

A FUND FULL OF KNOWLEDGE

*Report on the evaluation of projects
implemented as part of the Scholarship and Training Fund
by Polish higher education institutions*

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1. CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY	3
INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMME.....	3
METHODOLOGY	4
TOOLS AND SAMPLING	6
2. MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS OF THE STUDY	7
3. BENEFIT AREAS – SUPPORTING THE TEACHING ACTIVITIES OF HEIS	8
- INCREASING STUDENT MOBILITY	10
- NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES AND FIELDS OF STUDY	11
- NEW TEACHING METHODS	13
- STUDYING AND THE LABOUR MARKET	16
4. BENEFIT AREAS – BUILDING THE POTENTIAL OF STAFF	18
- STAFF TRAINING	18
- SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH	21
- DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER PATHS.....	22
5. AREAS OF BENEFITS - INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	23
- NEW FIELDS OF ACTIVITY OF THE INSTITUTION	24
- DEVELOPMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL CONTACTS	25
- INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTITUTION	30
- DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING INFRASTRUCTURE	31
6. BENEFIT AREAS – INTERNATIONALIZATION	32
- ESTABLISHING COOPERATION WITH PARTNERS FROM THE DONOR STATES	33
- BENEFITS RESULTING FROM PARTNER COOPERATION	36
- SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY OF PARTNERSHIPS	40
7. EXPLOITATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTCOMES.....	41
- DISSEMINATION OF OUTCOMES	42
- THE POTENTIAL OF OUTCOMES IMPLEMENTATION	44
- PROJECT CONTINUATION	47
8. PROBLEM AREAS	48
- TIME SCHEDULE-RELATED PROBLEMS	49
- PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM FORMAL ISSUES	49
- PROBLEMS LINKED TO THE PARTNERSHIP	51
- INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF PROJECT PROMOTERS’ INSTITUTION	53
- PROBLEMS WITH ENSURING OUTCOME SUSTAINABILITY	54
9. DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY.....	56
- CONDITION 1: HUMAN RESOURCES	56
- CONDITION 2: FLEXIBILITY	57
- CONDITION 3: PARTNERSHIP OF GOOD QUALITY.....	57
- CONDITION 4: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT	58
- CONDITION 5: IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	58
- CONDITION 6: SYNERGY WITH DOMESTIC PARTNERS	59
10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	59

1. CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY

Information about the Programme

The Scholarship and Training Fund (STF) was established under agreements between Poland and: Iceland, Liechtenstein, and the Kingdom of Norway, which provided non-repayable financial aid for the cooperation of educational institutions from Poland and the aforementioned countries (called Donor States).

The overall objective of the Fund was to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations in the area of education between Poland and Donor States through:

- increased student and HEI staff mobility between Poland and the Donor States;
- increased and strengthened inter-institutional cooperation and partnerships between institutions active in the area of education (at the level of primary, higher, vocational and adult education) in Poland and in the Donor States.

In Poland the role of the Programme Operator was provided by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System. In the years 2013-2016 (the second edition of the Fund – subject of the evaluation study described below), funds were allocated to the implementation of the projects in the total amount of EUR 15.5 million.

As part of the Fund's educational offer, the following initiatives could be co-financed:

- study periods and practical placements for students;
- preparatory visits undertaken by representatives of education institutions in order to establish or develop cooperation and/or prepare a joint project as part of the remaining measures covered by the Fund;
- activities aimed at the improvement of the quality of study programmes offered in foreign languages by Polish HEIs;
- activities intended to improve the quality of teaching and the didactic capacity of the Polish education system;
- activities aimed at the development of the didactic offer;
- activities aimed at increasing the participation of Polish educational institutions in international programmes, student exchange programmes and increasing the possibilities of organizing international events.

These initiatives could be undertaken as part of four measures:

- *Mobility Projects* – a measure intended for HEI students and staff (academic, research and administration);
- *Preparatory Visits* and *Study Visits* – measures addressed to the staff of educational institutions;
- *Inter-institutional Cooperation* – measure meant for educational institutions (schools, HEIs, research centers) implementing projects with a foreign partner;

- *Development of Polish Higher Education Institutions* – a measure aimed at Polish HEIs implementing projects on their own or in cooperation with a foreign partner.

Mobility Projects

Academic exchange projects, allowing students to go to partner universities for study period and practice, while staff - conducting classes in partner universities and participating in foreign training and conferences.

Preparatory Visits and Study Visits

Short visits taken by the representatives of educational institutions, aimed at: establishing cooperation between institutions, maintaining and developing already existing contacts, preparing and planning a joint project.

Inter-institutional Cooperation

Projects of bilateral scientific, academic but also school cooperation, realized jointly by institutions from Poland and the Donor States. The partners share their experience and knowledge, working together on solutions of specific problems.

Development of Polish HEIs

Projects supporting the development of the didactic offer and improvement of the organizational efficiency of Polish HEI. These projects allowed, among others, creating new study programmes and preparing new courses, modules, specializations.

Methodology

The main objective of the evaluation study was to assess the support given to Polish educational institutions in the framework of the second edition of the Scholarship and Training Fund (projects implemented in the years 2012-2016). The overall scope of evaluation was also accompanied by the following specific objectives:

- evaluation of the extent to which projects accomplished under the second edition of the Scholarship and Training Fund have contributed to achieving the strategic and specific objectives of the Programme;
- an assessment of the impact of projects implemented within the framework of the second edition of the STF on individual Project Promoters and on the institutions accomplishing the STF projects;
- an assessment of the quality and sustainability of the project outcomes achieved by the STF's institutional Project Promoters.

The following evaluation criteria have been used at the planning stage:

- **effectiveness** (Have the objectives of the STF Programme been achieved and, if yes, to what extent?);
- **relevance** (To what extent the objectives of the STF projects are consistent with the needs of the recipients?);
- **usefulness** (To what extent the results generated by the STF Project Promoters correspond to the needs of target audience of these results?);
- **sustainability** (To what extent project outcomes are long-lasting and sustainable?).

The decision about selection of the aforementioned evaluation criteria was decided on the basis of the survey results conducted with involvement of the external experts responsible for the content-related assessment of the applications submitted within each call for proposals. As part of a pilot survey conducted prior to the start of the evaluation study, focus group interviews with experts were conducted, during which they identified the most important factors for the quality and success of the STF projects. The results of the auditorium testing, conducted during the meeting, were also analyzed. Asked about the areas of the projects that should be subject of special attention during the evaluation, the experts pointed out that the research should primarily be focused on content-related aspects of the projects, and not technical issues. As a key area of evaluation experts pointed out the outcomes of the projects - quality and sustainability, and secondly - the efficiency of funds disbursement. Thematic areas identified on the basis of general and specific objectives of the STF and the nature of projects carried out in the second edition of the Programme were subject to evaluation. Key questions and relevant evaluation criteria have been assigned to individual thematic areas of the evaluation.

Evaluation areas	Selected key questions	Evaluation criterion
Project objectives	<i>Has the project achieved the intended objectives? Have the intended objectives responded to actual needs of institutions carrying out the projects?</i>	Effectiveness, usefulness
Outcome quality assessment	<i>Do the outcomes correspond to the recipients' needs? Do the recipients use project outcomes? How do they do that? Has the added value of the project been identified?</i>	Usefulness, relevance, sustainability
Partnership	<i>Does the participation of a Donor State partner affect the quality of implemented project? What factors determine the success of partnerships?</i>	Effectiveness, usefulness
Substantive assumptions	<i>What is the relationship between project assumptions and strategic objectives of STF? What is the impact of the accommodation of strategic objectives and priorities defined by the Operator on the quality of the implemented project? (applies in particular to projects including "the green priority").</i>	Relevance, effectiveness, usefulness
Impact	<i>How is the project impact on prospective stakeholder groups? What was the STF projects' impact on institutions engaged in their implementation?</i>	Sustainability, usefulness, relevance
Outcome dissemination	<i>How do the Project Promoters disseminate the outcomes of projects co-financed with the STF funds? What target groups do the Promoters reach through the adopted strategy for the dissemination and use of the outcomes?</i>	Sustainability, usefulness
Administration and procedural issues	<i>How do the Promoters assess the project implementation rules and administration procedures? Have administration and procedural issues affected project implementation, and if yes, to what extent?</i>	Effectiveness, usefulness

Evaluation of the second edition of the STF covered the projects carried out in the framework of the following measures: *Mobility Projects in Higher Education, Inter-institutional Cooperation, and the Development of Polish Higher Education Institutions. Preparatory Visits and Study Visits* were excluded from the evaluation study due to their character, which differs from the remaining types of projects (short duration; objectives focusing on establishing a partnership, preparation of new projects or summing up the completed activities; inability to comply with the sustainability criterion).

Tools and sampling

As part of the evaluation survey, both quantitative and qualitative study methods were used, as well as desk research analyzes. Triangulation of research tools was associated with the different types of projects implemented under the second edition of the STF, the triangulation of research methods allowed for gaining in-depth information on projects. The quantitative study was attended by Project Promoters implementing projects within the framework of *Mobility Projects* (a questionnaire for individual participants in mobility flows) as well as *Inter-institutional Cooperation and Development of Polish HEIs* (a survey for representatives of institutional project teams). Qualitative research was carried out by representatives of *Inter-institutional Cooperation and Development of Polish HEIs* projects - *focus group interviews* (FGI) and *case studies* were included in the qualitative survey.

The survey questionnaire focusing on mobility projects has been sent by the STF team to all Project Promoters at the stage of submitting completion reports concerning co-financed activities. For the purpose of this evaluation, the survey is treated as an element of a desk research (due to its realization prior to the commencement of the evaluation process), however survey results will be included in the study report.

Sampling for *computer-assisted web interview* (CAWI), addressed to the Project Promoters of the *Inter-institutional Cooperation and Development of Polish Higher Education Institutions* measures, is intended for a full survey, which means that the online questionnaire will be sent to all institutions carrying out projects under the two measures. However, it should be noted that representatives of some institutions, which obtained STF funding may not send back the filled-in questionnaires, as the survey is anonymous and voluntary and may result in lower than 100% return rate. CAWI survey was attended by 89% of institutional Project Promoters, which is very high return rate. This is probably due to the relatively small number of institutional projects (76 in total) and because of the fact that the Project Promoters were invited to participate in the evaluation study by representatives of the STF Operator.

In the qualitative survey, the representatives of the *Inter-institutional Cooperation and Development of Polish Higher Education Institutions* took part. The selection of participants for focus group interviews (FGI) from the overall sample of CAWIs was primarily related to the location and availability criteria, which is directly related to the focus of group interviews (the need to gather all interviewees in one place and time). Three focus groups were implemented in different regions of Poland. Representatives of one-fifth of the institutions implementing the projects within two measures participated in this phase of study.

As part of interviews with all groups of respondents in case studies (addressed to Project Promoters of *Inter-institutional Cooperation and the Development of the Polish Higher Education Institutions* measures) nonprobability sampling will be used, which is characteristic of qualitative research (e.g. institutions implementing several STF projects or activities identified by the STF team as good practices).

In the second edition of the STF, not only universities but also schools (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary) also participated in the projects under the *Inter-institutional Cooperation*. There were 6 schools in the whole edition of the Programme. The evaluation was covered by all institutions, but their numbers were too small to carry out comparative analysis of schools and

universities, and to draw more general conclusions about the impact of the STF on Polish schools. School data is excluded from this report which was concentrated on higher education sector in Poland.

MEASURE	DATE
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MOBILITY PROJECTS	by the end of September 2016
ANALYSIS OF DATA SUPPLIED	March 2015
PILOT STUDY	April 2015
RESEARCH TEST CAWI	December 2016 – January 2017
FGI STUDY	February-March 2017
CASE STUDIES ANALYZE (GOOD PRACTICE)	March 2017
DEVELOPMENT OF RESULTS	March-April 2017
PREPARING A REPORT	April 2017

It should also be noted that the quotations included in the report have been significantly shortened (especially in case of long, multi-threaded statements of respondents) and edited (primarily to eliminate inclusions, digressions, unfinished thoughts, and colloquial speech).

2. MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS OF THE STUDY

- The Scholarship and Training Fund provides support for the development of didactic and research activities at the university, with particular emphasis on teaching (modernization of the didactic offer, implementation of new fields of studies, development of new didactic materials), and the research component complements the main activity area of the university.
- According to respondents' declarations, STF projects are most often implemented as a result of existing internal needs, although this is not always the strategic need of the institution. Sometimes the project is a result of the individual needs of research or teaching staff (STF projects often result from need of professional development or research career). Interestingly, case studies analyzes have shown that coordinators of individual activities in different faculties and departments are often unaware of the fact that such projects are being implemented at all, although if there is cooperation within the institution, it significantly influences the quality of the activities and allows synergies.
- The link between specific projects and the general strategic needs of universities is particularly pronounced by smaller institutions. In such cases, the individual coordinators are much more knowledgeable about what has already been done in other projects in the same institution and benefit from previous experience. Because of the scale effect, the impact on the institution of the Project Promoters is more visible.
- The STF projects favored interdisciplinarity - they allowed to combine the activities of different teaching units (faculties, institutes, departments) in a single activity within the Project Promoters institution.

- In many cases, Polish universities did not cooperate previously with institutions from the Donor States, partly because of difficulties in establishing partnerships with these institutions. Participation in the second edition of the STF facilitated contacts between institutions in this area.
- Foreign partners, in opinion of the Project Promoters cooperating with foreign institutions, bring many benefits on both individual and institutional level, and also provide innovative results, as often foreign universities offer something that cannot be offered by national institutions. However, a foreign partnership can constitute a significant administrative and procedural obstacle, which discourages some Project Promoters from engaging in such cooperation, especially while they don't have experience of previous cooperation with the Donors.
- The national partnership is a very important component of almost all institutional projects, improves the quality of results, and enables the STF Project Promoters to establish and strengthen cooperation with external stakeholder groups.
- The participants were very positive in their ability to carry out ecological and environmental actions. Particular support for the activity in this area was a special thematic priority introduced in the second edition of the Call for proposals within the framework of the *Development of Polish HEIs*.
- Compared to other grant programmes used by higher education institutions, the STF is distinguished by its accessibility and flexibility, which facilitates the implementation of projects and fosters elaboration of additional benefits such as the possibility of working out unplanned results, which constitute significant added value.

3. BENEFIT AREAS – SUPPORTING THE TEACHING ACTIVITIES OF HEIS

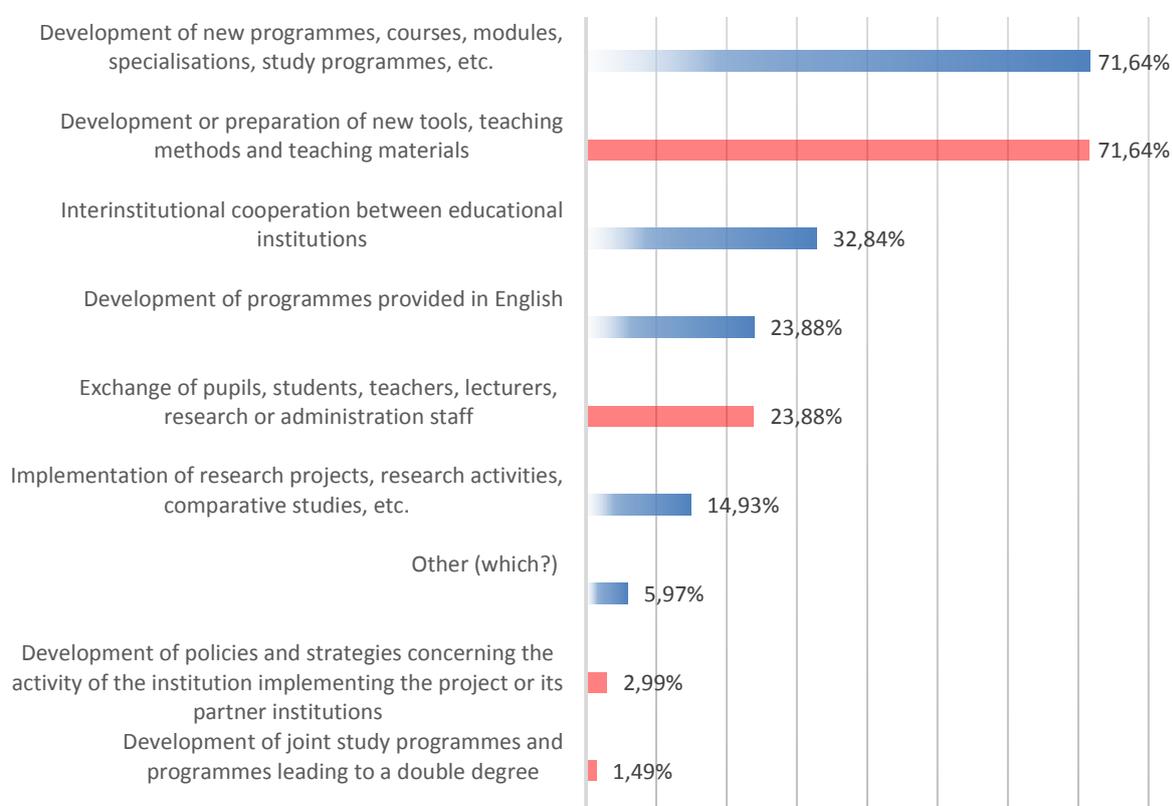
Both the general principles of the STF Programme and the specificity of grants awarded to individual project types made the support and modernization of teaching activities the main benefit area resulting from the implementation of STF projects. In the opinion of their coordinators, STF projects exerted direct influence on education, mainly thanks to the introduction of new curricular contents (new subjects, fields of study and modules) and new methods of working with students. According to the representatives of HEIs participating in the evaluation, being able to finance projects focussing on improving the quality of activities aimed at student education was one of the most important advantages offered by the programme. In particular, respondents highlighted the availability of the STF funding for projects focussing not only on support provided to the education process itself, but also on activities directly aimed at the improvement of teaching staff's competences. What is important - while the principles of using the funds of other programmes concentrated on the development of infrastructure and academic potential of HEIs, the STF funds were seen as an important source of funding the improvement of those HEIs' teaching offer.

It is far easier to obtain funding for research than for activities linked to didactics. There are more opportunities and competitions.

Teaching quality is just as important as research conducted by HEIs. There is, however, not enough funds for teaching tools and materials.

The results of the evaluation survey confirmed that the modernization of teaching offer had become an important project outcome. Over two thirds of respondents declared that their projects had contributed to the development and preparation of new tools, teaching methods and materials relating to student education. At the same time, a similar number of survey participants confirmed that activities as part of STF had influenced the quality of the teaching offer also in terms of developing new fields of study, courses, modules, specialisations and study programmes.

Institutional projects outcomes



The results of the qualitative study also serve as confirmation that activities aimed at the improvement of teaching offer, study programmes and the development of HEIs' didactic capacities were at the heart of projects, while being one of the most important expected outcomes of the activities undertaken. More importantly, the outcomes of such projects generated changes in the approach to students. Most interviewed respondents said that an important qualitative change had occurred as a result of those projects. It consisted in the introduction of individual work with placing special emphasis on tutoring. As a result, students not only gain specific knowledge and competences, but also they are offered an opportunity to make use of their new skills in practice. This is also a direct consequence of the implementation of study programmes developed in

cooperation with entrepreneurs, which guarantees a better adaptation of teaching activities to the needs and reality of the modern labour market.

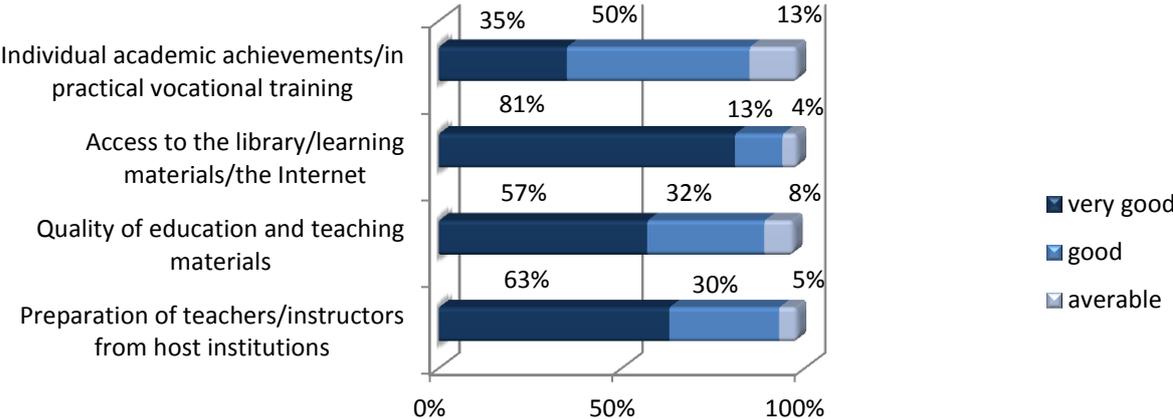
Our teaching offer has taken a new form thanks to raising the attractiveness of the things that we have been successfully dealing with for years. The project allowed us to introduce new additional activities to our teaching which were a great form of immersing in that cultural ecology.

We realised that we did not have inferior competences. However, we do not have that many opportunities for in-service training in new teaching methods and our working conditions are worse than in Norway. We are more overworked, have a high number of students, whereas their lecturers enjoy time free from teaching when doing research. They also obtain funds for training and purchase of materials.

- Increasing student mobility

Mobilities to educational institutions in the Donor States played an important role in supporting student education. In line with the principles of the Programme, student educational mobilities aimed at the improvement of knowledge and skills linked to a specific study programme, and future professional or academic career. The results of survey questionnaires filled in by the students returning from mobilities show that Polish students are really satisfied with their mobility abroad and award high rates to the quality of education in host partner HEIs. The conditions in which knowledge is gained are also praised, among them: access to library resources, quality of teaching materials offered and lecturers’ preparedness for classes. Over 85% of respondents rated these factors as “good” or “very good”. However, students awarded lower rates to their own academic achievements and practical preparation linked to their future activity on the labour market.

*Teaching offer quality evaluation**



*poor and very poor rates carrying values below 1.5% are not included

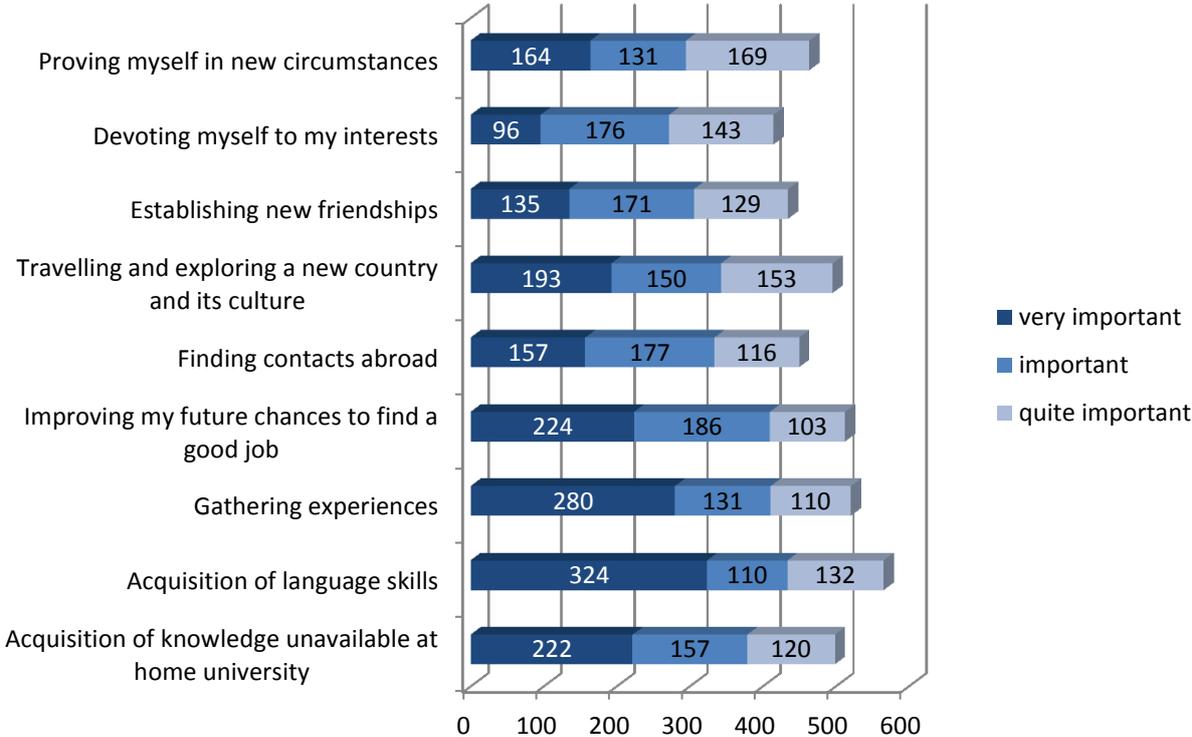
It seems that the most important motivation to effect a mobility was to gain practical experience and acquire specific skills directly linked to the field of study. Such prioritising was also reflected in the results of the ex-post questionnaire filled in by the students returning from their mobilities. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated language skills improvement as the most

important benefit derived from their foreign mobilities. Benefits consisting in gaining new experiences and improving employability also turned out to be essential. The above aspects were recognised as more important than personal benefits such as: opportunities to prove oneself in new surroundings, make new friends and to devote time to the development of personal interests (respondents saw this area of potential benefits as the least important one).

Measuring outcomes also means measuring progress in learning and in skill acquisition. However, there is a non-measurable, but easily noticeable aspect of personality development. We see who is leaving and we see who is returning and what that person does later.

It is easier to convince students to study English when they have seen that all Norwegians are fluent in it. Owing to this, they are able to understand that without speaking foreign languages they won't be a success in the world.

Which aspects of the mobility were the most important to you (ex-post questionnaire for student mobility participants)



The survey also showed that an encouraging amount of funds offered to finance foreign mobilities was seen by HEIs participating in such projects as one of the most important decisive factors in applying for mobility funding. This amount was higher than those provided by other programmes offering similar funding opportunities of foreign mobilities to Norway, Liechtenstein or Iceland. The fact that the foreign mobility funding offer and institutional projects could be combined was often emphasised.

- New study programmes and fields of study

One of the strategic objectives of the Programme consisted in supporting activities leading to the implementation of new study programmes, both as part of newly developed fields of study,

specialisations and courses and as part of modifications made to existing teaching contents and programmes. It is for this reason that projects benefiting from STF funds often focussed on the modernisation of the teaching offer (modernisation of teaching tools and materials) or on the introduction of changes to study programmes (new contents, courses, frequently the launch of new fields of study).

We changed the study programme designed for Environmental Education Methodology by introducing “a field lab”. Although our plans focussed on the Bachelor’s degree programmes only, we finally introduced similar changes to our Master’s degree programmes.

We launched another field of study as part of which we developed a number of approaches, also from the organisational aspect. The 3.5-year-long experience we gained during the first cycle programmes allowed us to watch cooperation with medics.

Combining various subject areas as part of joint study programmes was very important for Project Promoters. That kind of interdisciplinary approach to education often referred to very different areas of knowledge and quite apart in terms of contents. This aspect also turned out to be essential from the perspective of establishing cooperation not only between lecturers in academic subjects representing very different domains, but also between individual units in HEIs with no previous contacts or experience in cooperation, despite functioning within one HEI.

At first sight, biomedical engineering, computer engineering, renewable energy sources and construction are quite remote domains, but they have one thing in common: impressive interdisciplinarity. We are trying to go beyond the framework, in which the HEI operates. By doing this, we have better chances for comprehensive development and transferring various experiences to the teaching process.

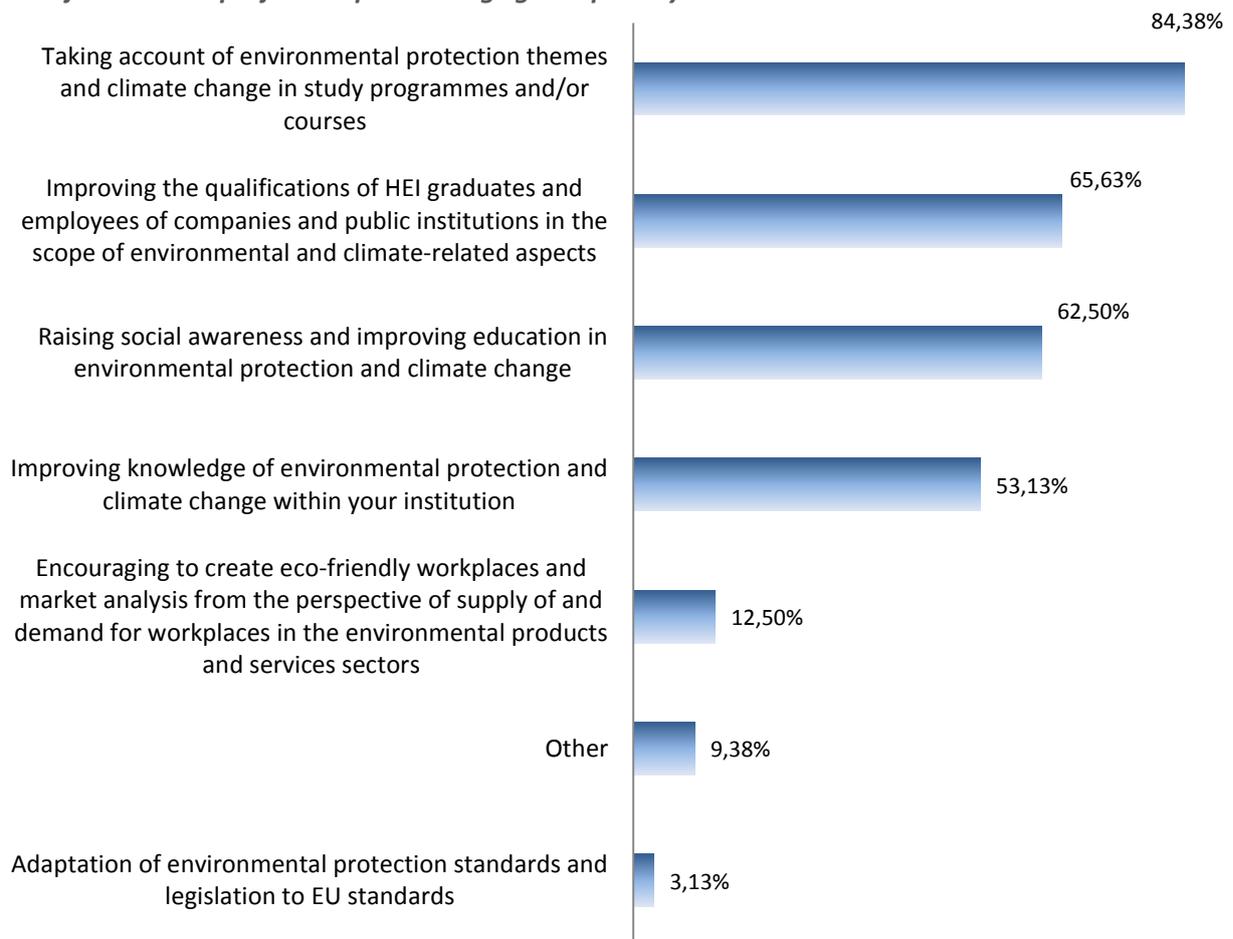
There is quite a big difference between medicine and technology, which is why we were determined to launch a new and more interdisciplinary field of study, whose study programme would combine medical and technological subjects.

The declared interdisciplinarity of education was a direct result of introducing a priority focussing on the environment and climate change. In 2014, projects focussing on this area were given a priority during a call for proposals under the Development of Polish HEIs. Successful projects aimed at broadening study programmes by adding ecology-related issues, promotion of eco-friendly attitudes, exploitation of renewable energy sources and the introduction of green policy elements. Our respondents declared that this priority had contributed to the development of interesting and useful teaching materials and tools, which would not have been developed if not for STF funding. On several occasions, it also turned out that satisfying the priority required close cooperation not only between individual lecturers, but also between individual units within a HEI. This cooperation resulted in the development of study programmes containing components and teaching modules based on knowledge and experiences from very different domains. The HEIs that used STF funding developed new fields of study linked to those domains and areas of knowledge, on which the priority was focussed (e.g. Cultural Ecology, Environmental Philology, Spatial E-development, Environmental Engineering, Biomedical Engineering). Many of them consisted in combining courses forming very remote disciplines and scientific domains.

It is very difficult to find other sources of funds for environmental protection activities. The Programme helped us implement the plans that we had been thinking about for quite a long time.

We had previously planned the development of new specialisations focussing on environmental protection, waste management and nature protection. The funds available under the Programme provided ideal support to our plans.

Subject areas in projects implementing "green priority"



- New teaching methods

The introduction of new student education methods was an extremely important outcome of projects focussing on the development of didactics. In respondents' opinion, even minor modifications to previous teaching methods often proved to be quite a change influencing the way of knowledge transfer and interacting with the group and - consequently - made it easier to get through to students and course participants. In some cases, changes to teaching methods were closely linked to the introduction of new teaching materials (e.g. games or other forms of interactive knowledge acquisition thanks to cooperating within a larger group of students). There were also numerous projects, where emphasis was placed on individual work with students.

Up to then, we had a simple game consisting in selling hotel services, which we wanted to expand. It turned out to be possible thanks to STF funds, and as a result,

we created a product, which was not available to us before. Students are more willing to participate in classes involving games rather than fill in tables in calculation sheets.

An opportunity to work with real software and specialist training, otherwise out of their reach, because of its costs, were the things that our students liked best. The training offered raised the standard of teaching.

One of our projects focussed on a legal clinic. The changes we introduced then are still in place. Students provide consultation using experiences gained during the project.

Tutoring was a very important new teaching method introduced or developed by HEIs thanks to STF-funded projects. Benefits derived from the application of such individualised methods of working with students were particularly often emphasised by qualitative study respondents. Some HEIs taking advantage of STF funds also used tutoring as an element of a broader strategy introducing qualitative changes to educating their students. Therefore, STF projects saw the foundation of informal groups of lecturers and formal units promoting tutoring among lecturers and often developing the rules for tutor/student cooperation.

Having attended training in tutoring, a group promoting this method formed within our faculty.

Our HEI is now an institution possessing the largest number of certified tutors. After the completion of very comprehensive training, we now have thirty active tutors using this method in their academic work.

It is particularly in the case of HEIs implementing a larger number of projects that their coordinators declared that the introduction of tutoring had affected their approach to the systemic education of students and course participants. It is worth emphasising that the representatives of participating HEIs declared that the introduction of new working methods had changed lecturers' attitude to students. In those respondents' opinion, that was mainly due to the opportunity to focus on individual workshop-based work, which made it possible to concentrate their attention on the needs and abilities of individual participants, and not on the whole group following a particular programme of study.

Increased student commitment to the learning process was a frequently declared result of activities implemented under STF-funded projects. A very important project outcome indicated by a number of representatives of participating HEIs consists in a change to the attitudes of students who - as a result of participating in those projects - are more frequently willing to assume greater responsibility for their education process. An increase in the number of project-based activities was an important and frequently indicated change observed by HEIs using STF-funding. Also in this context, respondents underlined students' increased responsibility for activities performed.

Before the project, we were involved in lectures, classes and small projects. Now, some of them have been replaced with a larger project, which lasts two semesters. These activities are more difficult to perform, but we have assumed that owing to them our students will be better prepared for the operation in the labour market, gain more knowledge in their domain and learn teamwork.

The introduction of distance learning elements, with particular emphasis on e-learning, was another vital change implemented by HEIs thanks to STF-funding. Respondents frequently described this method as a magnificent way of implementing teaching modules as part of distance learning. Among other things, this refers to academic units located far from other divisions of a particular HEI (e.g. branch campuses). In such cases, e-learning enables certain lecturers and practitioners to get involved in study programmes, which otherwise would not be possible, as they would have to commute over long distances to provide full-time education.

Let's not forget that distance learning is needed, as it provides the answer to our changing world and young people's approach.

E-learning courses also proved extremely useful in interdisciplinary educational pathways, especially in the case of the subjects, where it would be really difficult to provide a set of textbooks or a choice of particular materials to be compiled by students themselves as part of their preparation for classes. The introduction of teaching materials available online was also linked to the dissemination of the idea of the use of open educational resources among students and lecturers. In this context, respondents emphasised the big popularity of such learning methods in HEIs in the countries of project partners (especially in Scandinavian HEIs).

We have developed textbooks, which are available as open educational resources. Students do not have to buy them. These materials contain a selection of issues and questions raised during classes, and also links to useful websites and source texts.

We offer interdisciplinary modules, for which no textbook is available. We cannot recommend a specific publication, we often use up-to-date source materials. E-learning allows us to present materials, to which students may not have access or which they might find difficult to use on their own.

The outcomes of projects involving e-learning frequently proved useful also in foreign student education (such as contents-related complementing of courses, for example by providing context material or additional source texts in foreign languages). Sometimes, it became apparent that an e-learning programme could be an adequate complementation of an education cycle in cases where a full course cannot be organised (a small number of students interested in a subject, modules provided in foreign languages). Survey respondents emphasise that this is one of the ways in which to deal with low attendance at classes, especially in the case of courses provided outside of the standard full-time degree course offer (e.g. optional classes, post-graduate programmes, in-service training). It also makes it possible to extend the teaching programme, without increasing the number of contact hours.

E-learning is useful when organising courses for exchange students. They form too small groups to organise a full educational pathway in a foreign language for them. Conducting an examination in the English language is not a problem, but the organisation of that kind of a course would be cumbersome.

Before the introduction of courses on Moodle, we had students who were frequently unable to attend classes and showed up only occasionally. No mean effort was needed to encourage them to study. Access to distance learning lectures has improved learning outcomes.

Some of the respondents declared that an increased interest in a particular field of study among candidates was one of the consequences of their projects. This is best proven by higher enrolment witnessed by HEIs. Boosting foreign students' interest in taking up studying at Polish universities was one of the most important outcomes of increasing the attractiveness of the teaching offer of higher education institutions.

We were simply surprised with an almost 100% attendance at most of the classes, as the course was composed of a large number of hours. However, the participants liked our project, which is why they actively participated in the classes.

- Studying and the labour market

Financing projects implemented in cooperation with employers and the corporate sector was a significant area of support funded by the STF and provided to teaching activities. Respondents said that a relatively large number of projects seized the opportunity to cooperate with entrepreneurs, both at the stage of developing project concepts and as part of specific project-related activities. That kind of cooperation was also frequently continued after project completion, for example as part of the dissemination of project outcomes.

The project envisaged the development of a study programme in cooperation with the industry sector. When developing the programme, we held a meeting with representatives of companies operating in the region. We discussed the courses and forms of classes to be included in order for education to meet the needs of those companies.

Our graduates have better chances on the labour market thanks to cooperation with a developer. Therefore, energy-efficient design translates into the needs of the market. Owing to the post-graduate programme offered free of charge, its graduates can boast of a much more extensive knowledge than those who did not participate in the project.

Our graduates do not have problems with finding a job. The fact that we provided them with new skills and raised their awareness of energy-efficient construction is very important and relevant. It has a direct impact on the HEI and on the construction sector, which obtains specialised staff in return.

STF funding awarded to the programme of workshops and hands-on training for students proved important in this context. In respondents' opinion, this is a very attractive form of education, which is also worth continuing in cooperation with business partners and other representatives of the world of work. The need for such projects and teaching modules was also confirmed by the demands of the students themselves who - as part of internal evaluation and the identification of expectations exercises - indicated that the element of cooperation with employers included in study programmes implemented by their HEIs was not given enough prominence.

Even today, students recollect their summer school and its immensely popular workshop conducted by the managerial staff of a power station and electrical power and heating plant. I think this has brought lots of benefits.

Foreign students came to study here to find a job. They were very happy with the classes, although they had some reservations as to a small number of hours of hands-on training linked to industry.

Such activities were often preceded by a needs analysis serving the purpose of extending the teaching offer and introducing new fields of study conducted from the perspective of knowledge and competences expected by employers, especially in the context of making use of the outcomes at the stage of entering the labour market.

Owing to STF-funded projects, contact was established with practitioners, which made it possible for students to gain knowledge related to company operations. One example of such a synergy are projects implemented by a HEI located in the Pomorskie Province, which being a prospective location for the first nuclear power plant and the region where shale gas deposits have been identified - proved a potential partner in activities implemented in this domain. Those who implemented the project analysed the needs of a number of local government institutions, among other things, in the context of future demand for staff. Owing to this, programmes were developed from the perspective of their usefulness to the labour market in the context of problems and challenges faced by the public sector at the local level. The implementation of the project helped to bring education provided in the HEI closer to the needs of a specific group of employers so that graduates could possess practical skills and knowledge useful in their future job.

As part of the programme, we teach a subject which focusses on different issues linked to urban renewal. People responsible for the programme decided to invite practitioners active in various fields to deliver a series of lectures. That was possible thanks to the contacts established during the project, as part of which we set up an informal council of employers from our region.

Respondents repeatedly declared that the development of the teaching offer had taken account of the ongoing evaluations and permanent monitoring of students' needs and expectations. Owing to this, it was possible to adjust the study programmes to students' needs, which mainly focussed on finding an attractive job in the future. There were also declarations concerning the use that students can make of course attendance certificates, especially as part of optional programmes. Their popularity is the best proof of the relevance of such courses to the labour market.

Graduates can find employment in various places, but we are trying to identify where a specific competence will be much in demand and what to do to make it more reliable to prospective employers. We are truly satisfied when students are happy because they have found a job. When monitoring the careers of our graduates we note that there are discrepancies between education and the actual place of work. This means we should put more emphasis on optimising public expenditure on higher education.

We developed two optional courses for full-time and part-time degree programmes. Those who attempted to take the examination had the opportunity to be awarded a certificate. The standard to satisfy was quite high, as the pass mark for students to attain was 80% of correct answers. These certificates proved very useful and we even had to print their duplicates for those who needed them for job-related purposes. It is not a piece of paper to be shelved.

Programme experts also confirmed that the cooperation of HEIs with employers helped design study programmes properly adjusted to the requirements of the labour market. They noticed that contact with employers often helped with the determination of potential participants' training needs. The identification of entrepreneurs' needs focussed not only on the education of prospective staff, but

also on designing a training offer for entrepreneurs themselves and for others who are already active on the labour market. It is in this context that respondents quoted not only examples of cooperation with companies, but also with public bodies where employees also take advantage of the training offer available in Polish HEIs. The examples described involved local government and uniformed services officers for whom - among other things - offers of courses and postgraduate programmes were developed thanks to STF funds (focussing on environmental protection, formal and legal issues in their area of professional interest or learning the sign language). Courses using elements of e-learning, owing to which there is no need for regular turn-up at classes, provided as part of full-time degree programmes were another attractive form of improving professional competences.

Aviation law requires that every 3 years aviation industry staff is thoroughly trained also in matters of ensuring safety, so we got in touch with the local airports and introduced a number of courses focussing on airport safety. In this way, our graduates had the opportunity to be employed by an airport and the airport staff who studied with us were able to supplement their qualifications.

Part-time degree programmes linked to the project were intended for officers in active service, for whom that was an opportunity to supplement their education with specialist knowledge intended to help them do their job better.

We met with employers, and mainly with organic farm owners. This allowed us to gain knowledge about their expectations and their interest in studying the proposed field of study. It turned out that they were interested in education, which is why we decided to lodge another application.

4. BENEFIT AREAS – building the potential of staff

Although the majority of STF-funded project activities focussed on the education of students and the development of their competences, STF funds also helped improve the competences of HEI staff. The beneficial influence of such projects is particularly visible in relation to the development of academic staff. Survey participants gave positive ratings also to the opportunity of obtaining project outcomes of an academic nature. They stressed that such outcomes not only influenced their own development, but also that of the institution as a whole.

- Staff training

According to respondents, the Scholarship and Training Fund offered a relatively wide range of benefits to be derived by academic staff. This referred mainly to HEIs implementing the biggest number of diversified activities funded by the STF. The case studies of HEIs actively using the Programme funds as part of several different projects showed that owing to the Scholarship and Training Fund academic teachers had gained new skills and language competences, learnt to use new technologies at work and familiarised themselves with new methods of working with students.

We spent hours talking. I learnt a lot, also about practical issues difficult to learn about from articles and publications.

I was surprised that it was possible to work with students in a completely different way.

I learned how to cope with red tape, my English has improved, I authored an English-language publication and I met lots of people dealing with similar topics.

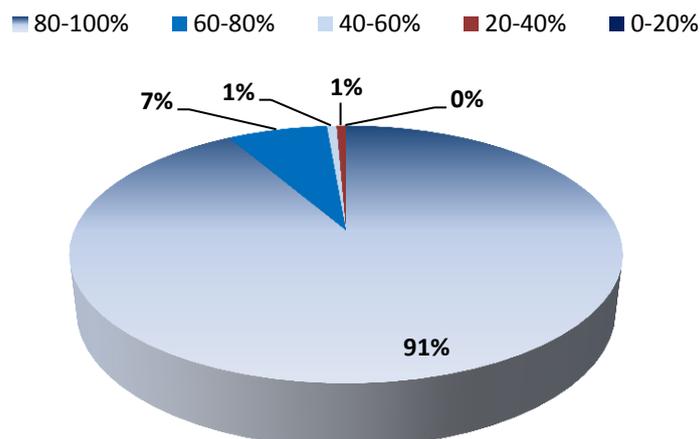
Lots of employees make use of the knowledge they gained during everyday classes with students. In this way, our experiences became part of the everyday teaching process and improved our staff's competences.

As part of the project, we organised training in modern methods of teaching and tutoring for our academic staff. Although this training meant participation in eight meetings, our staff were extremely willing to take part in them.

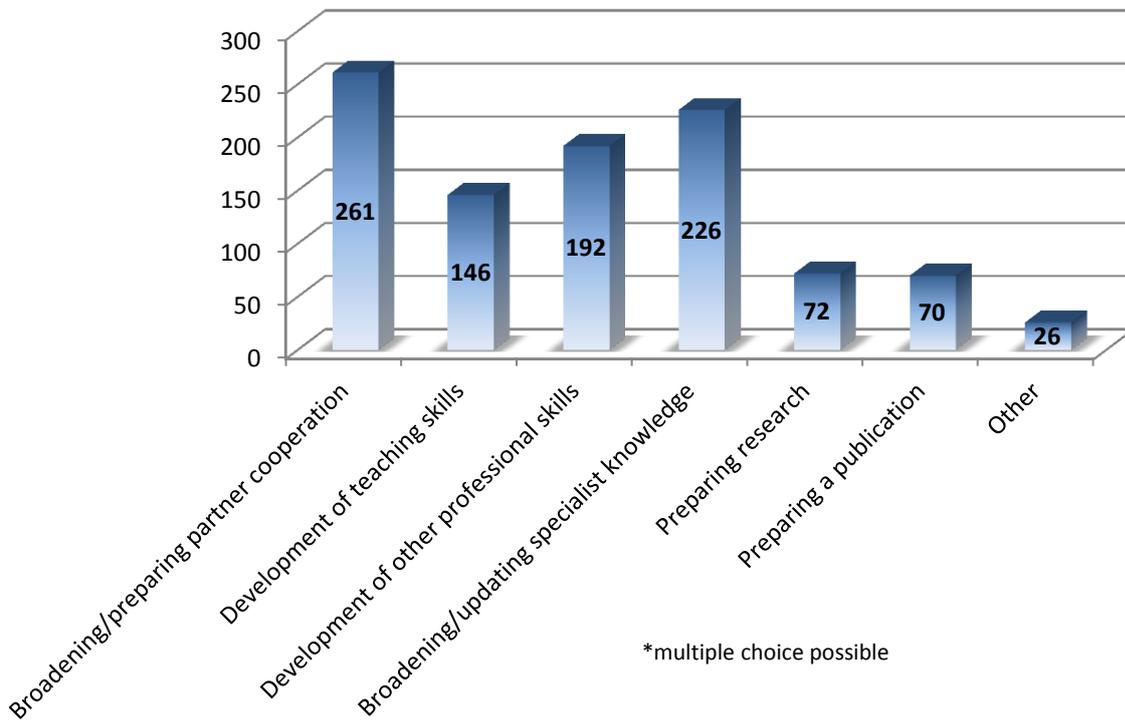
Mobilities to the Donor States using STF funds proved significant from the perspective of developing the competences of staff working in Polish HEIs. Such mobilities were effected by administrative, academic and research staff. The diversity of those mobilities proves that they influence almost each aspect of the functioning of HEIs. As the STF-funded mobility offer was not limited to academic staff mobilities only, but it also included other HEI staff, the benefits it has brought are clearly visible also at the level of the administrative functioning of academic institutions.

The results of the questionnaire filled in by mobility participants immediately on return showed that rates given to conditions for content-related work in host institutions given by HEI staff were much higher than those given by the students. An overwhelming majority of respondents rated the content-related conditions of their mobility as very good or good. The level of benefits resulting from mobilities also obtained high ratings. Over one third of respondents said their mobilities had contributed to additional benefits. The extension of the content-related scope of cooperation by including new topics, establishment of partner cooperation to implement new research projects, improvement of practical language skills and the familiarisation with the work culture of Scandinavian HEIs were seen as the added value of mobilities.

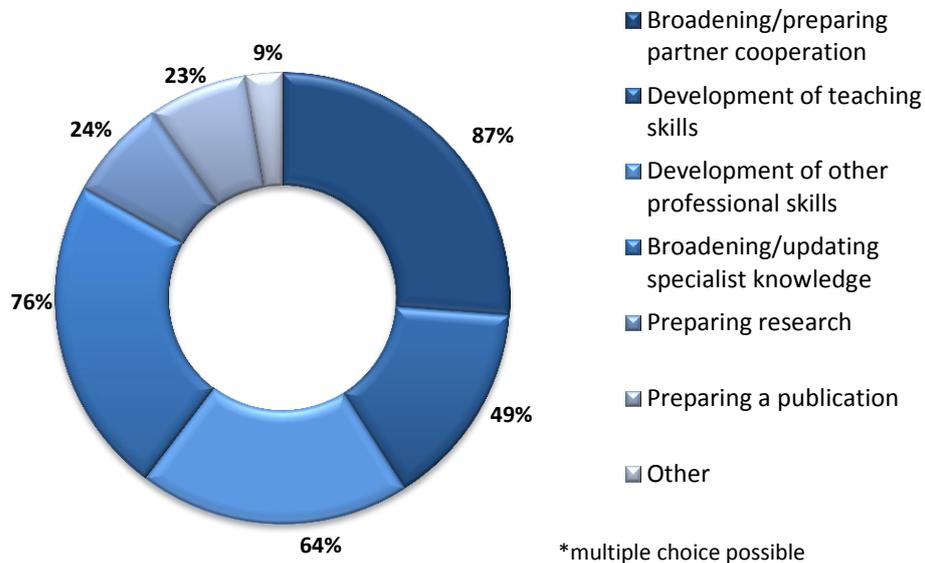
Assessment of HEI staff's satisfaction with their mobility



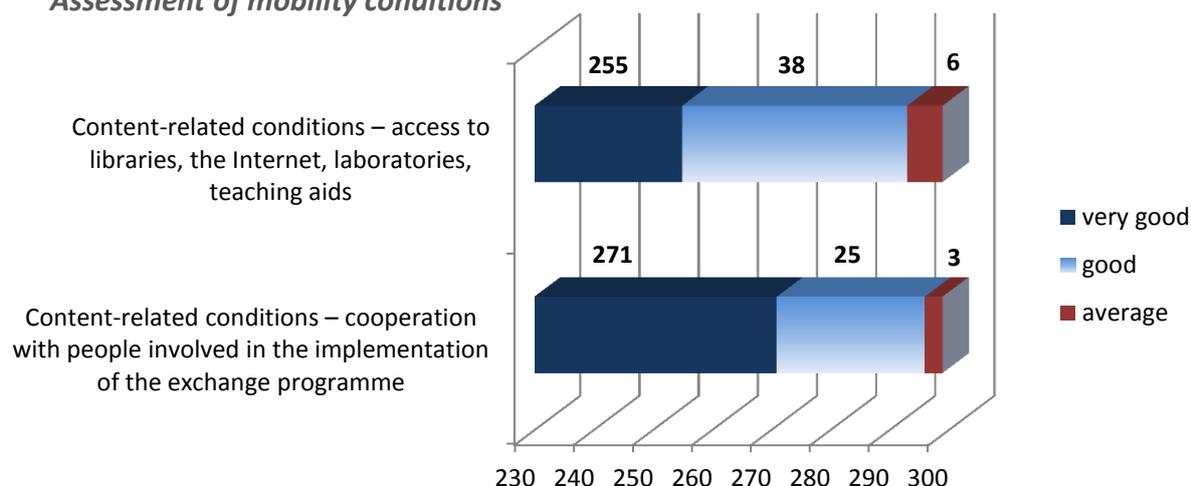
The mobility contributed to*



The mobility contributed to*



Assessment of mobility conditions



- Supporting scientific research

The opportunity to implement joint research projects with institutions from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as conducting own research funded by the STF were a significant area of benefits derived from the implementation of the STF projects. However, it should be emphasised that such activities as part of the STF were implemented by a smaller part of Project Promoters. While an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated in their questionnaires that their outcomes focussed on areas linked to teaching (e.g. development of new programmes and tools), outcomes linked to research were indicated by less than 15% of respondents. This must result directly from the principles and offer of the Scholarship and Training Fund, which largely supported cooperation leading to the development of the teaching offer of Polish HEIs. In spite of that, some projects had their essential research activities successfully funded and brought valuable outcomes resulting from their Project Promoter's activity in this field.

Three of my doctoral students conducted research as part of the project. Although our project mainly aimed at modifying the natural sciences teaching methods, as part of the same activities they also successfully conducted research needed for their doctoral theses.

Projects focussing on teaching are often of great importance for research results.

Our didactic project prepared us for the entry into the area of research. Thanks to our visit to Oslo, we were able to explore some solutions already operating in Europe, develop syllabuses and create textbooks. That was the starting point for the comprehensive development of the HEI.

Some of the respondents saw the opportunity to fund their own research, mainly as part of projects, aimed at the modification of teaching methods, as a very important area of benefits derived from the implementation of their project. The evaluation also proved the existence of quite significant differences in Project Promoters' expectations as to the programme offer. An overwhelming majority of respondents stated that STF-funded activities constituted an important and quite often unique chance for the development of the teaching offer with using external funding and that they would expect such activities to be repeated in the future. However, in this context some respondents had a preference for research over teaching. In their opinion, activities funded by the STF should put much

more emphasis on research activities. In the opinion of respondents, such demands resulted mainly from the specificity of the Polish higher education sector (parameterization, awarding scores to research only, conviction held by HEI authorities that above all, research staff members should be researchers and then - academic teachers). According to some respondents, the implementation of didactic projects is doomed to encounter a number of difficulties resulting from underestimating such activities not only by heads of academic units, but also by HEI authorities expressing a strong preference for research projects. It was also indicated that projects linked to didactics had no essential influence on the development of one's academic career if they had no component directly linked to research. Requests to reinforce the STF Programme by adding an extended component to support research were particularly frequent in interviews held during the qualitative part of the study.

We were pleased that our faculty had derived measurable benefits resulting from the combination of teaching students and a research component.

Funds awarded to projects containing a research component may finance the costs of publications and articles in journals on the Philadelphia List or their translation, or even research equipment.

The Fund could be more orientated towards research and development and not only towards educational activities.

- Development of career paths

Projects implemented as part of the Fund also contributed to the development of HEI staff's academic careers. The development perspective frequently related to research projects whose output - mainly in the form of articles and scientific publications - allowed their authors to climb the academic career ladder and enhanced the perception of them as specialists in specific fields.

The book, which became a part of my habilitation thesis, was created owing to the project.

Thanks to the modifications introduced to classes, I was nominated for the best academic teacher.

Only when applying for habilitation thesis, will I see whether or not the project has influenced my academic career. At that point, experience in the implementation of international projects will not go amiss.

I am enormously motivated when the implementation of a project focussing on teaching is also beneficial for my own academic development.

A number of respondents said that such output as publications exerted direct influence on their planned habilitation processes. The fact of implementing international projects is of great importance for the development of a career path, because, as respondents indicate, this is also something which has a significant impact on the habilitation process as it offers additional scores influencing the assessment of academic work. What should be mentioned in this context are the benefits derived from academic publications by the higher education institutions, as all of the above

achievements of academic staff are reflected in rankings and raise the quality of education offered by HEIs implementing STF-funded projects.

In the process of preparing five books, we developed one monograph influencing the parametric assessment of our institute. This means that the project contributed not only to the development of our academic career, but also to the development of our faculty and the HEI.

In respondents' opinion, original publications produced as a hard outcome of STF-funded projects play an important role in academic career development. This mainly refers to producing publications (e.g. research reports, books and articles in academic journals). What is important, respondents perceived activities in this field as a very important area of the influence that STF-funded activities exert on the development of Polish HEIs. That was mainly due to the tangible benefits that are brought by such outcomes in the context of requirements linked to the parametrization of Polish HEIs. Qualitative research participants frequently indicated the benefit that was offered to HEIs by the opportunity of obtaining additional scores for producing textbooks, course books or scientific publications.

5. AREAS OF BENEFITS - institutional development

Institutional benefits associated with the implementation of the STF projects in most cases were closely linked to the didactic and academic development of the institution (opening of new fields of study, specialization, programmes, etc.). These results exert a broader influence on the institution and its functioning sphere – project's implementation has enabled the institution to be expanded, enabled the introduction of new scientific and didactic areas, strengthening of the institution's existing cooperation with its external environment, and enabled the establishment of new relationships with other entities, including regional or sectoral partnerships.

Projects that influence the Project Promoter's institution, its activities and its relations with the environment are usually preceded by in-depth and detailed needs analysis. Some Project Promoters emphasized that the wider audience was involved in the diagnosis process - not just university employees but also students and even partner institutions. As a result, the actions undertaken by the universities responded to real problems and contributed to the needs identification before the project started.

The projects that were implemented under the STF assumed a diagnosis of the needs of the target groups, so that all efforts were made to bridge some of the deficiencies. Needs were reported by students, employers looking for qualified staff, but also staff.

The impact of the STF activities on institutional development of the university was also recognized by the Programme's experts, but it was noted that there is often a connection between the implemented projects and legislative changes at national level.

Projects for the development of higher education sector often associated with systemic changes. This is the context of internationalization, and earlier the effects of education in the context of the qualifications framework, ECTS context or modular

forms of education. I think applicants are looking for funds to meet the needs arising also in such changes.

- New fields of activity of the institution

The projects aimed at increasing the scope of institution activity at the stage of preparation of the proposal have special impact on Promoters. In this case the results of the development of the didactic offer of higher education institutions implementing the STF projects were of paramount importance. The STF Project Promoters achieved this goal primarily by developing their teaching and research activities, increased interdisciplinary education, introducing practical activities.

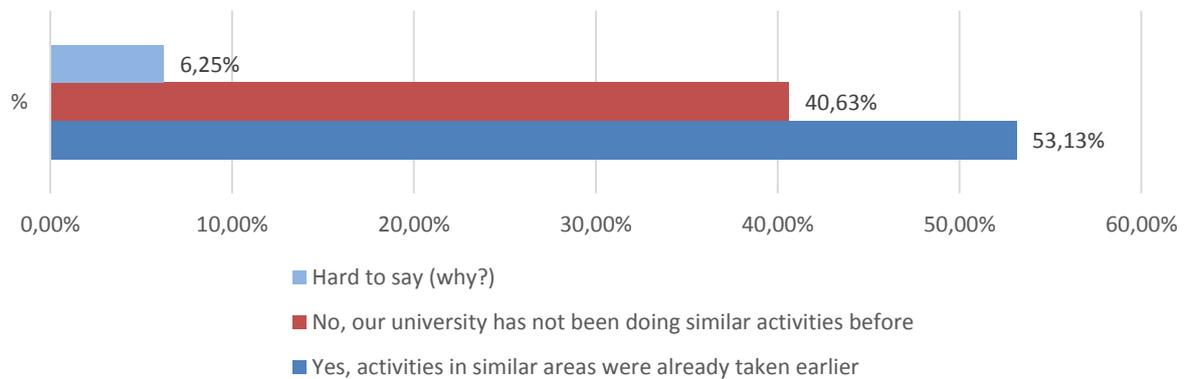
The accomplishment of projects that had a large impact on the Project Promoters institution was linked to an in-depth analysis of needs - usually its result was related to the diagnosed need for institutional development. Respondents pointed out above all the need of further development of activity of the university, as well as enhancement the scope of didactic activity, modernization of the education offer, matching the education programme to the requirements of the labor market. The implementation of the projects was also meant to enable the opening of unique fields of study and to allow the development of new didactic methods, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the university in the eyes of potential students and allowing the institution to distinguish itself among other higher education institutions operating in the region or offering similar education offer.

As we are a teacher education college, we were looking for programmes that could help us finance the preparation and implementation of new postgraduate programmes, courses, workshops.

The second most often mentioned need for institutional development was enhancement of the scope, intensity and quality of the university's scientific activities. This was often indicated by the project coordinators who were employed at home universities as academic staff. The implementation of scientific or research projects allowed the university to start survey in the new field, complement the existing research into the prospects of other institutions (especially foreign ones), and, in the longer term, to set up a research center within the university.

It is worth emphasizing here that the universities carrying out projects under the "green priority" were taking up both the didactic and the research field. These projects also contributed to the institutional development of their universities. As the results of the quantitative study, for 40% of the respondents carrying out activities under the "green priority", the project financed by the STF was the first opportunity to explore this issue. In many cases this also meant introducing interdisciplinary approach into the didactic and research activities of the university - especially in the fields of humanities, social sciences or philosophy.

"Green priority" in the context of previous activities of the university



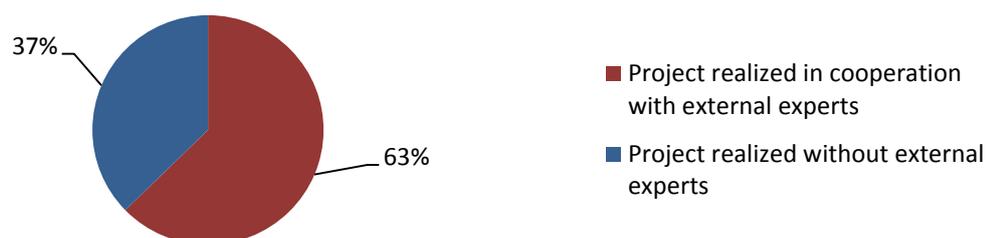
- Development of institutional contacts

The implementation of the STF projects has allowed the Project Promoters to strengthen and expand their existing networks and to establish new relationships with partner institutions. Some respondents of the qualitative study noted that the implementation of the projects also made them aware of the need to maintain close contact with other institutions - so far this issue has not always been a priority in the educational and research activities of the university and the relationship with other institutions was often incidental. The implementation of a project with a significant impact on the beneficiary institution provided a good opportunity for a more thoughtful and planned way of creating a list of partners and institutions and to work with them in a more structured way. The Project Promoters emphasized that the list of organizations and institutions cooperating with their institution is in this case an additional value of the project and will be used by them in the future.

Usually I worked with a person I knew personally. In a few cases, we managed to establish a new partnership, but it was often very difficult.

The implementation of institutional projects under the STF in most cases included outside experts – according to the results of the quantitative survey, they participated in almost 2/3 of the projects. The involvement of external experts was mainly related to their participation in the content-related activities - they brought the knowledge and competences that complement the university's offer. External experts represented a number of institutions - from research and didactic institutions, through public institutions and self-governments to the business environment.

Participation of external experts in institutional projects



While planning the cooperation with external institutions at the project initial stage, then usually the Project Promoters would continue this cooperation. In many cases, the STF project was another project implemented jointly by the partner institutions. This enabled to produce results which were more advanced and better tailored for specific needs of participating institutions. Project Promoters already knew the capacity of the project partner, which helped them to better plan their activities. Previous project experience also facilitated communication with the partner institution.

In many cases getting a project partner was also possible by using of individual networks developed by project team members in the course of scientific research and conferences (also international). Maintaining contacts with graduates employed in public institutions, local governments and media has also made it easier for Project Promoters to cooperate with national institutions.

It was possible to acquire external institutions because I knew people personally. In a few cases, we actually managed to establish a new partnership, because someone liked the idea of the project and decided to get involved. But usually, if one does not have to, he does not want to cooperate. It's just more work, extra papers, extra financial statements.

For some STF Project Promoters it has been a challenge to establish new contacts with external partners if their institutions did not cooperate earlier and there was no individual contacts between their employees. The Project Promoters emphasized that they had tried to invite the institutions active in the same thematic area to participate in the project, but this was not always the case. Participants of the qualitative interviews emphasized that they sometimes experienced from other institutions: distrust, communication problems, and even reluctance to take additional work. There were occasions when external institutions decided to collaborate but it happened after the project starts, or even at the dissemination stage, when they could already assess how they could benefit from the project outcomes. The STF Project Promoters (also those who did not cooperate with the national partner within the project) were very willing to disseminate the results of their activities to external institutions. Although the main purpose of the entire Scholarship and Training Fund was primarily to develop Polish educational institutions, participants of the evaluation survey indicated that this development is not possible in isolation from other educational and research institutions and also from the labor market. Therefore, the results of the projects were also dedicated to many groups of non-university recipients. Project Promoters usually cooperate with external actors in the same sector or industry, and are also engage in local and regional cooperation.

We introduced additional study visits in the schedule, because after our conferences we received invitations from other institutions which were interested in the project and project outcomes.

In many cases, local upper secondary schools (general and vocational schools) have become important partners for universities. Cooperation with schools has benefited the university, in the form of increasing knowledge of the university and its offer among future students, as well as schools (among others, it made it possible to make the curriculum more attractive and to introduce new content and activities of a practical nature).

The secondary schools that have profiles coincide with ours have also benefited from the project - students were invited to our workshops and seminars, learned what we

were doing, visited our education center. We also benefited from contact with them and we continue this cooperation.

As one of the project results we organized the workshops for high school students in all languages, which - in the case of English - also includes interpreting classes. This makes it clear to the students that the philological studies will not be boring and limited to sitting with the dictionary, but the student will actually do something.

We have implemented a specialization and a Master's degree, but the integration of education has also gone down towards technical secondary education. Techniques come to us for classes.

It is worth mentioning that close to one third of the projects have produced outcomes the labor market is benefiting from, a similar number of projects focused on business-oriented topics - this is in line with the university-defined needs related to the willingness to change a learning process into more practical. Cooperation with employers and business environment has allowed universities to tailor new teaching methods and content of education to employers' expectations, but also often has a broader dimension. In such projects, the tools used by the business community and the labor market institutions were developed in order to strengthen the cooperation between the university and business or to use the results of the projects by specific groups of customers on the labor market.

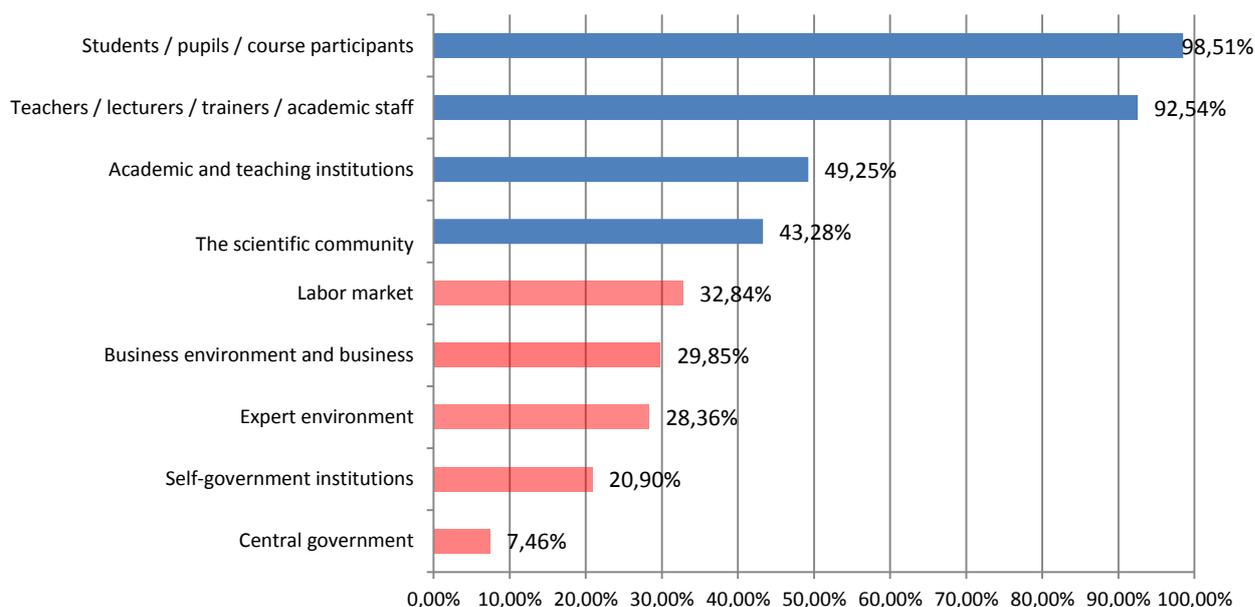
We have created a web platform where business representatives and researchers can gather, where they were matched in terms of research interests. We used our contacts with other companies and incubators.

In over one fifth of cases, the project outcomes were directed to the local government, which also suggests that the Project Promoters tried to make the results of their projects more interactive and influencing not only their institution. In the qualitative part of the survey, the STF Project Promoters emphasized that local authorities are usually interested in the initiatives taken by the universities, and thus initializing contacts with them is not difficult. On the other hand, it is much more difficult to reach the central authorities. This is also confirmed by the results of the quantitative survey - only 7% of the respondents indicated that their outcomes were being used by the central authorities, and they also complained that although they tried to attract some of the central offices (eg. ministry) to the results of their project, they did not receive any response.

We have cooperated with local government units, with regional and provincial politicians. We also everyday get information from them on which direction we should go.

The developed project outcomes were sent to all provinces throughout the country. Two cities asked if we launch another edition of our studies, because they would be very interested in them, and they have no opportunity to implement such a programme.

Recipients of the results of institutional projects presented by groups



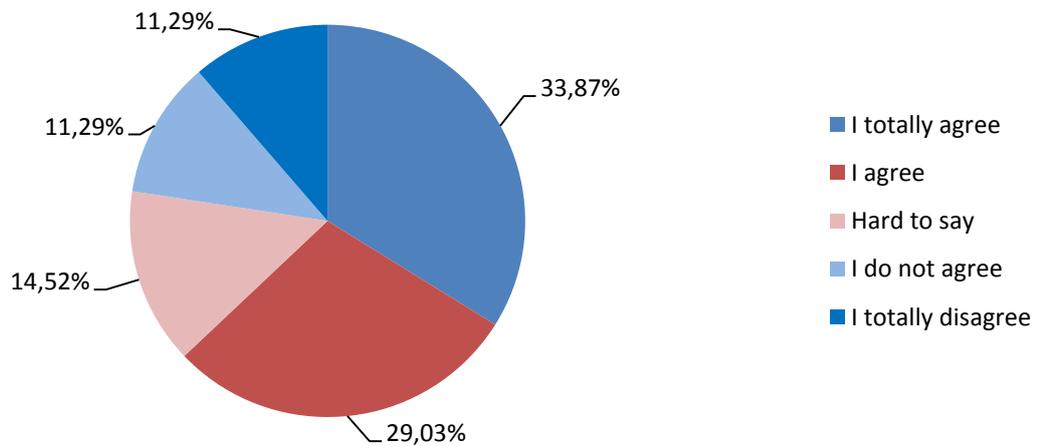
An important institutional outcome was the establishment of long term cooperation with external institutions, resulting in the joint implementation of further projects, both within the STF and within other programmes. Project Promoters emphasized that in many cases this effect was achieved. As a consequence, not only the results of the STF projects have had a lasting impact, but also the institution has increased its activity, resulting in initiation of further pro-development initiatives. More than half of the STF-funded institutions indicated in the survey that the project helped them to establish contact with the new partner institutions. Moreover, the vast majority of respondents also indicated that the implementation of the STF project contributed to the project activity of their institution.

With one of those companies that helped us with conceptual work, we applied later jointly for other funds in a completely different area. This is a substantial proof that cooperation has expanded.

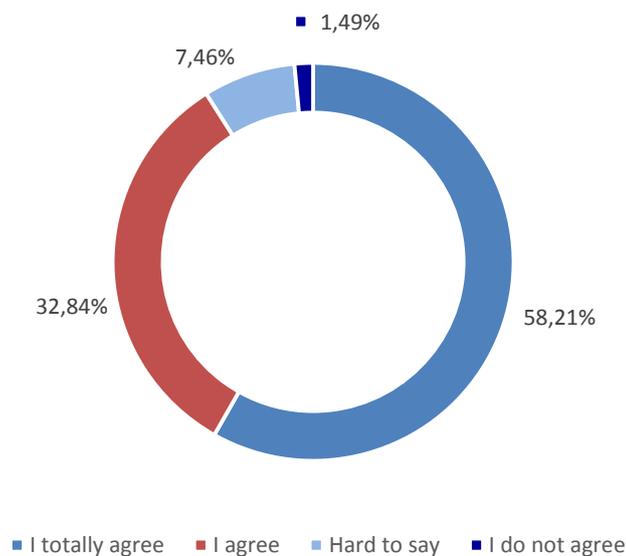
It was also emphasized by the programme's experts how important for institutional development is to establish partnerships between different organizations. They pointed out that it is very often the quality of such cooperation that can determine the success of a project. In this context, inter-sectoral partnerships at the local level can play a particularly important role, especially as they result from an in-depth needs analysis of the university and the cooperating institutions. Making project more realistic positively influences the prospect of implementation and the sustainability of its results.

If the project implies a cross-sectoral partnership, e. g between university and enterprise, such activities often result from the real needs. Such project will have naturally continuation. Greater sustainability and efficiency will emerge.

Thanks to the project we got to know the new partner institutions



STF' activities have increased the project activity of our institution



Establishing cooperation with external institutions in many cases has favored the implementation of “green priority” projects. Respondents implementing such type of projects emphasized that the selection of environmental and sustainable development topics provided an additional motivation for universities to undertake broader cooperation in this area. This is related to the specificity of this topic - environmental issues are relevant to many different stakeholder groups and consequently the outcomes of the projects were targeted to wider audiences.

Green priority allowed us to create the whole idea of the project in fact, because we cooperated with this foundation, but with another project, a few years ago. And priority has made it possible for us to return to this cooperation and to create something together. If not for this priority, then this project would not have been implemented.

This topic was not only about carbon emissions, but on emissions at all, different groups were included. There was a local government, representatives of the City Hall, Environmental Protection, local entrepreneurs.

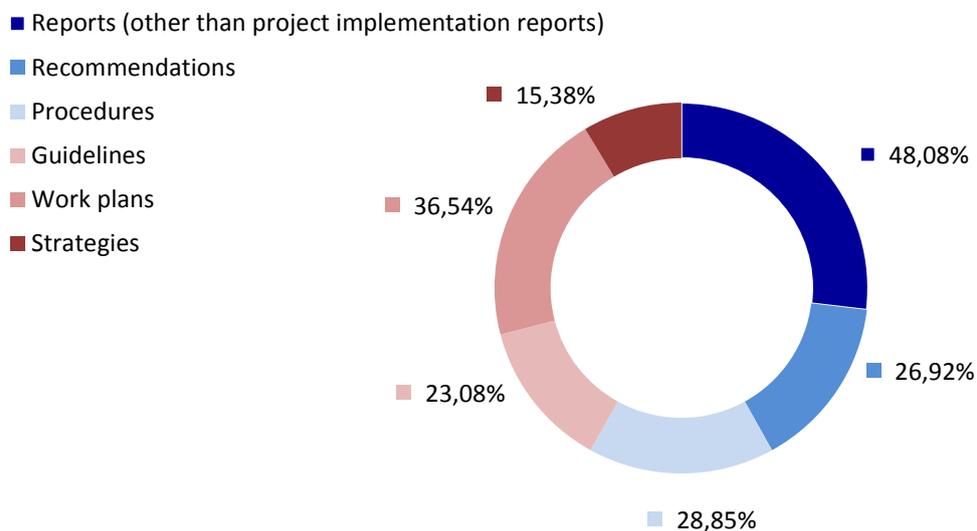
Universities in the "green priority" projects were eagerly supported by experts in environmental protection or renewable energy. Non-governmental organizations and entrepreneurs were also included in the projects. In many cases, local government authorities also participated in the implementation of environmental projects, which supported the activities undertaken by the university and made it possible to use the results of projects on a larger scale.

- Internal development of the institution

Some of the institutional projects were focused on making changes in the functioning of the university. These changes were related to the development of outcomes such as strategies or plans of action which allowed changes within the Project Promoter institution. In the part of projects, not only didactic or scientific staff but also administrative staff and university authorities have participated. As a result, a number of institutions have introduced changes and modifications, covering the structure of the institution, the transformation of the work organization, and the introduction of new working tools and facilities within the institution.

The administrative part of the project was addressed to the university authorities to pay more attention to the needs of the development of research studies and the support of research projects.

Impact of the project results on the functioning of the beneficiary institution - internal documents



Some projects implemented under the "green priority" referred the environmental, ecological and sustainable development issues also to the internal issues of the university. Such projects have made that the universities adopted new strategies or new ways of functioning. In the context of internal changes in higher education, the "green priority" projects have made changes at the micro level in the course of everyday teaching and research activities (e.g resource use, recycling, waste

segregation). Their practical dimension and the fact that they proposed concrete solutions to existing problems made the environmental awareness of university staff and students increased.

For some Project Promoters, internal results were the added value - the project influenced the project team. This type of unplanned outcomes appeared when working together resulted in closer cooperation within the project team and within the faculty, as well as in enhancement of cooperation between staff from different faculties - which also contributed to the increased interdisciplinarity of the activities being undertaken. Increasing the intensity and improving the quality of work within the institution is very important in terms of ensuring sustainability of project results and as a prelude to further projects implemented by the institution.

We always keep in contact with our team, with our external expert also. We have the impression that a network of cooperation has been born in this area and that is probably the added value that you may not see, but it exist.

A new academic culture was established between those who participated in the project. This means that we are friends now, we started to know what each of us is doing, how we work, what kind of people we are.

We are supplementing with colleagues from another faculty, so it has happened that we have prepared two projects and both have received funding, and it came out that they have similar subject. We use our knowledge, we cooperate at every stage and it goes very well.

Institutional changes brought about by the implementation of the STF project also included changes in the way of thinking about university education in a project team, within a faculty or even an entire institution. Project Promoters noted that the very fact of introducing changes in the existing model of functioning of their institution has resulted in discussion. Teams of university staff discussed not only the planned results of this particular project, but also the opportunity to change other aspects of the institution's functioning. This kind of reflection were particularly common in projects that opened up entirely new fields of study, but discussions were also triggered when developing new learning methods or expanding the institution's research activities.

We have certainly started to pay more attention on how to develop a curriculum in general, taking into account the expectations of entrepreneurs.

This project opened the discussion on the strategy of study planning. We have not had such profound didactic discussions in our institute for a long time, because now for the first time our institute has launched a new field of study. It was a very serious change, and there is a discussion at the moment what to do next.

The mere fact of implementing four STF projects greatly influences institutional development. Thanks to all projects, new courses were introduced or developed. Projects have had an impact on the whole institution due to its interdisciplinary approach.

- Development of teaching infrastructure

The opportunity to purchase multimedia equipment and teaching aids was an essential element of projects implemented by institutional Project Promoters. The equipment that was bought as part of

those projects included equipment used in laboratories and lecture rooms, as well as small items such as teaching aids used for the purposes of those projects and in teaching work.

We are using equipment bought as part of the project, that is magnifying glasses, microscopes or cameras, and it has proven useful.

The purchase of equipment complemented and reinforced project outcomes - the infrastructure facilitated the inclusion of new courses in study programmes and made it possible to conduct hands-on activities, such as workshops, experiments and simulations. Moreover, the fact that HEIs possess new and well-equipped laboratories motivated them to exploit the outcomes of their projects also when STF funding was over.

These opportunities to buy multimedia equipment were an important element of projects resulting in the development of e-learning. The purchase of equipment facilitated the development of e-teaching materials (films, presentations, animations, etc.) and making them available to students.

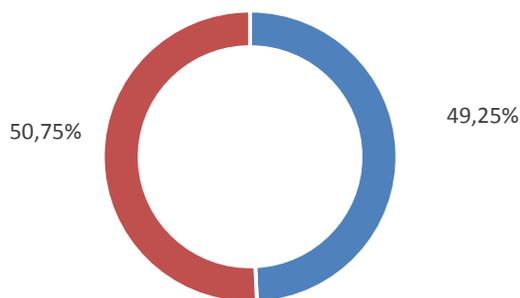
We organised a room with cameras and microphones, where you can conduct live classes and stream them live on the Internet or record them and then upload them on the platform.

Simulation games intended for students form a separate category of projects focussing on investments in the teaching infrastructure. This method is willingly used during practical activities. As part of such activities, students play a game where they perform the roles of business people running their own business and solve problems, which they may face in their future job. STF funding helped develop scenarios for that kind of games, graphics and even complete simulation games. Teaching materials of that kind raise the attractiveness of activities, which may also mean improving the attractiveness of a given field of study. Simulation games are of a practical nature and they are often developed in cooperation with external institutions and employers, which improves education quality and helps adjust the programme of study to the challenges, which students will have to face in the course of their professional careers.

6. BENEFIT AREAS – internationalization

Raising the level of internationalisation is one of the most important challenges faced by Polish HEIs. This is also one of the most frequent reasons for implementing STF projects, although it should be noted that not all HEIs decided to establish partnerships with institutions from the Donor States. Activities implemented in cooperation with a foreign partner institution were compulsory in all *Inter-institutional Cooperation* projects and optional in the case of *Development of Polish HEIs* projects. That is why only a part of those promoting the latter decided to cooperate with a foreign partner.

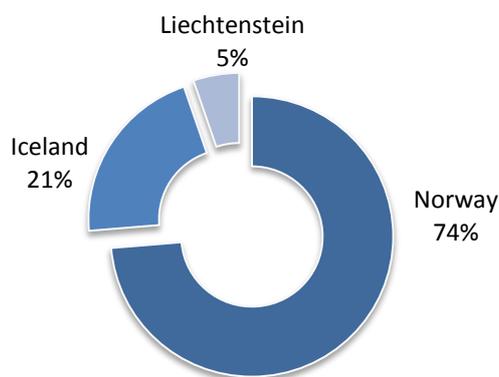
Projects involving a foreign partner or implemented without one



- All project activities were implemented without the participation of a foreign partner institution
- A foreign partner participated in the project

In most cases, Polish Project Promoters established partnerships with Norwegian institutions - they participated in almost 3/4 of all projects involving foreign partners. Icelandic institutions participated in every fifth project, whereas the number of Liechtenstein partners cooperating with Project Promoters was undoubtedly the smallest.

Country of origin of partner institutions from the Donor States



- Establishing cooperation with partners from the Donor States

In the opinion of Polish Project Promoters, one of the biggest challenges in cooperating with institutions from the Donor States was the establishment of relations with foreign HEI representatives when their HEI had not cooperated before with partners coming from those countries. Project Promoters stressed the fact that in the absence of previously established relations getting through to contact persons in HEIs operating in the Donor States was very difficult and rarely brought the expected result. They described attempts to send emails not to a specific addressee, but to the general mailbox of a HEI or a faculty as particularly ineffective. Invitations to partner cooperation sent in this way usually remained unanswered. Therefore, establishing contact with persons employed in a specific foreign HEI and already known to Polish Project Promoters was of key importance.

It is rather difficult to get through to Norwegian HEIs and encourage them to cooperate. STF-funded projects enabled us to win a partner, which is a big value of this project.

They are sent so many emails in Iceland that they do not respond to all of them and it is best to get through to a specific professor.

Polish HEIs which had previously carried out activities in cooperation with Donor States partner institutions had the fewest problems with finding a partner institution. Previous cooperation usually focussed on activities under the first edition of the STF - a significant number of institutional Project Promoters of the second edition had already some experience of participating in the STF programme in the years 2009-2013. Polish institutions interested in the implementation of institutional projects also built on their experience of cooperation when dealing with mobility projects both as part of the STF (*Mobility Projects*) and other EU educational programmes, such as Erasmus+. Contact established with coordinators in foreign HEIs made it easier to enter into cooperation as part of institutional projects. Some of Polish HEIs had previously implemented academic cooperation projects with institutions from the Donor States.

Before that, we had two projects also funded by the Norwegians, but that was probably in 2009, in the previous edition.

We already had partners, as together with the Norwegians we organise research projects, but no didactic projects had ever been done with them before.

Some Polish institutions looking for partners from the Donor States took advantage of the STF offer by implementing projects as part of *Study Visits* and *Preparatory Visits*. These activities meant the implementation of short-term projects serving such purposes as the establishment of partnerships, discussion on future activities or work focussing on future project cooperation.

Before that, we had implemented two projects and we had no foreign partner, as finding one had proved to be quite a problem. But we were interested in partnership and after the launch of Study Visits and Preparatory Visits we established rather personal than institutional contact.

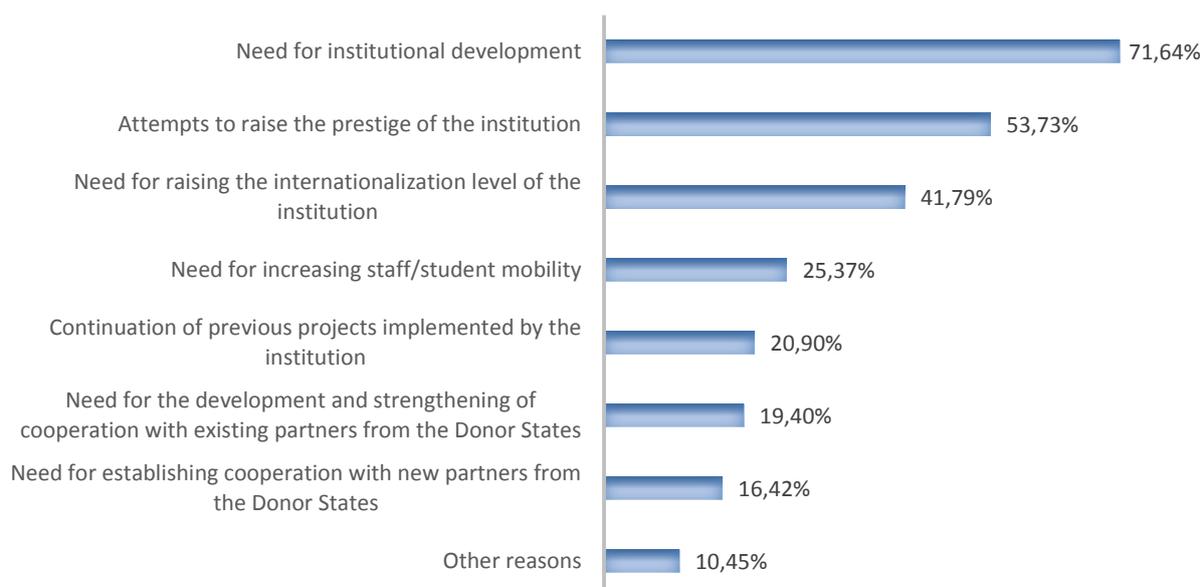
The establishment of partner cooperation often resulted from making use of individual contacts - employees of Polish HEIs personally knew people working for foreign universities. Making such acquaintances was usually possible thanks to joint participation in international conferences, preparation of joint publications or participation in other international projects. It is owing to those personal acquaintances made before that representatives of Polish HEIs were able to send their cooperation offers not to shared mailboxes, but to specific persons involved in teaching and research. That was the way in which partnerships between institutions with similar educational profiles or between researchers in comparable domains were often established.

We racked our brains to recall the names of those we already knew and it turned out that we had joint publications, knew each other from a conference, and that's how it worked.

Until then, contact with our partner was by phone or email and strictly scientific, whereas afterwards we were able to exchange experiences face-to-face, which was really great.

Before the project, there was no cooperation with that HEI, there were only some contacts made at various conferences. The idea for this project came with the launch of the calls for proposals.

Factors influencing the implementation of STF projects



The results of the quantitative study show that Project Promoters took up partnership projects mainly to meet the needs of their institutions: the need for institutional development was the reason that was quoted most frequently, whereas a large group of respondents indicated the issue of improving the internationalisation of their HEIs and aspirations to raise their prestige.

We found it easy to find common ground within that partnership as we train teachers and so do they but we do it in a slightly different way. Without a substantive basis there are no chances for effective project participation. Strategic partnerships are the starting point for the implementation of projects.

Some projects taken up as part of the second edition of STF were implemented without partner institutions from the Donor States - it was possible in the case of projects under the *Development of Polish HEIs*. Some Project Promoters decided not to enter into partner cooperation, as they had problems with establishing contact with HEIs operating in the Donor States. They saw the absence of a previously established relationship as a factor preventing them from preparing a high quality project and they emphasised that there was not much point in an accidental partnership established only to meet the requirements of the call for proposals. They feared the divergent expectations of both parties. That was something likely to come to light already during the implementation of the project and to compromise the implementation of its activities.

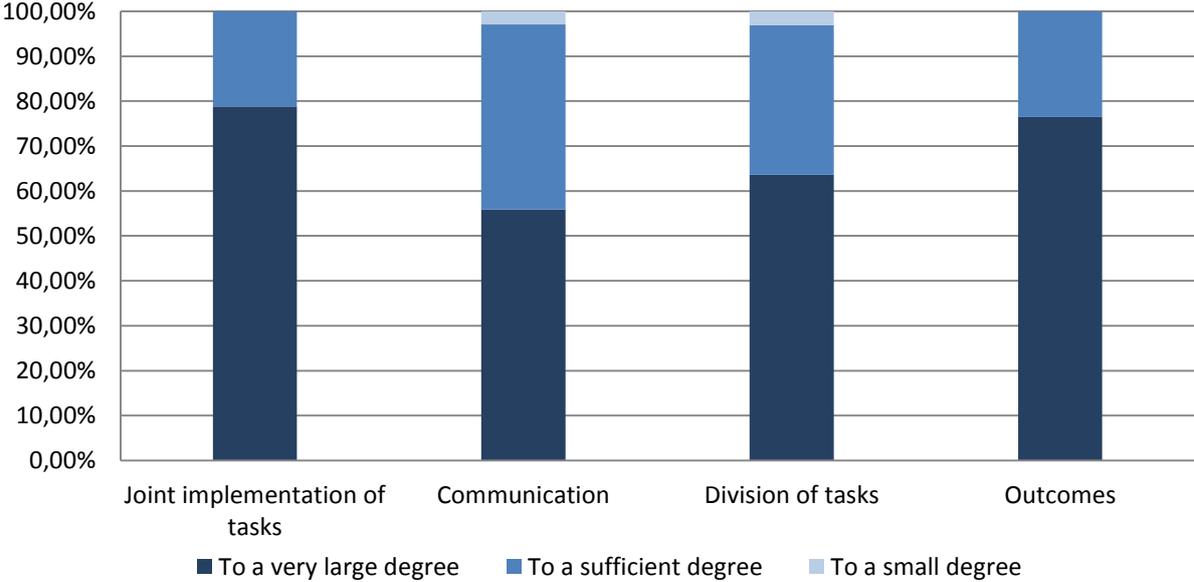
Some of the Project Promoters had no plans for establishing cooperation with institutions abroad. In their opinion, the opportunity to implement a project without entering into a foreign partnership

was an important advantage offered by the second edition of STF. Project Promoters not wishing to cooperate with a foreign partner emphasised that their project had been prepared in cooperation with domestic institutions and the participation of a foreign partner was not something bound to raise the quality of the activities involved. Moreover, projects of that kind often involved activities aimed at Project Promoters' institution itself - they focussed on its development, procedures or methods of operation, so it was decided that in that case the participation of foreign institutions would not bring an added value.

- Benefits resulting from partner cooperation

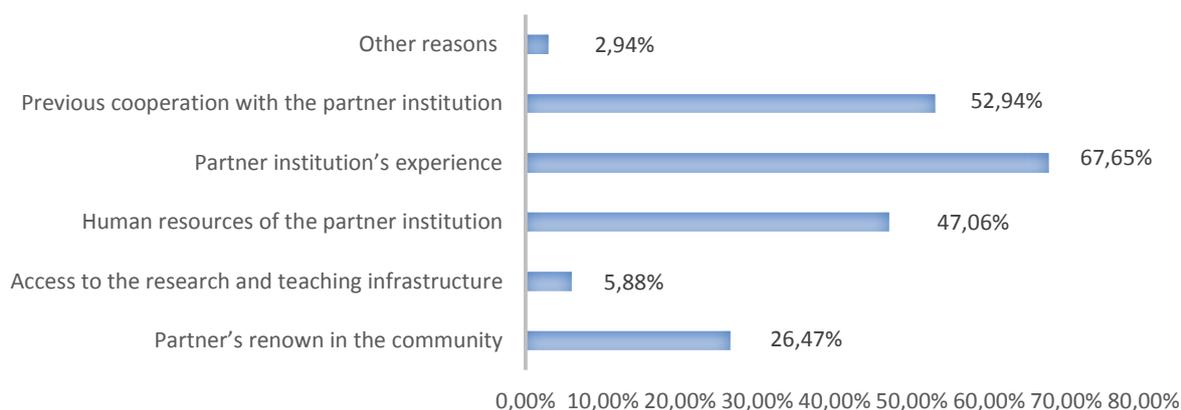
Partner cooperation established by Polish STF Project Promoters and partners from the Donor States is very highly rated. Representatives of Polish institutions were satisfied with each aspect of their cooperation with foreign partners, especially with the joint implementation of project activities and with its outcomes. Communicating with the partner and the division of tasks between cooperating institutions caused certain problems to a small group of Project Promoters.

Polish STF Project Promoters' degree of satisfaction with cooperation with partners from the Donor States



Content-related issues were the most important and decisive reasons to start partner cooperation: over 2/3 of Project Promoters indicated the experience of their partner institution as the most important factor influencing their decision to start cooperation with institutions from the Donor States, and almost half of Polish institutions indicated staff employed by foreign HEIs. The issue of access to the teaching and research infrastructure was of lesser importance.

Factors influencing the decision to establish partner cooperation



Respondents participating in the qualitative study confirmed that in their opinion being able to make use of the experiences of their foreign HEI in the domain on which their project focussed was the key argument to start partner cooperation. Two thematic areas were particularly frequent: issues of ecology and sustainable development as well as including new technologies in the teaching process, especially in relation to distance learning and the application of e-learning. The internationalisation of HEIs in terms of accepting more students from abroad was the third domain developed by Polish Project Promoters thanks to partner cooperation.

Ecology, environmental protection and sustainable development were the thematic areas that Polish Project Promoters recognised as those that were particularly valuable in the context of their cooperation with partners from the Donor States. Respondents emphasised the fact that science and didactics relating to those fields were significantly more advanced in Scandinavian countries (especially in Norway) than in Poland. The implementation of STF projects gave Polish HEIs access to the knowledge and experiences of foreign institutions, insight into examples of good practices and possibility for their transfer back home. Representative of Polish institutions emphasised ecology as a domain where institutions from the Donor States are an unquestionable authority.

Norway is pro-environmental, education for sustainable development is of paramount importance there. In that country almost everybody somehow comes across that green component.

It is particularly important that those partners - the Donor States - are simply the best at those green issues.

Project Promoters noticed huge differences between Poland and the Donor States in the domain of environmental protection. Above all, they lied in a different way of thinking about ecology and in foreign partners' increased awareness of how significant environmental problems are and how they could be prevented. Project Promoters noticed that such differences were the most difficult ones to be eliminated promptly and they emphasised that their projects were the starting point for changing the Polish way of thinking. It is also for this reason that Project Promoters implementing green priority projects particularly emphasised the need for similar activities in the future and suggested that the continuation of the green priority in future STF editions would be extremely welcome.

There is very high demand in Poland, Poles' environmental awareness is low, which is why such projects should be implemented.

It's simply fantastic that the Norwegian vision is becoming popular here and that some people are starting to think in that way. It seems to me that none of that would have been possible without STF funding. The huge development that we are witnessing is owed to those Norwegian projects and funds.

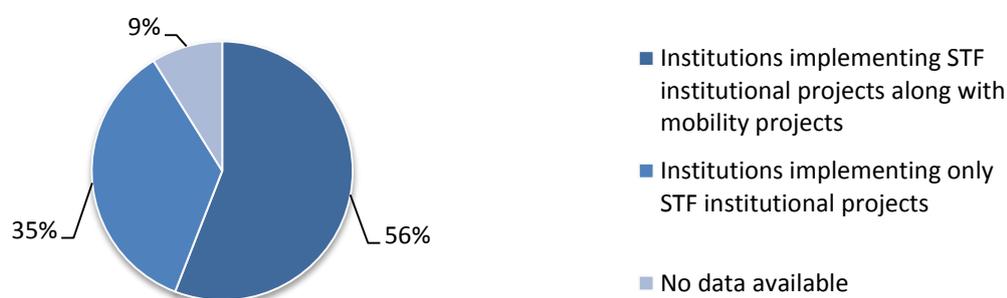
The fact that the STF Operator introduced a green thematic priority proved to be a particularly strong encouragement to take up environmental protection issues. That explained not only HEIs' increased interest in this domain, but also facilitated the provision of funding available to Project Promoters active in the field of ecology. In Project Promoters' opinion, the introduction of that priority commonly associated with the Donor States was consistent with the principles of STF and made the Fund stand out from other grant programmes. It is also worth noting that there was no criticism of the green priority, even among Project Promoters not involved in the thematic priority.

We had several opportunities to visit Scandinavian countries and I am personally delighted with their environmental culture, that culture of ecology. We have plenty to do in this matter in our country.

The application of new technologies to distance learning and e-learning is the second thematic area which - in the opinion of Project Promoters - is particularly well developed in the Donor States. In this respect respondents referred above all to the experience of Norwegian and Icelandic HEIs successfully applying those teaching methods for many years (among other things due to significant distances between cities). They are nowadays more and more often implemented in Poland.

Polish HEIs, especially those aiming at raising the level of internationalisation, found it essential to increase the number of foreign students and research workers coming to Poland. Many STF Project Promoters participate in programmes focussing on academic mobility, above all as part of the Erasmus+ programme. Apart from institutional projects, a significant part of Project Promoters under the second edition of STF implemented projects focussing on *Mobility Projects*.

Projects implemented as part of the STF - mobility and inter-institutional projects



As part of mobility projects under the second edition of STF, students and research workers willingly effected mobilities to the Donor States. However, Polish students' and research staff's great interest in foreign mobilities did not always mean that their counterparts had just as great an interest in coming to Poland. The numbers of outgoing and incoming researchers do not differ in a significant

way, however, there was a high disproportion between the numbers of outgoing and incoming students.

Number of student and staff mobilities (incoming mobilities to Poland and outgoing mobilities to the Donor States)



However, Polish HEIs are aware of foreign students' growing interest in their offers. With raising the level of internationalization in mind, some Project Promoters decided to implement institutional projects aimed at boosting foreign students' interest in their HEIs (also those from the Donor States). Among other things, those project resulted in launching programmes provided in a foreign language, modules and subjects in foreign languages, as well as in the development of teaching materials intended for foreign students.

Plans were made to encourage foreign students to come and study in Poland by launching international programmes. The Rector's Office made me an offer to coordinate a group of tutors working with newly arrived students as part of their three-month induction course.

The project influenced the internationalisation of the HEI, as we launched the first and unique programme provided only in English.

A part of STF Project Promoters also built on the synergy that resulted from the implementation of institutional and international mobility projects. Contact established with a foreign partner during one project led to further cooperation and made it possible to extend the scope of projects and joint activities. To initiate institutional projects, STF Project Promoters used both contacts established in the course of mobility projects to initiate institutional projects, and also looked for an opportunity to start mobilities of students and staff from both institutions after establishing partner cooperation.

The university we worked with during the project was merged with another university, and it turned out we knew only a small part of the HEI, and we wanted to continue our cooperation. So we also started mobilities to establish further cooperation.

Mobility and cooperation projects are compatible, we often have the same partners and we cooperate with them.

The cooperation was established as part of the Erasmus+ Programme. At the beginning, it envisaged student mobilities only, then a lecturer from Norway came to our HEI, following which more people went to Norway. We started getting to know each other and now we have quite a partnership.

- Sustainability and quality of partnerships

Partnerships established between institutions from the Donor States and Polish Project Promoters are usually continued. Satisfaction with individual aspects of cooperation and benefits derived by Project Promoters encourage them to look for more grant programmes funding their partnerships. During the second edition of STF, some Project Promoters implemented a number of projects and those undertakings were a continuation of their previous activities.



STF Project Promoters emphasise that good communication, shared purposes and the joint implementation of project activities result in lasting and friendly relationships between partner institutions. This is also a result of well-thought decisions concerning the choice of a partner institution.

STF Project Promoters put emphasis on the fact that phoney partnerships established only to meet the Operator's formal requirements benefit no institution, but generate lots of problems instead. However, partnerships where both parties derive benefits from cooperation are not only more durable, but also produce better outcomes. Some of Project Promoters preferred to give up partnership projects in the absence of previously developed good relationship with foreign institutions.

In spite of our previous relations with the Norwegians, a quick search for a partner was beyond our reach, although we were able to find an added value for one, a role to play in the project.

A part of Polish Project Promoters said that the basic objective of their projects consisted in deriving maximum benefits by the Polish institution and learning from partners from the Donor States. The benefits to be had from the project by the partner were regarded as secondary. It turns out,

however, that this kind of attitude is not something partners from the Donor States expect. They expect cooperation both at the stage of writing project applications and planning activities, as well as evenly distributed benefits from project implementation.

I approached our partner in a very instrumental way, I set the date when we were to visit them, I specified what they would do for us, just like you do in such projects. However, it turned out that their expectations of us were different. It means they do not like projects involving exploitation, that means we come, we see, we go.

Our cooperation progressed beautifully, no major obstacles, and we established a real partnership - not a phoney one. The Norwegians were extremely involved in the implementation of individual projects, as they had the same objectives and priorities.

Some Polish institutions found it surprising that foreign universities also wanted and were able to learn from their Polish counterparts. At the same time this discovery allowed to expand initial project plans, increase the number of tasks, and develop additional outcomes. Polish HEI Project Promoters gave a number of examples of exploiting project outcomes by foreign partner institutions.

Then it turned out that it was good that we wanted to learn something, but they wanted to learn something from us as well. They also devote their time, so there has to be reciprocity in our relationship. And in this case I learned that projects are to be designed by the partners.

The Norwegian coordinator made me realise that if she were a project partner and we used that word, then she would like to be a real partner, so in the course of our activities we had to change everything to get her more involved in the whole process.

The Norwegian HEI we cooperated with introduced some courses to its study programmes and uses the one we developed in English as well.

STF-type projects result from a certain kind of stagnation and lack of external communication. An increased openness of Norwegian universities is an outcome that may be intended, maybe that is why they want to pay for it. We get something for our development, but they also get something in return.

7. EXPLOITATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTCOMES

The sustainability of outcomes is one of the most important factors needed to evaluate project success. It is essential to make sure that the end of project activities and external funding does not mean the end of the exploitation of their outcomes. This is of particular importance in the case of projects like those implemented during the second edition of STF involving activities whose outcomes contribute to the modernisation of HEIs and extend the scope of teaching and research activities.

An ideal project is one which, as early as at the stage of its implementation, develops mechanisms and resources, which will be used to guarantee the durability of project outcomes.

STF Project Promoters often emphasised that taking care of the sustainability of outcomes was not merely the STF Operator's formal requirement - they themselves insisted on the continued relevance of their outcomes and their usefulness to subsequent users. In the opinion of Project Promoters themselves, the exploitation of project outcomes is beneficial to their institution and its activities. Experts evaluating project applications lodged by HEIs also called for the necessity for the continuous identification of needs in the context of ensuring sustainability to project outcomes.

We managed to preserve the sustainability of the project, because we worked on the assumption that if we educated future teachers who would have contact with learners at various stages of education, that knowledge would be repeatedly shared and passed on, there would be no barrier.

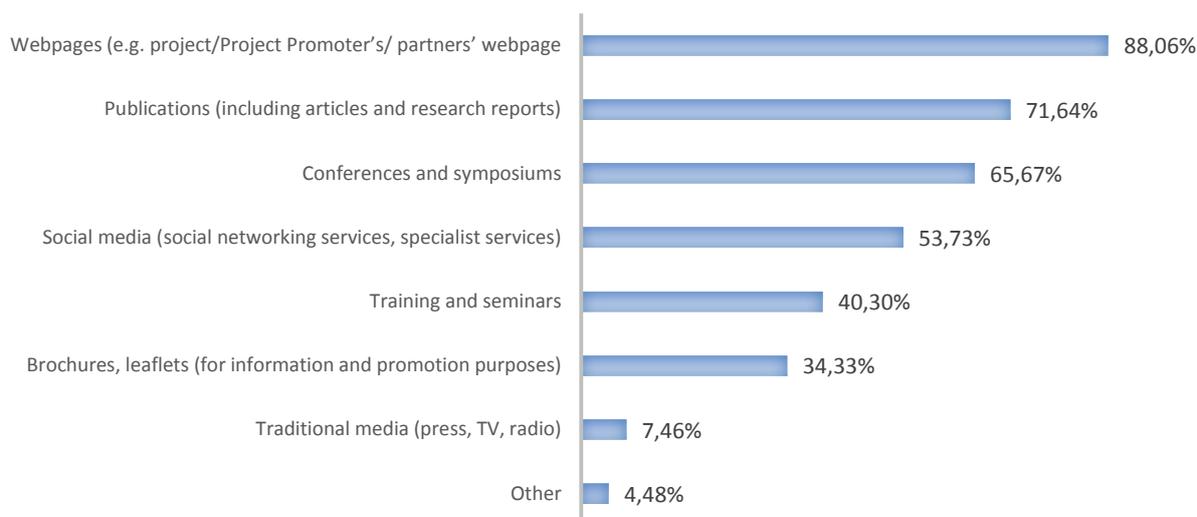
Project Promoters also noticed an increase in the sustainability of outcomes thanks to the implementation of more projects thematically linked to their predecessors and owing to the experience of the project team. Those Project Promoters who implemented more than one project during this edition emphasised that their subsequent activities helped develop the outcomes of the first project - by enhancement and building on them - which resulted in the development of more valuable and better outcomes. It also favoured the increase of the number of people cooperating in the course of projects and involved in the implementation of their outcomes.

Each project existed as an individual item, but there is no denying that those examples gave the green light to the implementation of other activities. I think that continuity was due to the fact that a group of people had learnt to create good project plans, knew what we were writing about and that we had focussed on the following domains: renewable energy sources, biomedical engineering, English language project, necessity for internationalisation, construction.

- Dissemination of outcomes

Projects implemented as part of the second edition of the STF were strongly diversified in terms of recipients of outcomes. Some projects met the internal needs of HEIs and were mainly aimed at HEI employees (research and administration staff) and students, other projects were intended for external recipients. That is why dissemination strategies planned by the STF Project Promoters mainly reflected the fact which target groups might exploit outcomes generated by those projects. In communicating with those groups, Project Promoters used a lot of various communications channels.

Methods of outcome dissemination applied by the STF Project Promoters



Websites presenting projects and their outcomes were the most popular method of outcome dissemination applied by Project Promoters. Social media were also frequently used. These methods of disseminating outcomes have an essential advantage: they are inexpensive and easy to apply. They also make it possible to get through to an important group of recipients - to young people, students and pupils. In the opinion of some Project Promoters, the scope and influence of social media was a value that could not be underestimated, which is why they also made the use of that channel a constant practice in their HEIs.

A colleague of mine started running a Facebook page for our field of study, for our students. And that has proven quite interesting, as students are actively contributing to the page.

Our project has a website, the rector treats it as a way of promoting the university, because this is a project with all university logos, so we did not need to convince him to make it available on the server.

Quite a lot of people noted that it was possible to conduct promotional activities even at very low cost. And that may be an additional outcome in subsequent projects - that people will be aware of what can be done, that this is not so difficult and that they do not need any large funds.

Project Promoters took great care to reach the research community - information about the projects they implemented was disseminated at conferences and seminars or in the course of training, and they also published articles about the outcomes of their projects. Project Promoters perceive conferences as events playing a particularly important role - many projects ended up in a conference to get through to a wider audience, including representatives of external institutions. Owing to this, a number of institutions and organisations not participating in those projects, but still able to exploit their outcomes increased their interest in the projects and their outcomes. Research staff involved in project implementation were frequently guest speakers at various conferences throughout Poland, presented their projects and promoted their outcomes.

Scientific conferences are events where our community meets. We talked there about the fact that everybody could exploit our outcomes as they were readily available on our webpage. And it went down very well.

We held two conferences aimed at integrating our didactic activities into the analytical and research needs of internal security institutions. The conference was intended for all officers of uniformed services and involved the participation of students.

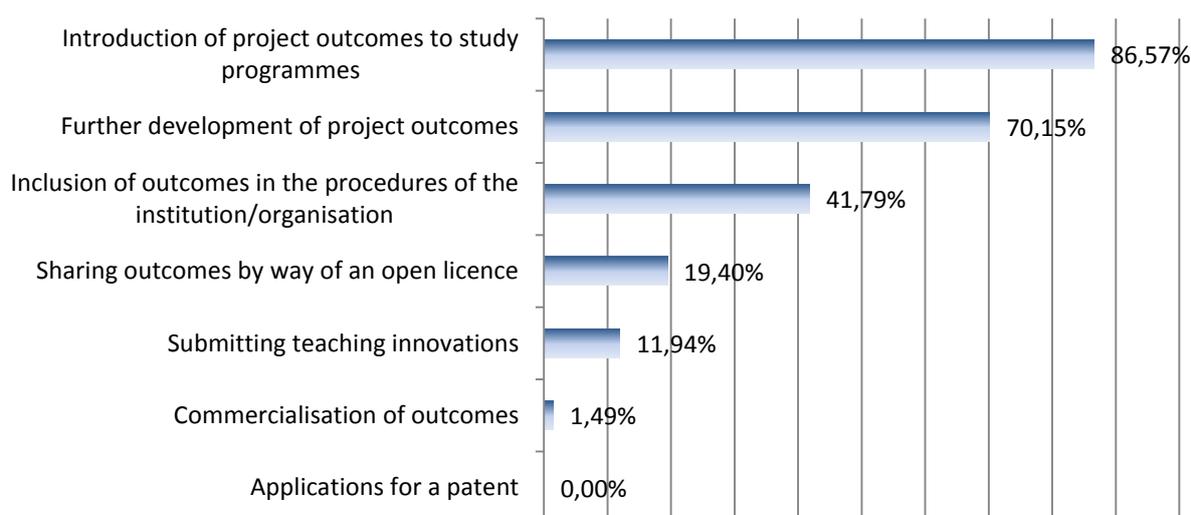
I tried to promote the project at conferences, to demonstrate it as an innovation. Other HEIs invite me to their seminars and draw inspiration from our project. They want to know what we did to be successful.

The dissemination of outcomes using traditional media was the method least frequently used. Project Promoters realised that the nationwide media were not usually interested in disseminating project outcomes. It is far easier to get through with project information to local media, especially in smaller localities. Project Promoters emphasised that the media (both at national and local levels) were mainly interested in events catching attention rather than in projects themselves. That is why their interest is aroused by the organisation of promotional events (e.g. opening of a laboratory), especially with the participation of local government bodies.

- The potential of outcomes implementation

STF Project Promoters applied many diversified methods to ensure durability to their project outcomes. The most popular ones are linked to the functioning of Project Promoters' institutions - namely the incorporation of project outcomes in study programmes and in HEI procedures. As the second edition of STF was mainly orientated towards supporting teaching projects, rather than those based on research or development, only a few Project Promoters decided to commercialise their outcomes and no Project Promoter created an outcome, which would be patented.

Methods of ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes



The outcomes of a number of projects implemented as part of the second edition of STF mainly met the needs of Polish HEIs linked to their development. For this reason, HEIs took up mainly those

activities which led to the internal exploitation of outcomes. Such activities comprised the implementation of outcomes (launching new fields of study, new specialisations) and their introduction to the study programme. New teaching materials and new teaching methods were developed for internal purposes. Ensuring their durability meant their regular exploitation during teaching activities.

HEIs launching new fields of study as part of their projects, providing new specialisations or developing a programme of workshops noticed that in their case the sustainability of outcomes was closely linked to student interest. That is why a considerable part of activities aimed at ensuring durability meant involvement in dissemination and promotion. For this reason, it was possible to get through to groups interested in newly launched programmes, courses or training while ensuring that full-size groups could be formed in subsequent years. In the case of such projects their promoters did not attempt to target diversified groups of recipients. Instead, they focussed on secondary school leavers or HEI students.

The promotion of this project was very natural as we wanted candidates to study the programmes. The study programmes were the main outcome of the project, so by promoting them we promoted the project. So it was a reciprocal action.

It is worth emphasising that in the projects where the launch of a new field of study and specialisations resulted from previously identified shortages within the HEI, the durability of outcomes was achieved in a natural way - the outcomes of such projects met the needs and supplemented the offer of the institution. The durability of outcomes of such projects is verified every year, during subsequent calls for proposals. In the case of projects of particularly high quality addressing significant shortages identified by HEIs, Project Promoters did not have to make attempts to make their outcomes sustainable, as they had already become a permanent fixture integrated into their HEI's educational activity. Only the HEIs that failed to perform detailed analysis of needs prior to their project had problems with the durability of outcomes including newly launched fields of study.

The project was not over yet and we already had candidates for another post-graduate programme provided in accordance with the new programme. We launch post-graduate programmes every semester, we always do it this way.

The programmes are still continued, there is a lot of interest: students are asking, phoning and want to follow courses covering those domains.

The durability of outcomes forming new programmes is also supported by material project outcomes, such as teaching materials or textbooks. Project Promoters are usually keen on exploiting outcomes of that kind, as they are an essential supplement and addition to teaching resources available to HEIs.

Once introduced, teaching materials and new methods remain there for good. This imposes the introduction of modules, a slightly different approach to teaching, education and to the relationship with students.

Teaching materials developed during the project are exploited not only in post-graduate but also in full- and part-time degree programmes. In principle, all

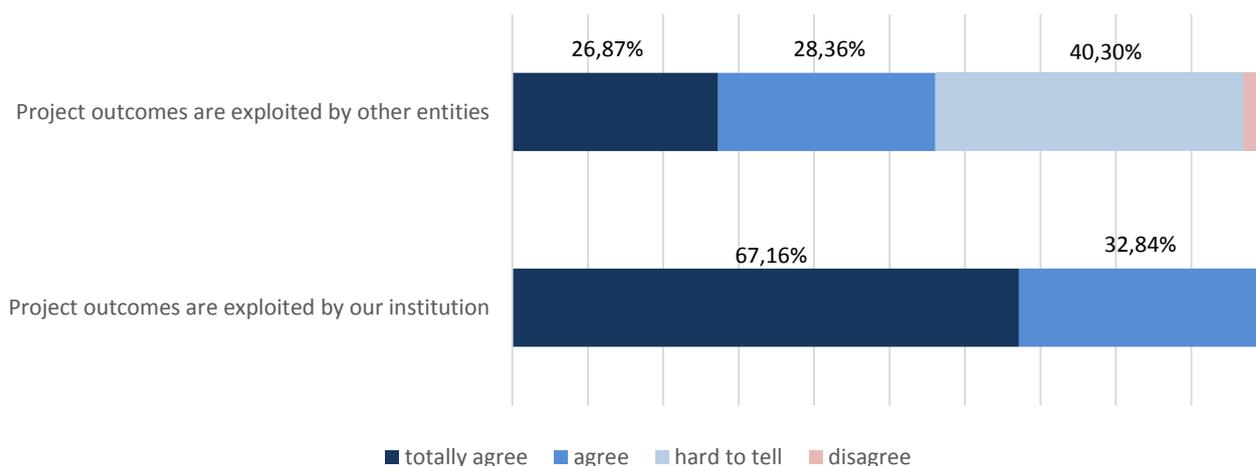
contents that have been developed are constantly used and enjoy quite big popularity.

Such elements as new teaching methods, updated study programmes or textbooks are constantly used and there is big interest in enrolment for individual programmes.

In the case of non-funded programme editions, we constantly use sustainable outcomes, knowledge and competences developed during the STF project.

STF Project Promoters indicate that their institutions willingly use the outcomes of their projects, however, external institutions use them much more rarely. In many cases, Project Promoters do not check whether or not project outcomes reach external recipients and how they are exploited by them. This is mainly due to the fact that projects implemented as part of the second edition of the STF were mainly targeted at Polish HEIs. Therefore, institutions implementing a particular activity were the recipients of outcomes of almost all projects, whereas external institutions were targeted in a significantly smaller number of cases.

Exploitation of project outcomes by the Project Promoters and external recipients



Making outcomes available to external institutions usually meant posting them on the Internet using a free licence (e.g. Creative Commons). That is how a number of Project Promoters published books forming a project outcome or summing up project activities. In some cases, STF Project Promoters conducted training, workshops and seminars for representatives of external institutions - that was both a method of dissemination and of ensuring outcome durability.

The main outcome of the project is the book that we prepared. It is being used, there is open access to it on all websites and we can see that people are making use of it.

The best proof that schools want to cooperate with us is that students of Spanish Studies conducted classes for lower secondary school students.

The HEI disseminates outcomes on the outside by conducting activities within schools and other organisations.

It is also worth stressing that some Project Promoters found it particularly important that their project outcomes were exploited by external recipients. They indicated the fact that it should be their university's mission to use its knowledge to support the solution of practical problems. They also said that apart from establishing cooperation with employers, HEIs should also cooperate more frequently with public institutions of various types. In that way, project outcomes could be exploited by and shared with a larger group of recipients.

The HEI should be more externally oriented. We are trying to attract external stakeholders, but not always are we successful... It would be great if they could somehow contribute to the project and not only be its recipient.

Foreign universities do nothing that benefits solely themselves, they always act in cooperation with communities, and then their projects are disseminated.

Projects should incorporate the rule that it is public institutions that are partners, because if we are talking about taxpayers' money it would be good if public institutions benefited from it.

- Project continuation

Most STF Project Promoters believe that the continuation of their project is one of the most important methods of ensuring outcome durability. Continuation means developing project outcomes, updating contents produced during the project, as well as preparing more teaching methods and materials based on previous experiences. In the case of outcomes such as new fields of study, continuation also involves the launch of new specialisation pathways or programmes covering a particular domain offered as part of subsequent study cycles.

Programmes are provided all the time, more students are enrolled, but we have also identified the need to organise this field of study as part of third-cycle programmes, as students are making enquiries regarding programme continuation.

We started from one group, now we have two and we are launching a degree programme based on our experiences.

After the project, we decided to keep up the momentum and launch an engineering degree programme. It is based on the specialisations launched owing to Norway grants. We would have found it difficult to launch the programme straight away without the funds.

Project coordinators often continue the thematic areas by implementing new projects in the same domain, which enables them to develop the project in a broader context. During their qualitative interviews, many respondents declared they would be willing to repeat their project activities because the domains covered by their projects gave a lot of room for development and required constant adaptation to market needs.

At the moment the programme is in full swing, living a life of its own, but we do intend to get more deeply involved in telemedicine. Our previous experiences show that this is a field of study with enormous developmental potential and the HEI has to look to the future.

The fact that students inquired about the continuation of classes in the following year proves that it was a step in the right direction. The need was undoubtedly real and it still is. That was no exigency, that need was dictated by time and the labour market.

Somebody came up with the idea to set up a Tutors' Centre, so we wrote a project and this is the second year that we have been in receipt of funding for cyclical tutor meetings for those who wish to continue their education and in-service training. The Dean promised the Faculty to provide money to organise such tutorials independently of the project.

Continued partner cooperation also serves the purpose of the continuation of project activities, both at international level and at that of partnerships established with domestic institutions. STF Project Promoters said that even after the completion of their projects they were still in touch with their project partners, jointly participated in scientific conferences and were involved in other joint activities.

During the project, we established cooperation with a Norwegian HEI and this cooperation is still continued, although the project is over. Our students and lecturers continue going there: to study, serve practical placements and to attend summer schools. This is a case of long-term cooperation.

We are going to work in such a way as to keep that contact. A short while ago our partner asked us if we could enable Norwegian students to serve their placement on an organic farm.

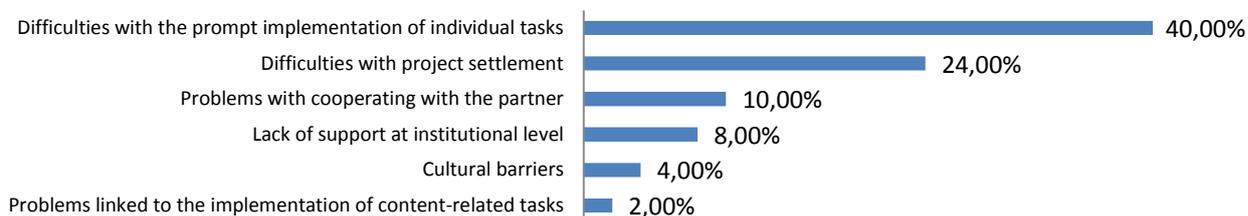
The project directly influenced the internationalisation of our HEI - all people effecting mobilities, also students and doctoral students, were given the task to establish contact with their peers. Before the project, there was no cooperation between our institute and Norway. It was started by the project and not we are at the stage of signing a cooperation agreement.

8. PROBLEM AREAS

During the evaluation study, respondents talked about a number of problems they had to face in the course of project implementation. Issues resulting from delays affecting the planned time schedule were undoubtedly the most frequent problem. Many Project Promoters complained about complex formal issues, especially those linked to project settlement. They affected mainly those cooperating with a foreign partner. Relationships with foreign partners also generated culture-related problems.

Some Project Promoters had to face internal problems in their own institution.

Most frequent problems linked to the implementation of interinstitutional projects



- Time schedule-related problems

Respondents participating in the quantitative part of the study indicated the problem of delays in task implementation as the most frequent problem area. In some cases, problems with sticking to the planned time schedule resulted from delays in the selection of successful applicants on the part of the Operator. As a result of such delays, those Project Promoters who assumed they would implement a number of tasks at the beginning of their projects had to modify them and even give up some activities. This was particularly onerous for Project Promoters planning the launch of a new field of study as they were unable to change certain deadlines at later stages of work, so they had to perform their tasks within a significantly shorter time span.

Considerable delays linked to the selection of successful candidates (agreement signing stage) caused changes to the whole time schedule of activities and were seen as a major difficulty.

As the project implementation was delayed by at least half a year, we were unable to implement all its elements, as we lacked time for the preparation of textbooks. We managed to prepare a chart of changes and buy ready-made textbooks.

We had a delay of several months and we did not manage to complete the project activities early enough to organise our paperwork properly. As a result, I worked full-time for free for three months to close and clean everything.

Respondents also emphasised the fact that they deemed the duration of their STF project too short. In particular, those planning outcomes requiring a lot of work realised that a dozen or so months might not be enough to carry out all activities.

Everything stems from the project frameworks into which we have to fit. These projects are very short, 17 months is an extremely short time span to implement a good project. Highly efficient people extremely focussed on their project are needed for this purpose.

- Problems resulting from formal issues

Project Promoters mainly complained about excessive red tape: many of them found delivering documents required by the Operator very difficult, and a number of principles which they had to adhere to when implementing their project were seen as being pointless.

Norway grants are notorious for their excessive red tape, but this fact would not have been a problem if it had been more compatible with the HEI and its procedures.

Generally speaking, those projects are very demanding in terms of paperwork, red tape, public procurement, documentation and reporting. They are very detailed and from where I am standing - even restrictive.

In our case, the problem was that we had separate costs when paying natural persons and other separate costs when paying companies. If we planned for employing natural persons and then during our project work it transpired that it would be better to employ a company, due to its experience, we had to draw up annexes to our agreements. And yet we are to be guided by content-related issues and not whether our contractor is a natural person or a company.

An overwhelming majority of participants complained about issues linked to public procurement. A very low threshold over which each expense required a request for tenders caused lots of problems. It required additional work from coordinators. Project Promoters also noticed that the application of the lowest price criterion to requests for tenders frequently ended in selecting an unreliable but cheap subcontractor.

In the course of planning the mobility it turned out we would have to issue a call for tenders for the provision of lunches. We sent enquiries to three bidders... Down on our knees we begged all local bars to give us any offer so we could select the best one.

Savings produced within projects frequently resulted from the fact that calls for tenders favoured the lowest level of funding. In general, I see it as a problem affecting the implementation of all projects.

Some delays were due to guidelines. The preparation of requests for tenders to which nobody replied was nothing but a time consuming thing. As a private HEI we have no Public Procurement Department and everything depends on the coordinator.

The fact that the Operator's formal requirements were not compatible with procedures operating within HEIs was also a problem. Large HEIs realised that they were unable to use their infrastructure and promotional materials during the implementation of their projects as their internal accounting was based on bookkeeping entries and not on invoices required by the Operator. Taking advantage of offers presented by external companies generated higher costs than those resulting from using HEI resources.

Our HEI is large, we have faculties and each of them has its own budget. The fact that bookkeeping entries were not accounted for was a problem for us. This makes our functioning difficult: as a result, we are unable to do a number of things as we have to look for external subcontractors.

Why do we have to have our book printed and typeset outside of the university when we have our own publishing department? Maybe it is worth adding the provision that as regards printing our materials we can use what has already proven itself within the university.

Discrepancies between regulations in different countries were a considerable problem reported by almost all respondents cooperating with foreign partners. Project Promoters noticed that there were usually fewer formalities abroad than in Poland, for example they said they had had to deliver time sheets on behalf of their partners, which is something that does not exist in Norway. Difficulties with obtaining financial documents equivalent to those used in Poland resulted in a number of misunderstandings, stress and the worsening of relations with the partner institution.

The clearance of expenditure required by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System is too complex in the opinion of the Norwegian partner who puts emphasis on final products and substantive contribution. This is due to a different level of trust enjoyed by Project Promoters.

The partner operates within a different organisational culture based on implicit trust and the absence of documentation. Icelanders were unable to document part of remuneration, as there were things their law did not allow, we had to develop another way of documenting this.

The only thing that we would like to see change is the issue of documents between Poland and Norway. We have to be aware that they do not have certain things. For example, our mentor returned some documents to us for correction because he had told us to put a different stamp, which did not exist in Norway.

There are no corresponding Norwegian documents being equivalents of Polish ones, for example payroll. To Norwegians that kind of document was in breach of data protection.

A large portion of Project Promoters reported formal problems linked to the selection of project experts. In accordance with the principles of the programme, Project Promoters had to issue request for tenders to select external experts. However, at the same time, the names of certain experts were indicated and their experience in a particular domain was described as early as at the stage of lodging applications. Those experts frequently participated in the preparation of applications and were treated as part of the project team, hence the necessity for reapplying for their offers of cooperation was much to Project Promoters' surprise.

All those procedures required in the process of applying are worth nothing as I am unable to guarantee that those experts will implement the project. They are frequently people working on the concept of the project and then it turns out that we have to launch a call for tenders anyway...

That must be unfavourable from the Operator's point of view. You awarded scores for a specific person identifiable by their name and that person did not necessarily have to participate in the project, it could be somebody else.

- Problems linked to the partnership

STF Project Promoters, both these who implemented projects with the participation of foreign partner institutions and those who did not enter into that kind of cooperation, emphasised the fact that cooperation with a partner meant - apart from benefits derived from such partnerships - also additional problems. Projects involving more institutions generate more work, especially for coordinators who have to deal not only with content-related issues within such projects, but they

also have to do administrative work. Partnership projects involve an increased number of formalities, which usually burden coordinators. Among other reasons, that is why some Polish institutions decided not to establish a formal partnership with their foreign counterparts despite benefits offered by partnerships with universities from the Donor States. Instead, they cooperated informally.

In our case, the arrangement was that we had no partner, but we effected two Study Visits, which allowed us to establish contact, get to know each other better and - as an added value - it did not require all that formal and legal complications.

We decided we could discuss various issues with other partners in an informal way, as we thought that this partnership might result in unwanted complications.

We realised that if we had no partner in Norway, we would not find one. On the other hand, we had enough experience to be able to do perfectly well without a Norwegian partner.

In the opinion of some Polish Project Promoters, the participation of partners from other countries generated problems linked to cultural differences. Project Promoters realised that partner HEIs functioned in a different way and that there were differences in the style of work of Polish and foreign scientists. Such differences were not always seen in a negative light - some Project Promoters said that different approaches could prove more favourable in the long term - however, coming across a different style of work at the beginning of the project came out as a surprise. These cultural differences were not insurmountable barriers, they only required more understanding and flexibility from Project Promoters.

The problem of the barriers that we had in other projects will never occur in STF, as there is only one country. We had to overcome difficulties resulting only from differences between Poland and Norway, unless someone chose Iceland or Liechtenstein.

Almost all Project Promoters implementing projects in partnership with Norwegian HEIs noticed their following characteristics: order, conscientiousness and strict (seen from the Polish perspective) adherence to working time. It is that last point that was astounding - the joint implementation of tasks with the Norwegian partner meant that it was necessary to stick to the planned time schedule and any overtime was out of the question.

Our idea of cooperation was simply different. We were even surprised at the programme that our Norwegian partner sent to us: it detailed what our meeting was to look like, what we were supposed to consider, what to do on a particular day and at what time.

Norwegians kept discipline. If a visit was to end at 3.00PM, it did. The fact that there was a discussion in progress was not important. It had to end as they were already going home.

However, Polish Project Promoters were pleasantly surprised with their Norwegian partners' reliability - there was no situation in which a partner from that country failed to do his tasks or delayed the implementation of further parts of a project. Norwegian partners were praised for their openness to cooperation, kindness and interest in Poland.

If Norwegians say they will do something, they will. There was no need to supervise them. As sometimes you get partners requiring constant attention and reminding that there are deadlines to meet and tasks to perform. Norwegian partners knew what they were to do and it was obvious that this would be done.

In the case of Icelandic partners issues relating to communication proved to be the biggest cultural difference. Project Promoters emphasised the fact that it was difficult to establish a close relationship with Icelanders being perfect strangers - they can be quite aloof. In the opinion of Polish Project Promoters winning a project partner's personal affection is of great importance in relations with Icelanders. However, once acquaintance was established, Icelanders proved to be kind, involved, warm-hearted and friendly partners.

They told us in Iceland that if you click with an Icelander they will go through fire and water for you. If not, it is like coming up against a brick wall.

- Internal problems of Project Promoters' institution

Some respondents said that their home institution had not provided them with appropriate support during the project. Some people found cooperation with other researchers difficult, especially when it involved confrontation between younger and more senior lecturers. Senior lecturers criticised the introduction of new teaching methods, especially those involving e-learning and the Internet.

The older generation of professors does not always see the need for investing in such new forms of teaching. If we had not been given money, we would not have been able to convince them, as they do not understand why this should be done.

A number of respondents also experienced problems with administrative issues - university units supposed to support projects implemented by research staff in terms of administration failed to fulfil their functions. Therefore, the whole burden linked to project implementation, administration and settlement lied with coordinators and their project teams.

Unfortunately, we were stuck with the university unit and I had the impression that the unit lacked specialised knowledge, for example that calls for tenders did not always necessarily have to be based on the lowest price criterion.

Frankly speaking, during the whole project I did not contact even once the Project Management Office operating in our HEI. The Office was not particularly interested, did not intervene and offered no assistance.

The EU projects department helps settle such projects, but it is mainly involved in accounting issues as it verifies finished reports and invoices. This is the biggest obstacle in the implementation of academic projects - research staff dealing with administration. There is no content-related mentoring for projects at out faculty.

Project coordinators also complained about the fact that their HEI authorities showed no interest - some of them said the authorities did not know what their projects involved. Some coordinators said that despite their project being a success, they did not feel appreciated by their own HEI.

The project was appreciated and gained recognition abroad, but in Poland it was as if it did not exist. There was no handshake. Something which raised education quality was not quite recognised.

I organised evaluation meetings and always invited the dean. He did not turn up even once. Fortunately, the rector cannot be reproached for anything of that kind.

The most bitter aspect was that the compensation, which was also envisaged for me was treated by the university as its own contribution. As a project manager I did not get a single penny. Universities should be monitored to be prevented from doing such things as this is counter-productive to the identification of staff with their place of work.

Sometimes project topics also caused tensions with HEI authorities. Participants in the evaluation study realised that HEIs were more willing to support research projects rather than teaching oriented ones. In their opinion, this is due to the fact that research activities are something that brings real benefits to HEIs, whereas staff involvement in projects developing teaching activities is not perceived as particularly beneficial by some HEIs.

When we were awarded funding, the vice-rector responsible for projects held it against us that the HEI potential would be wasted on teaching and there would be nothing left for science - meaning the HEI.

Teaching oriented projects do not enjoy ministerial subsidies and later they are not included in the algorithm. Of course, we are trying to emphasise the research aspect of our projects and fortunately, we managed to do it in the case of STF.

- Problems with ensuring outcome sustainability

Some Project Promoters found it difficult to continue project activities and ensure sustainable outcomes. Making sure that fields of study launched as part of projects enjoy student interest is a considerable problem faced by HEIs. Project Promoters emphasised the fact that in general, HEIs grapple with ever decreasing numbers of students and that this general problem also affected their project outcomes. Sometimes Project Promoters also said that their newly-launched fields of study did not enjoy popularity as they did not quite meet the needs of the labour market and potential recipients were not interested in them. One way of coping with the problem is the integration of such study programmes in other fields of study or specialisations. The inability to fully implement project outcomes is a serious problem in the opinion of external experts. In this context, attention was drawn to the need to conduct reliable needs analysis not only ensuring, but also conditioning project durability and - hence - effective spending.

In my opinion, enrolment problems are caused by our society's persisting low environmental awareness.

We were shocked by the poor response, as our study programmes were totally free of charge, we also sent an invitation to participate in postgraduate programmes to officials from different towns and only 4 localities responded.

If a HEI launches a new field of study, then ensuring durability consists in checking that there is some interest in the programme. Otherwise it will be discontinued as soon as its funding is over.

We are not providing this programme now, as at the moment we have no candidates, but those modified study programmes have been incorporated in our full- and part-time degree courses.

The end of funding means that project outcomes, such as training programmes or workshop scenarios are not exploited, because Project Promoters have no means to organise such activities. The participation of representatives of institutions in conferences where they could promote the outcomes of their projects is made more difficult by the absence of funds.

We have the remaining workshops programmes, but the difficulty is to get funding for the organisation of that kind of workshop for students.

When we went to an eco fair we had a stand there promoting our institution and project. Contact established on that occasion is still alive and our partners phone us to invite us to more events. But there are no funds left and we cannot send an employee.

The problem involving sustainability also refers to co-financing the costs of further exploitation of project outcomes. Project Promoters noticed that when the publication prepared as part of a project was out of print they were compelled to finance the costs of reprinting themselves, as they were unable to charge the participants. Ensuring durability is linked to a HEI's finances, which causes some of them to give up additional activities. Being able to sell such publications would help solve the problem. Courses and training offered by HEIs free of charge generate a similar problem - participants in such activities often lack the necessary motivation to attend such activities regularly, which means that they start a course, but never complete it. The loss that Project Promoters have suffered makes them say that introducing partly paid activities would increase their participants' motivation to attend, improve attendance and facilitate the organisation of more training events.

We really need a source to fund our reprinting. To be able to do that, the rector must cough up some money from the budget. It is not about making money from it, but as reprinting costs, we could sell this publication at some reasonable price. And then we would manage to meet the costs.

As the HEI is under the obligation to make its own financial contribution, the prospect of commercialisation is something likely to convince the rector to add that 10%. And then, 2 or 3 years later, he will have some benefits.

Project Promoters also reported problems linked to the dissemination of outcomes. Almost all respondents said that getting through to national media and getting journalist interested in a project-related theme was quite difficult. They expect the STF Operator to grant them support to find favourably disposed editor's offices and publish project information in the national press and on TV.

In their interviews, respondents said that never before had they heard about other projects funded as part of the second edition of the STF and that they had not been familiar with project outcomes produced by other institutions. That is why, they suggested that the STF Operator should support them in the process of project outcome dissemination, for example by creating an online outcome database, where all institutions concerned could search and download interesting outcomes produced by other projects. Also Project Promoters themselves would welcome that kind of tool facilitating their dissemination-related activities among peer institutions.

9. DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY

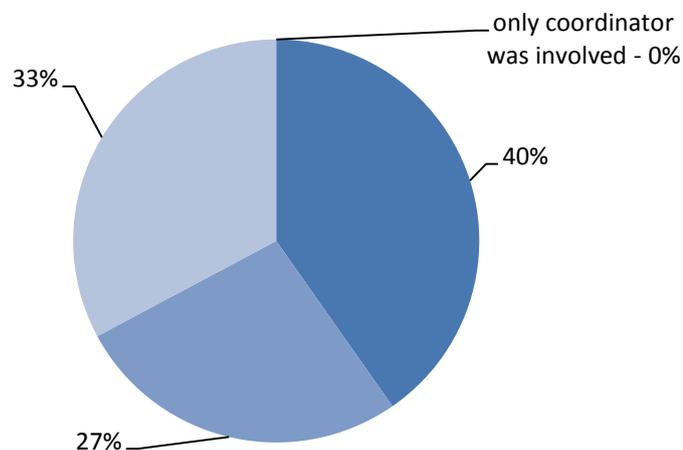
This chapter deals with aspects, which - in the opinion of respondents - play a key role in ensuring high quality activities. In many cases, it is the factors presented below that determine the effective exploitation of funds and make projects implemented by Polish HEIs successful, or sometimes - make them an example of good practices and experiences to be used by other institutions.

- Condition 1: Human resources

In respondents' opinion, a tight-knit and committed team is one of the basic factors that are instrumental in the success of a project. Within such team, a significant role should be played by its coordinator who possesses leadership qualities and is not afraid of making bold decisions. It was frequently emphasised that without a leader and an appropriate project group it was impossible to implement a high quality project. There were also statements that a committed and professional team should be appropriately compensated for their work and effort put in the project. Moreover, such efforts frequently mean additional overtime going beyond everyday job responsibilities.

Size of the project team

- Only the coordinator was involved in the project activities (1 person)
- Several people were involved in the project activities (2-5 people)
- In the implementation of the project activities was involved medium project team (6-10 people)
- The project implementation required involvement of more than 10 people

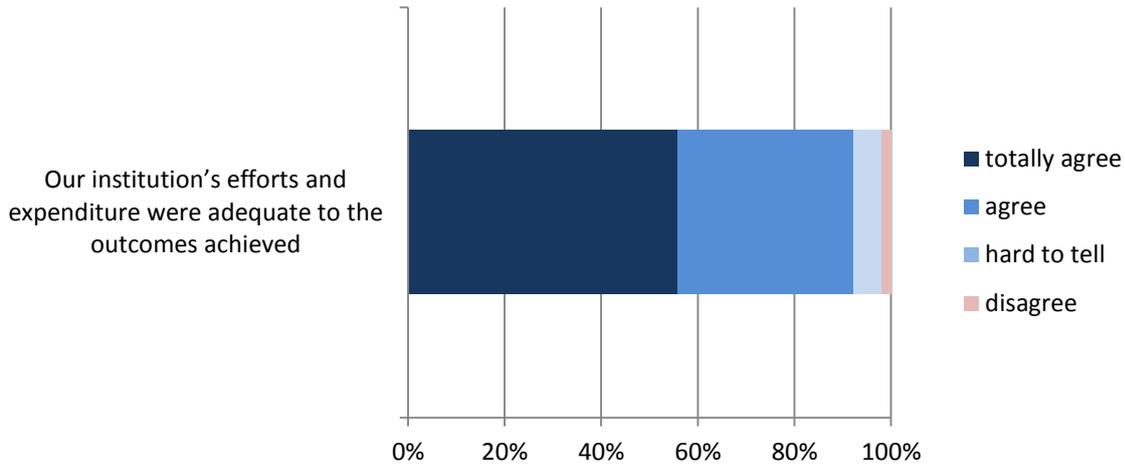


Above all - people and their commitment. Believing that it will work, a fascinating topic, and the coordinator's leadership qualities. Project implementation is about human interactions. It is also essential to be prepared to go the whole hog, as it is not always easy to talk students into cooperation.

If we are able to pay the authors for the preparation of materials, then it is much easier to motivate them to cooperation. Nobody works for free nowadays.

A good leader has to create a team that is easy to cooperate with. They also have to be charismatic and possess organisational skills.

- Condition 2: Flexibility



Respondents say that a flexible approach to previously planned activities allowing for modifications dictated by the changing needs and context of HEI functioning is a very important factor in ensuring quality. Survey participants also mentioned that context when talking about situations, in which unspent funds could finance other objectives linked to high-quality project implementation. It is worth emphasising that effective use of funds was also possible due to the flexibility of the programme itself, which enabled combining training components with spending funds on the purchase of assets, for example specialist equipment and software. More importantly, project teams frequently saw such elements not previously planned as an added value significantly expanding the catalogue of project outcomes.

Thanks to our project savings we had money left for another book.

Sending students to a Warsaw conference to present an article was the added value of the project resulting from the savings we had made. Another value consisted in organising a trip to Gliwice to participate in projects in a practical way.

The Fund enabled everyone of us to find space for ourselves and our ideas.

If only all HEIs made full use of STF flexibility, they would be able to implement much more activities. Unfortunately, not always are they able to take advantage of such opportunities.

- Condition 3: Partnership of good quality

Survey participants often emphasised the choice of a partner institution as something of great importance to high-quality project implementation. It is partners' content-related resources and their commitment that proved immensely important for ensuring the successful implementation of project activities. Respondents also stressed the ease of communication, availability and the willingness to become truly involved in project activities. It is worth emphasising that although

having a foreign partner was not a precondition for obtaining STF funding (the programme offer also envisaged activities without foreign participation), experience in the joint implementation of activities and jointly developed outcomes are a significant contribution to the quality of projects while bringing tremendous satisfaction with their implementation.

A good partner is an institution that replies to emails at once. When I present an idea to them I know at once whether they are interested or not. I write, tell them what this is about, ask - and get a prompt reply.

Not every institution makes a good cooperating party. Hence the extensive selection. The coordinator's personality is also decisive in choosing a partner.

- Condition 4: Institutional support

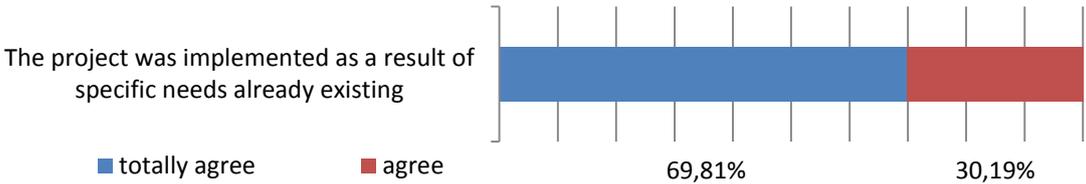
According to respondents' declarations, no high-quality project can be implemented without support provided by fellow staff and the management of the home institution. Both substantive support and assistance with such administrative tasks as compliance with public procurement law requirements, accounting and human resources issues are indispensable within the internal structures of Project Promoters' institution. Respondents often said that it was difficult to implement a good project without openness to new ideas and real willingness to introduce changes to the existing teaching and research activities of HEIs.

We function within a specific structure. The Head of the Chair perfectly understands new technologies, others - not necessarily. Not everyone can imagine the benefits that might be brought by a project.

It is important to have the support of the whole university, its rector, international relations and accounting department. That was a tremendous help. I had the impression that there were people around ready to help me. Institutional support was important, a team of people and students open to novelties.

The rector treats projects as the promotion of the HEI, he does not need much convincing.

- Condition 5: Identification of needs and strategic objectives



The compliance of projects with the strategic objectives of HEIs was another significant condition ensuring quality of STF-funded activities. The belief that analysis of needs plays a key role in ensuring project success was also widespread among external experts assessing applications. In their opinion, failure to identify a HEI's needs in a reliable way often proved to be the biggest weakness of a number of applications.

The obvious need to introduce changes to specific areas of HEI activity facilitates internal synergy between units or even separate faculties, and makes it possible to involve a larger group of employees from various teams. It is the durability of outcomes in particular that is closely linked to performing an appropriate needs assessment still at the stage of developing the concept of a project. There were frequent cases in which the proper identification of recipients' needs saved HEIs from having any additional problems with ensuring outcomes durability.

We lodged an application because the support area suited our needs. We review various calls for proposals and we choose those whose principles are in accordance with our needs

It is not enough to read the guidelines to prepare a good application. No application lacking a good needs analysis and well-determined indicators will be awarded funding.

The idea to do something new emerged much earlier. It is not that we developed a study programme for the purposes of the call for proposals. This is more like looking for a call for proposals whose principles suit our specific ideas.

- Condition 6: Synergy with domestic partners

Survey participants indicated that the involvement of other institutions cooperating with HEIs as a local, regional or industry partner significantly increased ratings given to the quality assessment of projects. Cooperation with local and central government bodies able to extend the sustainability and increase the usefulness of project outcomes to a significant degree was also frequently quoted in this context. Establishing cooperation with domestic partners increases the usefulness of projects and enables the adaptation of HEI activities to the local context, and the development of project outcomes likely to exert particularly significant influence.

The Municipal Guards approached us by themselves. It turned out that we were an interesting partner for them.

We derive great satisfaction when someone uses the results of our research, when research problems are not divorced from reality and when we work to invent something needed by someone.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. In general, Project Promoters have a positive opinion about STF, both in matters of principles and rules, as well as of cooperation with the Operator. Project Promoters find the STF principles of project implementation easy and intelligible - a characteristic to be maintained in future programme editions.
- II. High value of the Fund was the thematic priority. Most survey respondents and interviewees were very glad that the Programme Operator had indicated priority areas of support linked to ecology and environmental protection. The continuation of that kind of priority in future STF editions is worth considering. In their interviews, respondents also said they were

interested in participating in calls for proposals giving priority also to other areas, on condition that the wide scope of the priority would be maintained.

- III. In most projects, emphasis was placed on the didactic and scientific area. In Project Promoters' opinion, the opportunity to implement teaching projects, whose outcomes develop HEIs' teaching offers was one of the most important advantages of STF. Another advantage of the Fund is that research components or investments in the infrastructure of HEIs may be added to such projects, which makes it possible to make them more comprehensive. Project Promoters will welcome the keeping of the comprehensive character of the STF.
- IV. Increasing the sustainability of outcomes is one of the challenge faced by Project Promoter's. The possibility of project outcome commercialisation (marketing the outcomes of implemented projects) is one of the proposed solutions. In principle, STF-funded projects were implemented on the understanding that they should not bring profit to HEIs. However, Project Promoters drew attention to the fact that sharing outcomes for profit would significantly increase their sustainability (e.g. proceeds from sharing a publication for pecuniary consideration could finance its reprinting).
- V. It is very important for the STF universities to establish partnerships with both national and international institutions. The beneficiaries of the partnership projects were very pleased with this cooperation, indicating a number of thematic areas in which the foreign partner brings added value. However, at the same time - as respondents said - Polish HEIs encounter problems with enlisting the cooperation of institutions from the Donor States. Many representatives of HEIs implementing projects without the participation of partners declared they would be willing to involve partner institutions in such activities, if they were given assistance with establishing contact with a prospective partner. Therefore, more support granted to Polish institutions in the matter of establishing partnerships between them and institutions from the Donor States would be welcome. Preparatory Visits and Study Visits seem a step in the right direction, as they make it possible to establish personal contact between employees of various research institutions.
- VI. Project Promoters suggest the Programme Operator should pay special attention to sticking to his fixed time limits and time frames for calls for proposals, selection of projects and making grant settlements. This mainly refers to the time limits for the organisation of the calls for proposals - respondents said that not always were they adapted to the specificity of the functioning of Polish HEIs.
- VII. In the opinion of Project Promoters, streamlining financial procedures (with placing particular emphasis on tendering and subcontracting procedures) is an important issue requiring improvement. They said the low thresholds above which HEIs had to comply with the guidelines of the Public Procurement Act, as well as the complicated process of selecting experts (despite the necessity to declare the participation of specific persons as early as at the application stage) were a major difficulty. The above procedures proved very difficult, especially in the case of small HEIs and project coordinators lacking experience.

VIII. The area of cooperation with the Operator is one of the most important advantages of the second edition of the Scholarship and Training Fund. Project Promoters speak particularly highly of the assistance they received from employees - they felt they had the STF employees' support and personal involvement in the implementation of their projects and in solving problems linked to their activities, as well in answering their questions.