

IMPACT OF EU FUNDED PROJECTS ON STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN ZBROSŁAWICE MUNICIPALITY

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Introduction/background: Raising the standard of living of local communities is one of the objectives of activities undertaken by local government units. The most important and essential in regional development is therefore social development. One of the stimulators of regional growth are European Union funds. The improvement of the social and professional situation of the residents of municipalities in the Silesian Voivodeship has been mainly influenced by EU funds implemented through the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship 2014-2020 under the European Social Fund (ESF). The municipality of Zbroślawice has implemented several such projects.

Aim of the paper: The aim of the paper is to examine and analyse the impact of ESF-funded projects implemented in the municipality of Zbroślawice to strengthen social and professional activity of local communities in the period 2019-2021. The paper is based on research conducted for the master's thesis of Marcel Nalepa, whose scientific supervisor is Dr. Joanna Toczyńska.

Materials and methods: In the study, cabinet research was conducted on the basis of data from the Central Statistical Office using the methods of universal statistics on the analysis of the socio-demographic situation of the Municipality of Zbroślawice. The aim of the research was to identify problem areas prior to the start of the social projects implemented in the period 2019-2021. Subsequently, field research was conducted in the Municipality using the method of comparative analysis of project documentation and reporting documentation on two ESF-funded projects in order to determine the degree of achievement of the assumed target indicators in the projects. The research further involved a diagnostic survey of the opinions and perceptions of project participants using a questionnaire method.

Results and conclusions: As a result of the research, weaknesses and problem areas in the level of social life of the Municipality's residents were identified and solutions were proposed in the form of the need to implement specific projects. In addition, the research hypothesis assuming that the actions taken by the Municipality of Zbroślawice and the projects implemented in the period 2019-2021 contributed to strengthening the social and professional activity of local communities and strengthening the human potential of the Municipality was confirmed.

Keywords: EU projects in the municipality, social projects in local governments, impact of EU projects on social participation.

1. Strengthening human potential as an objective of regional development

Regional development is defined in various ways in the literature on the subject, but the central idea that runs throughout is that of the people who live in the region. It is the people living in a region who have the greatest influence on it. Regional development can result in:

- increasing the economic development of a region,
- improving the living standards of local communities (e.g. reducing the unemployment rate for a given region),
- developing the competitiveness of the local authority.

The development of individual local government units in aggregate can contribute to the development of the whole country, which is one of the tasks of the public administration (Właźlak, 2010, p. 42).

At the state level, these activities are referred to as regional policy, while at the regional level, as local policy. The function of local policy is to strive for the development of local communities living in communes and districts. The stimulants for development are the determinants directly related to society, i.e. the needs of the community, the culture and the attitude towards implementing regional change.

Continuously since Poland's accession to the European Union, all local government units (LGUs) - municipalities, districts, voivodships - have benefited from sources of funding from European funds. The municipality of Zbroslawice is a relatively small municipality with extensive needs for support under various European Union aid programmes. At present, the municipality of Zbroslawice is located in an underdeveloped region with a GDP per capita level below 75% of the EU-27 average. The fact that the municipality belongs to such a region results in a higher level of project co-financing than in more developed regions.

2. Municipality of Zbroslawice as a beneficiary of EU funds in the programming period 2014-2020

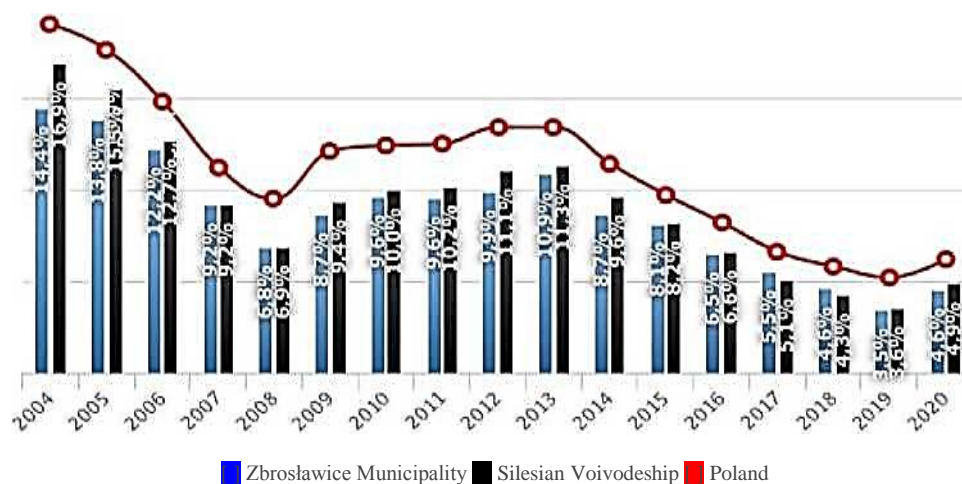
The municipality of Zbroslawice is located within the boundaries of the Silesian Voivodship of Tarnogorski powiat. The area of the municipality is 148 km², of which over 98 km² is agricultural land (<https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/>). As of the end of 2020, the municipality of Zbroslawice had 16,385 residents, of which 49.7% are men and 50.3% women. Between 2008 and 2021, the number of residents increased by 3.5%. The average age of the residents of the municipality is comparable to the average age of the Silesian Voivodship and the whole country and is 42.1 years. The largest group is made up of those aged 35-49 (<https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/...>). Details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.*Demographic structure of the population of Zbroslawice Municipality as at 31.12.2020*

Description	Total	Women	Men
Population	16 385 (100%)	8 234 (100%)	8 151 (100%)
Pre-reproductive age (0-17)	2 898 (17.7%)	1 419 (17.2%)	1 479 (18.1%)
Working age (18-59 for women) (18-64 for men)	10 026 (61.2%)	4 598 (55.8%)	5 428 (66.6%)
Post-working age (Women > 60 Men > 65)	3 461 (21.1%)	2 217 (26.9%)	1 244 (15.3%)

Source: Own study based on Central Statistical Office data.

According to the data, there are only 171 people working per 1000 residents in Zbroslawice municipality. This is significantly less than the same figures for the voivodeship or the entire national territory. In 2020, the average salary in Zbroslawice municipality was PLN 4858 gross, which is much lower than the average salary nationwide, which was PLN 5523 gross in this period. A large proportion of economically active people go to work outside the municipality of Zbroslawice, there are as many as 1620 such people. On the other hand, 713 people from outside the municipality found work in the municipality. The balance of arrivals and departures for work is therefore negative and amounts to -907 people. The unemployment rate in the municipality of Zbroslawice is 4.6 %, which is lower than the unemployment rate of the Silesian Voivodeship, as well as the general unemployment rate in Poland, which is 6.2 % as of 2020. Figure 1 shows the dynamics of the unemployment rate development in the municipality of Zbroslawice between 2004 and 2020.

**Figure 1.** Estimated unemployment rate in the municipality of Zbroslawice from 2004 to 2020.Source: https://www.polskawliczbach.pl/gmina_Zbroslawice, 12.03.2022.

The unemployment figures in the municipality are encouraging. The effect of projects carried out in the field of social and professional assistance can be seen here. However, in 2020, despite the projects carried out, unemployment increased significantly, which may be the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis carried out made it possible to identify weaknesses and problems requiring immediate intervention by the local authorities. Table 2 illustrates the weaknesses, problems and possible solutions proposed to the municipality of Zbroslawice.

Table 2.*Identified weaknesses and problems in Zbrosławice municipality and proposed solutions*

Weaknesses	Problem areas	Proposed solutions
Steady increase in population of post-working age, steady decline in people of working and pre-working age	Inheritance of poverty and exclusion	Implementation of professional development projects, community projects
Increase in unemployment among middle-aged people resulting in potential social exclusion	Labour market mismatch for the employed, inheritance of poverty and exclusion	Implementation of projects of the following nature: employment, social, revitalisation
Reduction of jobs in traditional economic sectors (mining, energy), accumulation of social exclusion in the most vulnerable places, increasing poverty	Degraded areas of the municipality, the need to create new jobs, reorientation and retraining of people made redundant and seeking employment locally	Projects of a revitalising degraded areas and social projects increasing employment and self-employment opportunities and counteracting social exclusion

Source: own study.

A local government unit with efficient and effective sources of funding, however, expand its range of financial support by initiating development projects co-financed by community funds. Municipal revenues should be diversified and prepared for various types of crises. This is particularly true in the current situation. Due to the introduction of the amendment to the Polish Order from 01.07.2022, local government units may face financial problems. Until now, around 40% of the PIT (Personal Income Tax) went to the budget of local government units. At that time, the PIT in the first tax bracket was 17%, while from 1.07.2022 it has been reduced to 12%, which may result in a drastic decrease in revenues to the budgets of municipalities, districts or provinces. In such a situation of financial uncertainty, it is advisable for territorial local government units to be more active in activities aimed at obtaining EU funds to achieve the set goals. As part of the 2014-2020 financial perspective, 22 projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) have been implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice. Table 3 shows the most important projects of the municipality in this period.

Table 3.*Key projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice from EU funds in the period 2014-2020*

Name of the project	Measure no. in ROP SV	Fund	EU funding	Total value project
Installation of photovoltaic systems	4.1	ERDF	PLN 2 004 806.79	PLN 2 585 469.73
Active Zbrosławice	9.1	ESF	PLN 272 000.00	PLN 320,000.00
A more active Zbrosławice	9.1	ESF	PLN 267 266.56	PLN 314 431.25
Open doors - activating local residents	7.1	ESF	PLN 1 419 704.68	PLN 1 670 240.80
Ambient comfort	11.1	ESF	PLN 320 037.54	PLN 376 514.76
Thermomodernisation of public buildings - phase 1	4.3	ERDF	PLN 672 203.87	PLN 1 641 065.97
Enhancing the cultural attractiveness of the region - St. Mary's Church	5.3	ERDF	PLN 997,508.67	PLN 1 190 672.95

Cont. table 3.

Modernisation of the wastewater treatment plant in Przechlebie - phase 1	5.1	ERDF	PLN 10 097 142.00	PLN 15 946 950.00
All together	9.1	ESF	PLN 3 458 572.65	PLN 4 068 909.00
Purchase of rescue and firefighting equipment for Fire department	5.5	ERDF	PLN 78 388.35	PLN 785 000.00
Construction of a water main and sanitary sewer in Ziemiećice	5.1	ERDF	PLN 552 425.00	PLN 1 694 893.43

Source: own study based on subsidy map <https://mapadotacji.gov.pl/>, 27.04.2022.

The Municipality of Zbrośławice has obtained a total of PLN 26,935,936.26 from EU funds to finance projects in the 2014-2020 funding period. The implementation of all projects, both financed from own funds and EU funds, contributed, among other things, to improving the quality of life of the residents, meeting the needs of local communities, as well as stimulating the economic development of the municipality of Zbrośławice and increasing the attractiveness of the municipality's area in a broad aspect. These aspects were improved thanks to a well-developed development strategy, which made it possible to identify priority actions.

3. Characteristics of projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrośławice within the framework of Measure 9.1.5 of the ROP SV (Regional Operational Programme – Silesian Voivodeship) 2014-2020

In the period 2019-2021, 2 projects have been implemented in the municipality of Zbrośławice under Measure 9.1.5 of the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship 2014-2020 (ROP SV). These are the projects Active Zbrośławice and A More Active Zbrośławice.

Active Zbrośławice project 2019-2020

The project, entitled Active Zbrośławice, was implemented for priority axis IX - Social inclusion, measure 9.1 - Active integration, sub-measure 9.1.5 - Strengthening the socio-professional potential of local communities, support for measures resulting from LSR (Forest Development Fund) covering rural and fishing areas. The project was co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). The municipality of Zbrośławice became the project leader. A project partner was selected, which was the Community Public Library. The goal of the project is to strengthen the social potential of 25 people at risk of social exclusion (15 women and 10 men) and to raise the professional competences of 10 people selected from a group of 25 (6 women and 4 men) at risk of social exclusion. The project is in line with the specific objectives of the Regional Operational Programme and the Development Strategy for the Silesian Voivodeship "ŚLĄSKIE 2020+" - Operational objective B.2. Development of competencies, skills and increase of the level of activity of the residents.

The project is of an anti-discriminatory nature, both in terms of gender, disability and the risk of social exclusion, particularly due to poverty. The project is implemented in accordance with the strategy of the Local Action Groups (LAGs).

The target group of the project is the local community of Zbrośławice Municipality, including in particular people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and their immediate environment. As part of the project, activities such as:

1. Social skills training for people at risk of social exclusion.
2. Information meetings on grassroots initiatives.
3. Educational speakers.
4. Animation activities.
5. Organisation of 5 neighbourhood picnics.
6. Festival organisation - Dramatalia.
7. Professional training.
8. Career guidance meetings.
9. Organisation of certified training courses.

The project started on 1.06.2019 and ended on 30.05.2020. It was co-financed by the European Social Fund and the amount of funding was PLN 304,000.00. The total cost of the project was PLN 320 000.00.

Project A More Active Zbrośławice 2020-2021

The project entitled “A More Active Zbrośławice” was implemented under Priority Axis IX - Social inclusion, Measure 9.1. Active inclusion, Sub-measure 9.1.5. Active inclusion programmes for people and groups at risk of social exclusion. The project leader was the Municipality of Zbrośławice, while the Municipal Public Library in Zbrośławice was selected as the project partner. The goal of the project is to strengthen the social potential of 25 people at risk of social exclusion (15 women and 10 men) and to raise the professional competences of 10 people selected from a group of 25 (6 women and 4 men) at risk of social exclusion. The project was linked to the strategies of the Upper Silesian Forest Region [*Leśna Kraina Górnego Śląska*]. According to this strategy, the following problems in the social sphere were identified:

1. Varying social activity of residents in relation to municipalities, with a particular focus on young people.
2. Social isolation of young people.
3. Poor sports, leisure and cultural offer.
4. Poor social integration between immigrant and indigenous populations.

The project targeted people at risk of social exclusion and communities living in the municipality. The social and environmental activities were intended to significantly increase access to services for communities that do not have this opportunity on a daily basis, mainly because of where they live. The project implemented activities such as:

1. Social skills training.
2. Educational speakers.
3. Organisation of 6 neighbourhood picnics.
4. Organising a neighbourhood festival.
5. Professional skills training.
6. Certified vocational training.
7. Career counselling.

The project started on 1.01.2021 and ended on 31.12.2021. It was co-financed by the European Social Fund. The amount of EU funding was PLN 267 266.56, while the total cost of the project was PLN 314 431.25.

The municipality of Zbroślawice, through the implementation of projects of a social nature, undertakes activities aimed at strengthening the social activity of local communities. These projects have effectively contributed to reducing the unemployment rate in the municipality and have become a stimulus for social development.

4. Research objectives, research hypothesis, research methods, data sources

For the research conducted, the following research hypothesis was assumed: the activities undertaken and projects implemented by the municipality of Zbroślawice in the period 2014-2020 contributed to strengthening social and professional activity of local communities and strengthening human potential. Two main methods were used in the research: analysis of project documentation and a survey.

Study 1: Examination of project and reporting documentation

The purpose of the desk study was to determine the extent to which the assumed target values of indicators were achieved in the projects Active Zbroślawice and A More Active Zbroślawice, which were implemented under priority axis 9.1 of the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship. The analysis was performed on the basis of measurable project indicators. Documents such as:

1. Application for funding for the implementation of the project within the framework of the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship 2014-2020 (Active and A More Active Zbroślawice).
2. Beneficiary's applications for payment under the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship 2014-2020 (Active and A More Active Zbroślawice).
3. Partnership agreement for the implementation of the project A More Active Zbroślawice.

Study 2: Surveys

The aim of the survey was to determine the respondents' knowledge of the projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice to strengthen the social and professional activity of the local community and to determine the impact of these projects on the lives of the residents. The survey was conducted partly online in May and June 2022 by sending out questionnaires via e-mail (38 people completed the questionnaire electronically, while 10 people filled out a traditional paper sheet). The research sample consisted of women and men. A total of 48 people responded. Thirty women and 18 men responded. The respondents were informed prior to the survey about the purpose of the study and the anonymity of the entire questionnaire. The research tool, a questionnaire, was developed by the authors of the study. According to M. Łowicki, a questionnaire is a sheet containing questions and a space for answering, from which the respondents choose the answer that suits them best (Łobocki, 2004, p. 98).

In the first part, respondents answered questions about the Active Zbrosławice and A More Active Zbrosławice projects, while in the second part they filled in data about themselves in the form of a metric. The survey contained both open and closed questions. The survey was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. This method involves obtaining key answers about the views and feelings of the respondents.

5. Background of the study 1. Comparative analysis of achieved and assumed target values in ongoing projects

Active Zbrosławice project

Measurement of the implementation of the assumed values took place at the moment of receiving the first form of support financed from the European Social Fund on the basis of documentation of support forms and application forms. Monitoring was conducted on an ongoing basis and reported in accordance with the payment schedule. Table 4 presents the degree of achievement of the project's values.

Table 4.

Target values, achieved and degree of achievement of target values within the Active Zbrosławice project

Indicator name	Unit of measurement	Break-down	Target value	Initial value	Value achieved	Implementation rate (%)
Number of people at risk of social exclusion supported by the project	Persons	F	15	15	17	113.33
		M	10	10	8	80.00
		Total	25	25	25	100.00

Source: own study based on payment application.

In the initial phase, the project achieved the planned indicators in the target groups by 100%. In the subsequent implementation phase, 2 new participants were selected as a result of the death of 2 participants. The project achieved its target number of participants, which was 25 in total.

Indicators specific to the implemented project - is the number of 10 persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion, seeking employment, participating in activities through which they gained professional qualifications, and finding employment after leaving the programme. The targeted values were 6 women and 4 men. Measurement of the attainment of the target values took place when participants changed their situation through:

1. Job search - measured on the basis of a certificate from the District Employment Office or a statement on job search.
2. Undertaking education or training - measured based on certificates or attestations from schools.
3. Employment - measured by contracts (indicator was measured up to 6 months after project completion).

The project assumed an employment effectiveness criterion of at least 25% of participants. The employability effectiveness indicator (EEI) defines the percentage of people participating in the project who obtained employment within 3 months of its completion (Toczyńska, 2017, pp. 4-6):

$$EEI = \text{number of people who found employment within 3 months after the end of the project} / \text{number of people who completed participation in the project} \times 100\%$$

The EEI for the project under review was 48%. ($EEI = 12/25 \times 100\% = 48\%$). This means that the required minimum employment level for the study group was achieved. Table 5 illustrates the achieved project indicators over a period of 3 months after project completion.

Table 5.

Specific indicators of the Active Zbroslawice project 3 months after completion

Indicator name	Unit of measurement	Break-down	Target value	Value achieved in the reporting period	Value reached 3 months after project completion	Implementation rate (%)
Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion seeking employment, participating in training, working after completing the programme	Persons	F	6	8	8	133.33
		M	4	2	4	100.00
		Total	10	10	12	120.00

Source: own study based on data from Zbroslawice Municipal Office.

During the course of the project, 10 people found jobs, which met the target values by 100%. However, the value achieved in the reporting period was slightly different from the target. For women, it was 133.33% (target value - 6, achieved value - 8) and for men, it was 50% (target value - 4, achieved value - 2).

Three months after the end of the project, the indicators achieved had improved significantly. The implementation rate was 120%. There was no change in the number of women working, which was still 8, but the number of men working had changed from 2 to 4.

The project was a success as it met its targets, which contributed significantly to strengthening both social and professional activity in the local community.

A More Active Zbroślawice project

The project A More Active Zbroślawice was in a way a continuation of the earlier project Active Zbroślawice. The project recruited 25 project participants residing in low-density rural areas in the municipality of Zbroślawice. It was of an anti-discriminatory nature, both in terms of gender, disability and risk of social exclusion, particularly due to poverty. The project met the minimum levels of social and employment effectiveness, which in relation to people at risk of social exclusion was 34%, with a minimum requirement of 25%. During the project implementation period, the following was carried out:

- Social skills workshops divided into groups of 10+15 people.
- 12 educational meetings.
- 30 hours of professional skills enhancement activities.
- 4 certified vocational training courses.
- 4 themed picnics.
- Dramatalia community festival.

The project was designed to bring together 25 people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. As in the case of the previous project, measurement took place at the moment of receiving the first form of support financed by the European Social Fund on the basis of documentation of the forms of support and the participants' application forms together with documents certifying the current situation of the project participant. Measurement tools included:

- source documents proving the participant's eligibility,
- qualitative surveys of participants,
- declaration of participation,

Table 6 shows the values achieved for the number of project participants.

Table 6.

Values achieved in the AMore Active Zbroślawice project

Indicator name	Unit of measurement	Break-down	Target value	Initial value	Value achieved	Degree of implementation
Number of people at risk of social exclusion supported by the project	Persons	F	15	15	15	100.00
		M	10	10	10	100.00
		Total	25	25	25	100.00

Source: own study based on data from. Zbroślawice Municipality (2022).

From the start of the project until its completion, the project met 100% of the targets in terms of the number of project participants.

As for the specific indicators of the implemented project, the project envisaged the professional activation of 10 participants. The target value for women was 6, while for men it was 4. The measurement of the indicator took place 4 weeks after the end of participation in the project. Measurement tools included:

1. Certificate confirming the acquisition of professional qualifications, by an external authorised body. Monitoring was carried out on an ongoing basis and changes at stages.
2. 4 progressive measurement of the acquisition of competencies, with source documents confirming the employment and achievement of the indicator reported in the payment applications.

Table 7 illustrates the achieved values of specific project indicators.

Table 7.

Specific indicators of the A More Active Zbrosławice project 3 months after project completion

Indicator name	Unit of measurement	Break-down	Target value	Value achieved in the reporting period	Value reached 3 months after project completion	Implementation rate (%)
Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion seeking employment, participating in training, working after completing the programme	Persons	F	6	6	6	100.00
		M	4	4	4	100.00
		Total	10	10	10	100.00

Source: own study based on data from Zbrosławice Municipal Office.

The project assumed an employment effectiveness criterion of at least 25% of participants. The EEI for the analysed project was 40% ($EEI = 10/25 \times 100\% = 40\%$). This means achieving the minimum level of the employment effectiveness indicator at the level of 25%. The project also assumed professional activation of 10 people. The target value was achieved. 10 people, 6 women and 4 men, found work 12 weeks after the end of the project, which contributed to meeting the target values in 100%. According to the latest data obtained from the municipal office in Zbrosławice, as many as 17 participants of the project 'A More Active Zbrosławice' have now found employment. Ten women and seven men taking part in the project have found employment. These data clearly illustrate the effectiveness of the project.

Summarising the results of Study 1, it can be concluded that both projects Active Zbrosławice and A More Active Zbrosławice contributed to strengthening social and professional activity of local communities. This is evidenced by the assumed and achieved employment effectiveness indicators of project participants.

6. Course of the survey 2. Survey for the evaluation of the impact of the projects on the local community in the opinion of the participants of the projects Active Zbroślawice and A More Active Zbroślawice

The survey was conducted in May/June 2022. The respondents to the questionnaire were people participating in the projects "Active Zbroślawice" and "A More Active Zbroślawice". The questionnaire was sent to 50 people. Ultimately, 48 people took part in the survey. 30 women and 18 men took part in the survey.

The analysis of the data marked in the metric concerned social and occupational determinants. The age of respondents in the five categories is shown in Fig. 2. The largest group is in the 41-50 age range.

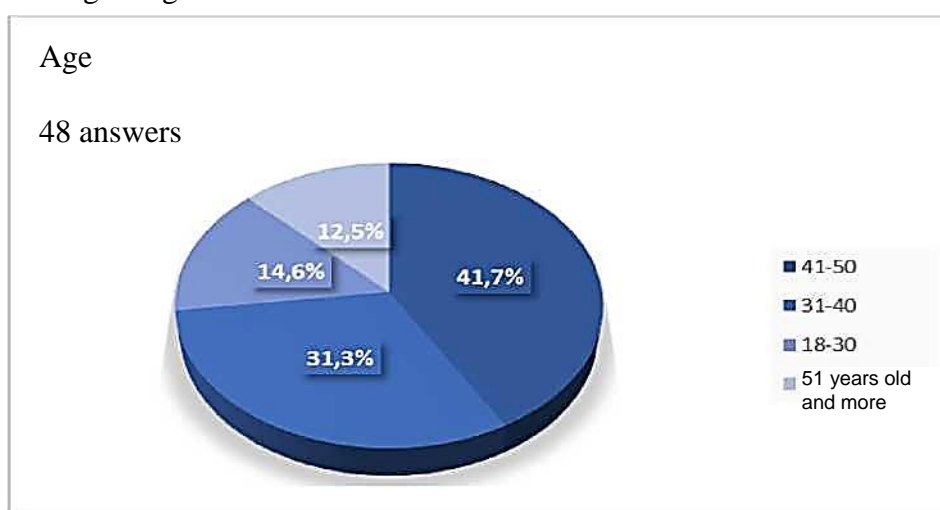


Figure 2. Age of respondents.

Source: Own study based on survey results.

When analysing the educational level of project participants (Figure 5), it is easy to note that the most numerous groups include representatives with primary education (47.5%) and basic vocational education (47.9%). Secondary education was held by 4.2% of respondents, and no one had a university degree. This shows that people with a lower level of education most often have problems concerning their professional situation and social exclusion. This in turn supports the thesis that projects should be launched to improve their social and professional competences.

The next question from the metric concerned the employment status of the respondents after the end of the projects. This question can be considered the most important in the entire survey, as it clearly indicates the number of people working after the end of participation in aid projects. The most numerous group was found to be employed - 75% of respondents found employment 3 months after the end of the project.

The core part of the survey was the questionnaire. Question one in the questionnaire was designed to find out which specific project the respondents had participated in. The question was of a closed nature.

"How did you find out about the implementation of the Active and A More Active Zbroślawice projects?" was another question asked to respondents. The question aimed to identify the main channel of communication, between the municipality and people at risk of social exclusion. The distribution of answers is illustrated in Figure 3.

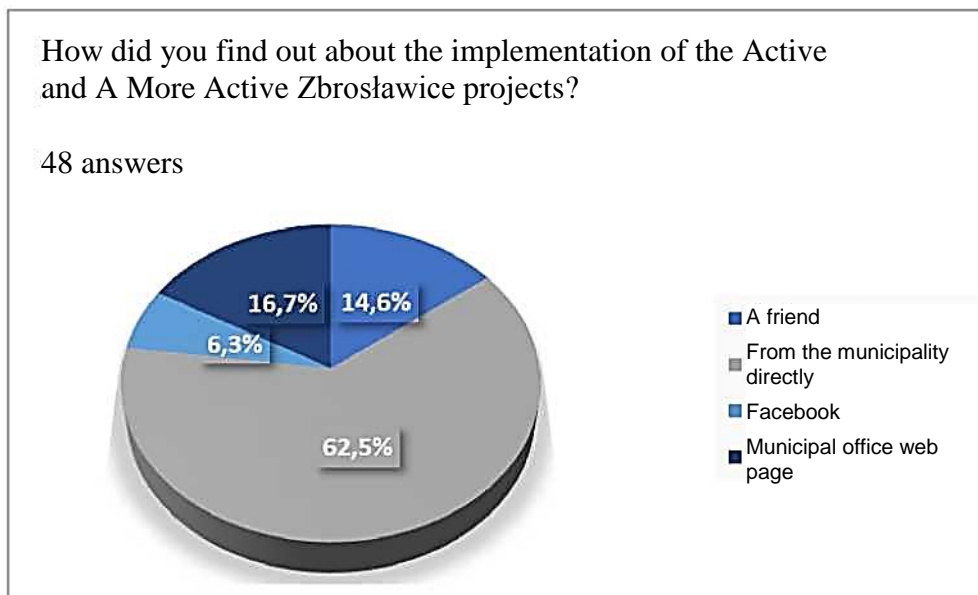


Figure 3. Channels of communication of the municipal office with project participants.

Source: Own study based on survey results.

The analysis of answers to the next - 3 question "Did your professional situation improve after participating in the project?" allowed us to effectively and quite quickly determine the usefulness of the Active and A More Active Zbroślawice projects. The answer "Yes" was given by 81.3% of the respondents.

"Did you participate in all the training courses of the ongoing projects" was another question to determine people's involvement in the projects. The majority of people were very committed to the project in order to improve their professional situation. 68.8% of all respondents participated in all the training provided by the projects surveyed.

The analysis of the answers to the next fifth question, "How do you evaluate the projects implemented in the municipality of Zbroślawice aimed at strengthening social and professional activity?" made it possible to determine the satisfaction of project participants. The most numerous group were those who assessed the projects implemented in the municipality very well (45.8%) or well (37.7%), which gives a total of 83.5% of those satisfied.

Question number six "After participating in the project, did you manage to find employment by improving your professional competences?" was aimed at determining the effectiveness of the project's training to improve participants' professional competences. 75% of the respondents declared to have found employment by improving their professional competences. This group consisted of 36 people.

The next question concerned the sector in which employment had been found (Fig. 5).

In Figure 4, the number 12 represents the number of people, which is 33.3% of all respondents who marked the first answer. Similarly, the number 10 represents 27.8% of all respondents who marked the second answer, and so on.

If you have found employment after participation in the project, in which sector?

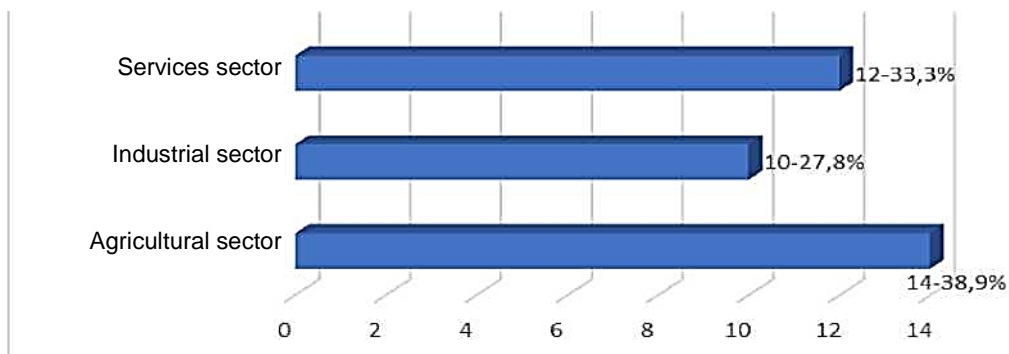


Figure 4. Percentage share of sectors in the employment of people participating in the surveyed projects.

Source: Own study based on survey results.

Another question included in the survey was an open one, “What impact do you think the projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice have on local society?” aimed to determine the impact of the projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice according to the opinion of those involved. Only 21 survey participants answered the question. The answers varied, however, the main motive was improving the living conditions of the residents. On the other hand, some people answered that the projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice are helping them to get back on their feet and, consequently, are helping them to become professionally active.

The distribution of answers to the multiple-choice question “What do you think should be improved in order to make the residents of the municipality of Zbrosławice more economically active?” is presented in Figure 5. In Fig.5, the number 8 represents the number of people, which is 16.7% of all respondents who marked the first answer. Similarly, the number 26 represents 54.2% of all respondents who marked the second answer, and so on. The residents, and at the same time the participants of the projects, clearly indicate that the best way would be to create new jobs. This was the answer chosen by 56.3 % of all respondents.

What do you think should be improved in order to make the residents of the municipality of Zbrostawice more economically active? (max. 2 answers) 48 answers



Figure 5. Development directions of the municipality in the social sector according to the respondents.

Source: own study based on survey results.

The next question, "How long were you unemployed before joining the projects?" was aimed at determining the career break of the project participants. The largest number, 19, had been unemployed for about a year before joining the project.

The distribution of responses to the final multiple-choice question, "What, in your opinion, is the main factor in getting an attractive job?" is illustrated in Figure 6. In Fig. 6, the number 31 represents the number of people, which corresponds to 64.6% of all respondents who marked the first answer. Similarly, the number 16 represents 33.3% of all respondents who marked the second answer, and so on.

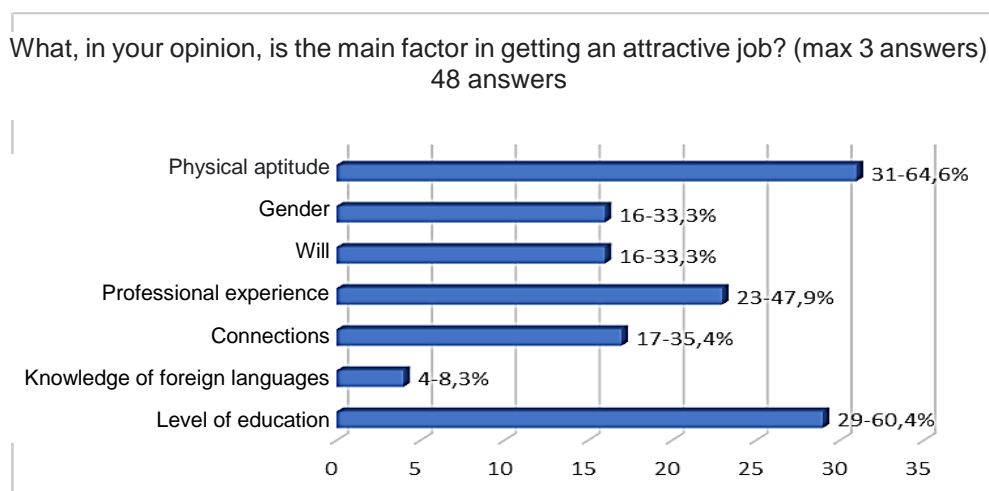


Figure 6. Factors for obtaining an attractive job according to the respondents.

Source: own study based on survey results.

The responses presented were quite unexpected, as the majority of respondents (31 people, 64.6%) believe that physical aptitude is the main factor for receiving an attractive job. 29 people, on the other hand, believe that the level of education is the main factor for receiving an attractive job. The least frequently selected category, surprisingly, turned out to be knowledge of foreign languages, with only 4 people believing that knowledge of foreign languages allows one to receive an attractive job offer.

7. Summary

On the basis of the results of desktop analysis and surveys, it is evident that the projects implemented in the municipality of Zbrosławice, aimed at strengthening social and professional activity of local communities, had a positive impact. The assumed project indicators have been achieved and, consequently, the projects have significantly contributed to improving the professional situation of a large group of participants in the “Active Zbrosławice” and “A More Active Zbrosławice” projects. Through the projects, the municipality achieved the target indicators at a level above the minimum required (the required 25% employment effectiveness - achieved 40% and 48%), and this contributed to a positive impact on the local community in terms of employment and reduction of social exclusion. More than 75% of the people participating in the projects managed to become economically active. This shows the positive impact of the municipality's measures to reduce unemployment and avoid social exclusion of the municipality's residents.

Respondents see a great impact of the projects under 9.1.5 ROP on their social and professional status. Most of the respondents believe that it is thanks to participation in the project that their life situation has improved. Project participants also indicated, in their opinion, further development directions of the commune in the aspect of professional activation of residents, which should be oriented mainly towards the creation of new jobs for residents living in the commune.

Summing up the entire study, the assumed study hypothesis stating that the activities undertaken by the municipality of Zbrosławice and the projects implemented in the period 2014-2021 contributed to strengthening the social and professional activity of local communities and strengthening the human potential was confirmed.

The municipality of Zbrosławice strives to improve the lives of its residents through the implementation of social tasks. A larger number of implemented projects would allow even better effects to be achieved, e.g. in terms of lowering the unemployment rate, social integration and communication, caring for the environment, better education, health care and active leisure. Systematic monitoring of areas at risk of social exclusion will allow for early detection of social risks and elimination of the risk of social exclusion and rising unemployment rates. It is recommended for the municipality to create a task force for raising funds from EU funds and for effective project management, so that the implementation of social or investment projects is not an occasional event, but becomes part of a systematic practice of experience in line with the municipality's strategy for improving the life of local communities in the municipality of Zbrosławice.

Acknowledgements

The results presented in the paper are the part of the statutory work 13/040/BK_22/0107 carried out at the Department of Management, Silesian University of Technology. The paper is the result of the seminar entitled “Areas of project management in organizations” that took place on December 13, 2022 in Zabrze.

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