**

Value of EU co-financing: **1.08 billion PLN**

Key outcomes of the projects:

3603 companies

receiving grants

1420 companies

receiving financial support other than grants

500

jobs created in supported enterprises

2729

estimated number of jobs that have been **preserved** thanks to working capital grants

Key benefits of project implementation:

- ✓ Positive impact of support in the form of grants/repayable assistance on companies initiating innovative activities and engaging in more innovative ventures; Enterprises supported in terms of investment believe that thanks to the support:
 - ✓ Their competitive position strengthened - **81%** of beneficiaries and **69%** of loan recipients;
 - ✓ Market share increased - **68%** of beneficiaries and **52%** of loan recipients;
 - ✓ Sales revenue increased - **74%** of beneficiaries and **57%** of loan recipients.
- ✓ Enterprises supported in terms of working capital financing survived the pandemic period - **94%** of companies are still in business.

Best practices:

- ✓ The use of a criterion that rewards projects that involved the implementation of R&D results among the criteria of substantive validity;
- ✓ A flexible approach to the borrower's own contribution and the loan repayment period.

Recommendations

- ✓ The implementation of support within separate calls for the creation of cooperation networks initiated by BSO for SMEs. Applying additional points for BSO project evaluations for activities supporting SMEs from areas in difficult socio-economic situations (Measure 1.6 FEL);
- ✓ Introduction of simplified methods for calculating the cost of enterprises' participation in missions and trade fairs (Measure 2.7 FEL).





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