

Evaluation of Polish Development Aid Provided through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland to Support Reforms in Ukraine and Selected Educational Initiatives in Eastern Partnership Countries in 2012-2016

Summary

The objective of the evaluation study *Evaluation of Polish Development Cooperation Provided through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland to Support Reforms in Ukraine and Selected Education Initiatives in EaP Countries in 2012-2016* was to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, utility and innovation of the undertaken development initiatives. The study was done by the IDEA of Development Foundation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July-December 2017. The evaluation was based on field studies (in-depth interviews, questionnaires, graduate tracking) carried out in Ukraine and Poland. Additional methods used were: desk research, case studies, benchmarking, a panel of experts and a SWOT analysis.

The research has led to a positive assessment of Polish development aid implemented in Ukraine and selected education initiatives carried out in the Eastern Partnership countries. Most of the social and economic objectives of the implemented development projects were met in all areas of support. **Measures offered to Ukraine as part of Polish development cooperation are based on Polish transformation experiences and are readily adaptable to Ukrainian conditions.**

Evaluation results – Component I (initiatives supporting reforms in Ukraine)

The Polish experiences served as an inspiration for the Ukrainian party, especially during the initial period of work on decentralization. As time went by, however, Polish practices and references to the Polish model were becoming less frequent. One reason was that other donors greatly increased their assistance (15 big foreign aid programmes are now implemented in Ukraine) and, as a result, Polish experiences are used as an argument in favour of decentralisation rather than as a model of operation. Polish support is mostly visible at the political level in declarations made during official visits and much less so at the level of strategy, programming and implementation.

The effects of carried out activities show that a mechanism of change was triggered covering broadly understood competencies of the participants of activities and the implementation of new mechanisms of running the local government. Other effects were identified such as drafting strategic documents, familiarisation with the way Polish local governments are run, and improving the competencies of local government officials.

With regard to supporting the reform of the Ukrainian education system, the impact of Polish initiatives on comprehensive and systemic changes was much more visible. Moreover, a broad long-term nationwide impact could be expected.

The efficiency of initiatives supporting the education reform could have been greater if the needs of the recipients had been better identified and more emphasis had been placed on the practical aspects of operating the Polish education system. Extending the projects to include the stage of implementation, monitoring and assessment of outcomes would be a big added value. The effectiveness could be increased if university lecturers specialising in education were included in the projects' target group. Currently, they are regarded as reform hinderers.

The strengths of Polish development cooperation in this respect are: high level of aid relevance at both strategic and operational levels, good familiarity with Ukrainian realities coming from experiences and a history of contacts between Polish organisations and Ukrainian partners, and the practical dimension of projects and solutions offered.

General recommendations:

- adopting a more strategic approach to supporting reforms in Ukraine by concentrating initiatives on specific themes, planning in a longer term and others;
- continuing support in areas where ending projects would compromise their outcomes;
- continuing (or even intensifying) support in the following areas: decentralisation and education reform;
- relying more on the existing channels for coordinating Polish activities with other donors;
- Strengthening the institutional presence of Polish development aid in Ukraine.

Evaluation results - Component II (initiatives addressed to firefighting, police and rescue services in Ukraine)

Projects in public security are characterised by high effectiveness in obtaining the assumed hard outcomes and outputs. In the case of some projects, indicators were exceeded. It is more difficult to assess the effectiveness of the soft outcomes because it is rarely measured.

Projects carried out in Component II are very sustainable. Ukrainian services benefit from the knowledge and skills acquired during specialist training. The projects combine education activities with “hard” infrastructural elements (modernisation and renovation of building structures) and equipment transfer. However, the projects are not being monitored for deferred effects.

Fire-fighting projects constitute a Polish “niche” and a “Polish export product.” The initiatives also have large horizontal synergy – subsequent initiatives are based on earlier experiences.

No evidence of complementarity between Polish projects and other donor initiatives was observed and no overlapping ventures in the area of security were identified. In comparison with other donors, Polish support provided to Ukrainian rescue services is systematic, complex and specialist.

General recommendations:

- continuing support for the process of changing the organisation of the national rescue and fire-fighting system in Ukraine;
- cooperating with other donors on fire-fighting projects;
- maintaining concentration and specialisation of rescue aid with a parallel inclusion of new recipients, subjects and areas (provided more funds are available) in initiatives;
- improved monitoring of how the handed-over equipment and gained knowledge and skills are being used;
- continuing cooperation with reliable partners.

Evaluation results – Component III (initiatives in the areas of education in the EaP countries)

The evaluated initiatives should be assessed very favourably both in terms of their outcomes and relevance. Also, their sustainability impact should be pointed out. However, participants said what they appreciated most was the knowledge they had acquired and the possibility to exchange experience with people from other countries.

The sustainability of evaluated initiatives should be assessed positively. Most respondents still draw on the knowledge gained during training, studies and internships in their professional work. Project participants have also said that now they are better off financially.

The fact that some of Poland’s initiatives are unique is also significant which makes our country stand part from our donors and has a positive impact on its image. The potential of all institutions that implement the evaluated projects is also an asset. Their experience and the activities they undertake to improve and develop the initiatives they undertake is the reason to continue them.

Openness, sincerity and willingness to share experiences are some of the things that internship, training and scholarship participants appreciate most in Polish lecturers.

General recommendations:

- better coordination of initiatives and popularisation of good practices of knowledge sharing;
- develop analysis of participants’ needs and introduce graduate tracking;
- introduce minimum information promoting projects.