

*dr Anna Busłowska*¹ 

Department of Socio-Economic Development
Department of Local Development and Spatial Management
Faculty of Economics and Finance
University of Białystok

Experiences and challenges of cooperation in functional urban areas of voivodeship centres in Poland

INTRODUCTION

With the start of the implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investments instrument (ITI) as part of the EU cohesion policy for the 2014–2020 perspective, ITI unions² were established to manage the development of the functional urban area (FUA). Functional areas were obligatorily delimited for voivodeship centres, the capitals of these regions, pursuant to Article 30 of the Act on the principles of implementing cohesion policy programmes financed in the 2014–2020 financial perspective (Dz. U. 2014 poz. 1146) and are continued from 2021–2027. The functioning of these ITI unions and the cooperation processes that take place are a current research problem. FUAs are an important stakeholder of urban and regional policy. Principles of FUA development management within EU policy include supporting the development of cooperation and integration in the functional area, promoting a partnership model of cooperation between administrative units in urban functional areas and implementing integrated

¹ Correspondence address: Anna Busłowska, ul. Warszawska 63, 15-062 Białystok; e-mail: a.buslowska@uwb.edu.pl. ORCID: 0000-0003-2581-380.1.

² ITI unions is a common name used in Polish programming documents for cohesion policy for institutionalised forms of cooperation between local government units within FUAs, which in the EU perspective 2014–2020 were established to implement the ITI instrument. In the 2014–2020 perspective, two forms existed: associations (entities independent of the organisational structures of local governments) or agreements of local government units (the role of the leader of this partnership is played by the FUA's core city (the capital of the voivodeship)). In the 2021–2027 perspective, the forms of ITI unions have been extended to include the possibility of creating also inter-municipal unions, powiat or powiat-municipal unions, as well as metropolitan unions. Therefore, in this work, a common name for these different forms is used – ITI unions. (More: MFiPR, 2023).

projects that respond comprehensively to the needs and problems of cities and their functional areas (MFiPR, 2023). Therefore, monitoring various aspects and challenges of this cooperation is important from the point of view of the success of the FUA development policy.

In particular, studies in the literature on cooperation in FUAs focus on aspects of inter-local government relations, with less analysis of the role of the ITI union offices themselves in the process of FUA management and development. Therefore, the author of this study aimed to present an assessment of cooperation in FUA and its main problems and challenges from the point of view of directors of ITI union offices. The study was conducted in September 2023 using the CAWI survey method and covered 18 FUA VCs in Poland.

THE ROLE AND MODELS OF COOPERATION IN FUNCTIONAL URBAN AREAS BASED ON LITERATURE RESEARCH

The issue of functional urban areas and their development has been discussed for several decades. In foreign literature, this topic includes research on delimitation, the role of FUAs and various socio-economic interactions, particularly commuting between the core city and its functional zone (Karlsson, Olsson, 2006; Sykora, Mulicek, 2009; Hu, Han, 2019; Gu et al., 2015; Dijkstra et al., 2019; Castells-Quintana et al., 2020; Chen, Yeh, 2022). In Polish literature, the topic of functional urban areas has gained particular importance in the EU perspective for 2014–2020, when, in connection with the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) instrument, FUAs were delineated within the country's territorial structure, and ITI unions were established to implement this instrument. Key researchers in Poland focusing on the delimitation, conditions and differentiation of socio-economic development within FUAs include P. Śleszyński (2013), W.M. Gaczek (2015), E. Szafranek (2017; 2018), E. Szafranek and D. Kociuba (2018), A. Nowak (2018), D. Kociuba (2015; 2018), D. Perło (2020), A. Busłowska (2022; 2023) and P. Churski et al. (2023). In particular, research on models of FUA cooperation, its conditions and effects has been conducted by researchers such as J. Sellers and V. Hoffmann-Martinot (2008), F. Kuźnik (2015), J. Krukowska and M. Lackowska (2016), T. Kaczmarek (2017), T. Kaczmarek and D. Kociuba (2017), T. Potkański and L. Wanat (2017), K. Janas and W. Jarczewski (2017), Wolański et al. (2018), K. Kuć-Czajkowska (2019), E. Szafranek (2019) and A. Noworól (2021).

FUA definitions are usually very general, even intuitive. In the context of the topic of cooperation discussed in this article, it can be pointed out that FUA is an area covering geographical units consisting of various interconnected elements. These elements are rationally arranged in space and interconnected by various

flows of people, materials, capital and information, as well as providing conditions for living, production, human recreation and economic activity. The role of strong, centripetal connections between settlement units, the occurrence of common development challenges of a supra-local nature and the great opportunities for cooperation at the level of existing institutions and initiating joint development projects are also emphasised (Kuźnik, 2015, p. 12; Gaczek, 2015, p. 12; Kuć-Czajkowska, 2019, pp. 11–12; Hu, Han, 2019, p. 2).

The definition and delimitation approach of FUA naturally implies the possibility of cooperation among various stakeholders. The goals of such cooperation primarily include the effective allocation of resources, improving the availability and quality of public services, increasing competitiveness, strengthening the development conditions of FUA and, consequently, enhancing the quality of life for residents (Janas, Jarczewski, 2017, p. 8).

The literature on integration and cooperation within metropolitan unions is quite rich; however, with regard to FUAs themselves, this problem is not very well-developed. In particular, there are two general models of cooperation in FUAs: bottom-up and top-down (Kaczmarek, Ryder, 2015; Krukowska, Lackowska, 2016; Kaczmarek, 2017; Kaczmarek, Kociuba, 2017). The top-down model concerns cooperation according to a predetermined procedure based most often on mandatory rules. Often, this path of development towards integrated management of functional areas results from the weaknesses of this process in local structures. This model is represented, for example, by the implementation of the ITI instrument, which centrally determines the number of ITI beneficiaries (delimitation criteria) and the need to establish ITI unions. In the long term, this form of integration in the functional areas may turn out to be unstable, and centralism may lead to unsustainable development and generate internal inequalities. The bottom-up model is the recommended one. Here, the integration of functional area management takes place on the basis of existing development problems. Their accumulation creates a barrier to the development of the entire functional area, and then there is a need for cooperation and the selection of appropriate development policy tools. In this model, cooperation is perceived as an important element of effective functioning, both organisational and socio-economic (Krukowska, Lackowska, 2016, pp. 85–87; Kaczmarek, 2017, pp. 158–162; Kaczmarek, Kociuba, 2017, pp. 49–51).

The above-described models seem adequate to the conditions for creating FUA VC in Poland. In some of them, there were institutionalised forms of cooperation (as bottom-up initiatives), even before the implementation of the ITI instrument, within metropolitan areas of: Gdańsk, Gdynia-Sopot (since 2011), Poznań (since 2011) and Szczecin (since 2005). The other functional areas were created obligatorily in the period of 2013–2015, in connection with the implementation of the ITI instrument into cohesion policy (Kuć-Czajkowska, 2019, pp. 340–341).

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research goal, a survey method was used by employing the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) questionnaire. The advantage of this method is sending the survey directly to specific groups of recipients, ensuring the anonymity of respondents (no so-called “interviewer effect”). Moreover, it is an economically effective method because it does not require interviewers or additional expensive tools. However, the disadvantages of this method include a high drop-out rate or deviation from representativeness (a lack of control over who fills out the survey) (SurvGo, 2023).

The survey was conducted between September 8 and 21, 2023, using a form created in Google. Then, a link to the survey was sent by e-mail to 18 directors of ITI union offices in the FUA VC in Poland with a request to complete the survey questionnaire. Each ITI union had to return one survey form. As a result, responses were received from 12 ITI unions (67%). The questionnaire included eight multiple-choice questions and a survey metric. Questions regarding the rating of the studied phenomena were formulated using a five-point Likert scale. The survey questions were developed based on the author’s own experience working in one of the ITI unions and were verified with the participation of employees from this union. The questions aimed to assess the cooperation of ITI union offices, both with stakeholders of the FUA development policy and in its basic aspects. In Questions 1 to 4, respondents assessed cooperation with various entities and in various areas, as well as the main problems of cooperation in the past 2014–2020 EU perspective. Questions 5 to 6 focused only on the general assessment of cooperation between ITI union offices and the local governments forming the FUA. The last two questions were related to the assessment of challenges and directions of cooperation for ITI unions in the future.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Referring to the characteristics of the respondent group, it can be noted that the majority of survey participants (83%) were ITI union offices that began to operate due to the implementation of the ITI instrument in the 2014–2020 perspective. In 17% of cases, this cooperation had existed before, but in a different territorial or organisational scope. The majority of participants in the survey were ITI unions operating as associations (67%), while the others were unions operating as agreements. In some ITI unions during the 2014–2020 perspective, there was a different partnership model, and the ratio among respondents would have been 50:50. This shows that FUAs operating under agreements have evolved into separate institutions (e.g., FUA Lublin, Toruń). The majority of the respondents

(41%) were from FUAs with the number of local government units ranging from 10 to 20, 25% from the range of 21–30 units, and 17% from ranges above 40 units and up to 10 units in each FUA. Moreover, 67% of the surveyed entities employed up to 10 people in the ITI office, 25% had 11–20 employees and 8% had more than 20 people. It can, therefore, be concluded that the survey responses came from a diverse group of respondents, and the results can be considered reliable.

As a result of the survey, it was observed that the assessment of cooperation within the FUA VC by ITI union offices is mostly positive. At the beginning, respondents were asked to give an overall assessment of the level of cooperation of the ITI union office with various stakeholders and development policy actors in the 2014–2020 EU perspective (Figure 1). Analysis of the data shows that 75% of the survey participants rated this cooperation as good and 25% as very good. There were no negative or average ratings, indicating that the ITI union offices have a positive relationship with different stakeholders and a positive experience in this respect.

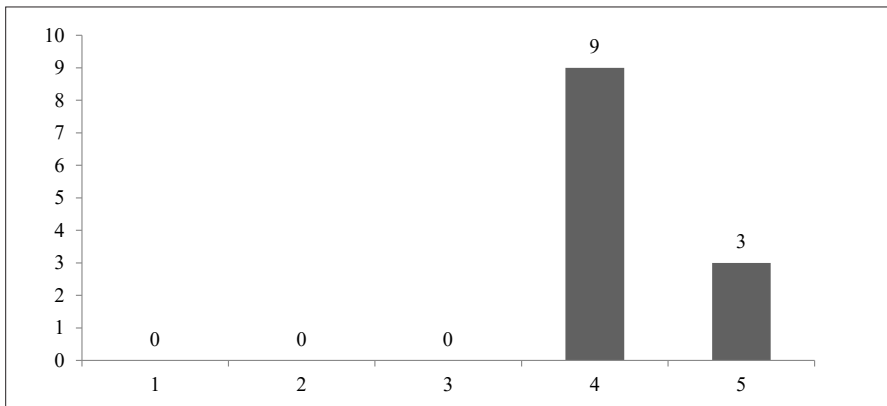


Figure 1. Number of responses assessing the level of cooperation between the ITI office and various development policy stakeholders

Legend: 1 – very bad; 2 – bad; 3 – medium (neither good nor bad); 4 – good; 5 – very good.

Source: own study.

Respondents were also asked to assess, in more detail, the cooperation of the ITI union office with the indicated development policy stakeholders in the frame of the 2014–2020 perspective, also on a scale from 1 to 5 (Table 1). Best of all, 100% of respondents gave very good ratings to cooperation with other ITI unions. This shows very good relations between these entities and great potential for further cooperation. ITI union offices are aware of common challenges and their role and create an active cooperation network, which can be considered a huge added value. The majority of respondents (75%) also assessed the cooperation

with the local government units that create FUA as very good. The worst rating was level 3, most people (50%) indicating cooperation with local entrepreneurs and residents of FUA. This may result from a relatively small number of activities carried out under the ITI instrument for these groups of recipients. In relation to the remaining stakeholders, the ratings were quite scattered between 3 and 5. In general, it can be summarised that ITI union offices assessed cooperation with the different stakeholders positively, as there were no negative ratings.

Table 1. Number of responses regarding the assessment of cooperation between the ITI union office and indicated development policy stakeholders

Scale/stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5	N/a
Local governments forming the FUA				3	9	
Other local governments and central government			2	6	4	
Managing and Intermediate Bodies of operational programmes			3	6	3	
Local entrepreneurs and business support organisations			6	2	1	3
Scientific and research institutions			2	5	2	3
NGOs			4	2	3	3
The FUA residents			6	3	1	2
Other ITI union offices					12	
Other stakeholders			1	6		5

Legend: 1 – very bad, 2 – bad, 3 – medium, 4 – good, 5 – very good.

Source: own study.

In the research study, respondents were also asked for an assessment of the importance of cooperation in various areas (Table 2). In this case, the ratings ranged on a full scale from 1 (not an important area of cooperation) to 5 (very important). The worst ratings, levels 1 and 2, were only single responses in some areas. However, most respondents (25%) indicated cooperation with other ITI unions in Europe as a little important, and almost 42% rated it as average (3), while only about 17% considered it very important and the same number indicated they did not cooperate. There is certainly a gap and future development potential here. The FUAs' problems and their scale in Poland and Europe may differ significantly, but the exchange of experiences in this area may prove to be a valuable opportunity for better development. On the other hand, the most important areas of cooperation (83% of respondents) were: cooperation with other ITI union offices in Poland, implementation of the FUA/ITI development strategy and acting as an Intermediate Body in the process of implementing the ITI instrument. The above shows that ITI union offices were most actively involved in the implementation of EU funds, and this was a very important area of cooperation for them.

Table 2. Number of responses assessing the importance of cooperation in selected areas

Scale/areas of cooperation	1	2	3	4	5	N/a
Preparation and implementation of the FUA development strategy/ITI strategy				2	10	
Cooperation with FUA local governments in areas not related to the implementation of the ITI instrument		1		6	5	
Cooperation at various levels between various stakeholders of the FUA development policy, also beyond the implementation of the ITI instrument				5	6	1
Joint implementation of partnership projects with local government units that form the FUA		1		4	7	
Supporting FUA local governments in obtaining external sources of financing (beyond ITI)	1	1	3	2	3	2
Exchange of knowledge and experience between FUA local governments and other partners		1		4	6	1
Cooperation with various ITI union offices in Poland				1	10	1
Cooperation with various ITI union offices in Europe		3	5		2	2
Acting as an Intermediate Body in the process of implementing the ITI instrument				1	10	1
Other			3	1	1	7

Legend: 1 – not important; 2 – a little important; 3 – medium importance; 4 – important; 5 – very important.

Source: own study.

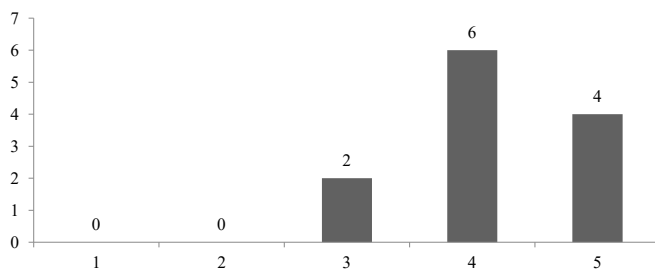
In the next step of the research, respondents were asked to select and/or write the three most important problems related to cooperation under the FUA in the 2014–2020 perspective (Table 3). Half of the respondents indicated that the issues were bureaucracy and an overly complex system of legal regulations, as well as insufficient financing for the implementation of the tasks planned under the ITI strategy. A third of respondents also indicated difficulties in cooperation with Managing and Intermediate Bodies of operational programmes and challenges in reconciling the needs of various FUA stakeholders. No one reported problems with cooperation with the authorities of local government units belonging to the FUA; however, one response concerned the low motivation to cooperate among employees of the ITI union office and FUA local governments. Although this may not be a common problem, it is worth mentioning that in some FUAs, there is an institution of “coordinators”. These are most often employees of FUA local government units who additionally perform tasks related to cooperation with ITI union offices. An overload of professional duties may result in low motivation and commitment among these individuals in their work.

Table 3. Answers regarding problems related to cooperation in FUAs in the 2014–2020 EU perspective

Cooperation problems	Percentage of responses provided (12=100%)
A lack of or low commitment to cooperation among local governments (authorities) forming the FUA	0
A lack of or low commitment to cooperation among the Managing and Intermediate Bodies of the national and regional operational programmes	33
A lack of or low commitment to cooperation among other FUA development policy stakeholders	25
Difficulties in reconciling the needs of different stakeholders regarding the functioning of the ITI union and the implementation of the ITI strategy	33
Overly complex system of laws, guidelines and bureaucratic procedures in dealing with external institutions	50
Low motivation for cooperation among ITI union office staff and FUA local government units employees	8
Difficulties in organising the work of the ITI union office due to staff shortages	25
A lack of funding for all tasks within the ITI union office, including the implementation of the ITI Strategy	50
Other	0

Source: own study.

In the frame of research, respondents also rated the overall involvement of the local governments forming the FUA, in cooperation and joint action for the development of the entire functional area on a scale from 1 (no involvement) to 5 (very strong involvement) (Figure 2). In this case, the level of involvement was rated as good by half of the respondents, 33% assessed it as very good and 17% as medium. This can be considered a positive result, which shows an understanding of the objectives and a willingness to work together for the development of the FUAs.

**Figure 2. Number of responses concerning the assessment of the level of involvement of local governments forming the FUA in cooperation and joint activities for the development of the FUA**

Source: own study.

Then, respondents were asked to rate the commitment to cooperation of the local authorities forming the FUA, but in some selected aspects (Table 4). Although in the previous question the involvement of local governments in cooperation was generally well-rated, in the case of specific areas of this cooperation, the results were more varied and ranged from 1 (no involvement) to 4 (strong involvement). There were no ratings of 5 (the best rating). The best rating and majority of responses concerned participation in the preparation of the territorial strategy for the 2021–2027 EU perspective and other FUA development programmes (75%), as well as providing support to ITI union offices in their contacts with Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies (58%). Half of the respondents rated their involvement in the planning and implementation of current tasks at the ITI union offices, as well as in jointly applying for external funding for projects and implementing partnership projects, as medium. Generally, it can be observed that local governments are most strongly involved in cooperation concerning the strategic activities of the FUA and in supporting contacts with the institutions financing the development of the FUA. On the one hand, this seems justified, but on the other, it can limit a wider field of cooperation in other aspects – such as the consolidation and networking within the FUA.

Table 4. Number of responses assessing the involvement of the FUA local authorities in various aspects of cooperation

Scale/areas	1	2	3	4	5	N/a
Support in contacts with Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies of operational programmes		1	4	7		
Participation in the preparation of the strategy for the 2021–2027 perspective and other FUA development programmes			3	9		
Participation in the planning and implementation of the ITI union office's current tasks	1	3	6	2		
Representing the interests and promoting the objectives of the ITI union in the national/international arena	2	4	5	1		
Joint application for external funding for projects (ITI union office and FUA local governments)	2	1	6	3		
Involvement in partnership projects (ITI union office and FUA local governments)		1	6	5		
Other	4		5			3

Legend: 1 – no commitment, 2 – weak commitment, 3 – medium commitment, 4 – strong commitment, 5 – very strong commitment.

Source: own study.

The next part of the research concerned challenges related to cooperation in the 2021–2027 EU perspective (Table 5). Here, the responses were quite diverse. The most frequently raised issue was obtaining external financial resources for both the implementation of the FUA development strategy (67%) and the operation of the ITI union offices themselves (58%). Half of the ITI unions also considered the implementation of integrated projects as part of the newly developed ITI strategies for 2021–2027 to be a significant challenge. Only 42% considered building partnerships within the FUA between different stakeholders to be the main challenge. In general, the answers to this question show that for ITI union offices, tasks related to the implementation of development strategies and securing financing for this purpose remain the main challenges. Other aspects seem less important, which may also indicate that the opportunities to deepen cooperation within the FUA are not being fully exploited. In the future, this may be particularly dangerous for those ITI unions, where the cooperation model was imposed top-down, rather than being bottom-up initiatives from local governments.

Table 5. Answers regarding the challenges related to cooperation under FUA in the 2021–2027 EU perspective

Challenges of cooperation	Percentage of responses provided (12=100%)
Obtaining external funding (outside the local government budget) to finance the ITI union offices	58
Obtaining external funding (outside the local government budget) to finance projects related to the implementation of development strategies, including the ITI strategy	67
Implementation of integrated projects within the ITI union	50
Organising a platform of cooperation for new members (local governments) of the FUA	17
Building partnerships and cooperation within the FUA between various stakeholders of development policy	42
Commitment to cooperation and exchange of experiences between ITI unions both in individual voivodeships and at the national and international levels	17
Supporting the competencies of institutions and organisations necessary to implement the FUA development strategy, including the ITI strategy	33
Other: own answer: obtaining financial resources for municipal coordinators	8

Source: own study.

At the end, ITI unions were asked to assess the durability of cooperation in the future and its directions by marking the sentences with which respondents agreed (Table 6). None of the respondents believed that the current state of

cooperation is sufficient, but one person stated that, in his opinion, the cooperation is not lasting and is implemented only because of the ITI instrument. However, the majority of respondents (75%) see the role of ITI union offices as coordinators of FUA development and the possibility of deepening this cooperation. Half of the respondents would also see a role for the ITI union offices as Intermediate Bodies, supporting the implementation of EU funds in the FUA. Slightly more than 40% of respondents also indicated that ITI unions of voivodeship centres should be the coordinators of cooperation for all FUAs operating in the voivodeship. Overall, therefore, it can be observed that the ITI unions see their main role further in the implementation of the ITI instrument, which continues to be the primary funding tool for FUAs.

Table 6. Answers regarding the evaluation of cooperation in the FUAs in the future

Cooperation perspectives in the future	Percentage of responses provided (12=100%)
I consider the current role, the tasks performed and the cooperation to be sufficient	0
I believe that our ITI union should be the coordinator of the cooperation of all FUAs in the voivodeship	42
I believe that our ITI union office should act as an Intermediate Body for European funds under the FUA development policy	50
I believe that our ITI union should focus more widely on tourism and economic promotion, as well as social activation of FUA residents	17%
I believe that the level of inter-local government cooperation in our ITI union is not durable and the union will cease to exist with the end of EU funding for the development of the FUA	8
Cooperation within our ITI union is developing very well and, in the future, the role of the ITI union office as coordinator of FUA development will become increasingly important	75

Source: own study.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective shaping of FUA development policy requires constant monitoring of relations and cooperation between different stakeholders. Such an assessment should be carried out not only in relations between local governments, but also in relation to entities and organisational structures established to manage this development, such as ITI union offices. The study conducted allowed for observation of how ITI union offices assess cooperation within the FUA. Among the basic observations and final conclusions, the following issues can be highlighted:

- 1) Overall, ITI union offices have positive cooperative relationships and experiences with other entities, which is an asset in shaping and deepening these relationships for further development of FUA in the future. ITI union offices should act as the “creator” and “initiator” of this cooperation.
- 2) Some of the best assessments concerned cooperation between ITI unions, offices of FUAs and VC. It was observed that they create an active partnership network. Together, they can be an important player in development policy not only at the FUA or voivodeship level, but also at the national one.
- 3) Among the different stakeholders, cooperation with the FUA local governments was also generally well-assessed. This is a positive sign, indicating a common understanding of the objectives of the FUA and its role. In general, it can be observed that local governments are most strongly involved in cooperation regarding strategic activities and providing support in dealing with the FUA’s development funding institutions. They are less involved in other additional tasks of the ITI union. Furthermore, the implementation of the FUA development strategy/ITI strategy was identified as the most important area of cooperation. Moreover, for the respondents, the main challenges remain the implementation of the FUA development strategy/ITI strategy and ensuring adequate financing for this purpose. Other aspects seem less important, which proves that cooperation is limited primarily to activities related to obtaining EU financing in the frame of ITI. This is of, course, justified, but it may limit strengthening the foundations of cooperation in the future, for example in the case of a lack of EU funding. Other authors of similar empirical studies also draw attention to such a risk: Kuć-Czajkowska (2019), Janas and Jarczewski (2017), Krukowska and Lackowska (2016).
- 4) The lowest rating received was for cooperation with FUA entrepreneurs and residents. This is certainly an area for improvement, as these actors are important stakeholders in development policy and a pillar of development for the entire FUA. Furthermore, a certain gap in cooperation with other ITI unions in Europe can be observed. Some of the ITI unions have been in existence for a relatively short period of time (about 10 years), and it can be assumed that this has not been a priority for cooperation so far. In the future, however, a broader exchange of experience in this area and the use of European good practices could be considered.
- 5) An important element of cooperation for ITI unions was also acting as an Intermediate Body in the process of implementing the ITI instrument in FUAs in 2014–2020 (also see: Wolański et al., 2018, pp. 132–133), and, generally, the respondents see such a role in the future. Unfortunately, in the case of some ITI unions (e.g., in FUA Białystok), the potential built in 2014–2020 as

an Intermediate Body will not be used in the 2021–2027 EU perspective, due to a change in the funding model for ITI union offices. This can be evaluated negatively, as a huge waste of experience gained and developed procedures.

- 6) Another important observation is the fact that the length of cooperation influenced its better ratings. Those ITI unions that were established as bottom-up initiatives of local governments, before the implementation of ITI, assessed cooperation and its prospects better. Also, in general, the ratings in the survey were better when the ITI union operated as an association. In particular, in the case of assessments of the durability of cooperation, they were more optimistic. Similar conclusions were also found in other studies – for example, Wolański *et al.* (2018), Kuć-Czajkowska (2019).

In conclusion, it can be noted that cooperation within the FUAs has generally been assessed positively. In the light of the research, it can be concluded that in relation to the ITI union goals (*Programowanie perspektywy...*, 2024; MFiPR, 2023), these unions implement cooperation tasks sufficiently. It can be observed that there is a commitment to cooperation in various forms and with various stakeholders, which facilitates better creation of the FUA development policy and coordination of projects implemented in the frame of the ITI strategy. Additionally, it can be noted that the established ITI unions have the potential to become stronger leaders and creators of this cooperation, rather than just administrators of EU funding. Certainly, important here is the role of local governments cooperating in the FUA, which should not treat ITI unions as a mechanism for obtaining funding but should increase their potential as coordinators of FUA development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Busłowska, A. (2022). Zróżnicowanie rozwoju miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych ośrodków wojewódzkich w Polsce. *Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy (Social Inequalities and Economic Growth)*, 70, 70–85. DOI: 10.15584/nsawg.2022.2.5.
- Busłowska, A. (2023). *Zintegrowane inwestycje terytorialne a kształtowanie się spójności terytorialnej miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych ośrodków wojewódzkich w Polsce Wschodniej*. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku. DOI: 10.15290/ZITKSTMOFOWPW.2023.
- Castells-Quintana, D., Royuela, V., Veneri, P. (2020). Inequality and city size: an analysis for OECD functional urban areas. *Papers in Regional Science*, 99(4), 1045–1064. DOI: 10.1111/pirs.12520.
- Chen, Z., Yeh, A.G.O. (2022). Delineating functional urban areas in Chinese mega city regions using fine-grained population data and cellphone location data: A case of Pearl River Delta. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, 93, 101771. DOI: 10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2022.101771.

- Churski, P., Adamiak, C., Szyda, B., Dubownik, A., Pietrzykowski, M., Śleszyński, P. (2023). Nowa delimitacja miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych w Polsce i jej zastosowanie w praktyce zintegrowanego podejścia terytorialnego (place based approach). *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 95(1), 29–55. DOI: 10.7163/PrzG.2023.1.2.
- Dijkstra, L., Poelman, H., Veneri, P. (2019). The EU-OECD definition of a functional urban area. *OECD Regional Development Working Papers*, 11, 1–18. DOI: 10.1787/d58cb34d-en.
- Gaczek, W.M. (2015). Szanse i zagrożenia rozwoju wielkomiejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych na przykładzie aglomeracji poznańskiej. *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu*, 39, 11–22. DOI: 10.15611/PN.2015.391.01.
- Gu, C., Wang, Y., Shao, Y., Gu, J. (2015). Research on administrative divisions based on functional areas analysis: A case of Shaoxing metropolitan area. *Acta Geographica Sinica*, 70(8), 1187–1201. DOI: 10.11821/dlxb201508001.
- Hu, Y., Han, Y. (2019). Identification of Urban Functional Areas Based on POI Data: A Case Study of the Guangzhou Economic and Technological Development Zone. *Sustainability*, 11(5), 2–15. DOI: 10.3390/su11051385.
- Janas, K., Jarczewski, W. (eds.). (2017). *Raport o stanie polskich miast. Zarządzanie i współpraca w miejskich obszarach funkcjonalnych*. Kraków: Instytut Rozwoju Miast.
- Kaczmarek, T., Ryder, A. (2015). Top-down and bottom-up metropolitan integration in Poland. In: J. Buček, A. Ryder (eds.), *Governance in Transition* (pp. 19–40). Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media B.V. DOI: 10.1007/978-94-007-5503-1.
- Kaczmarek, T. (2017). Miejskie obszary funkcjonalne – problemy integracji zarządzania. *Studia KPZK PAN*, 174, 157–167. DOI: 10.24425/118528.
- Kaczmarek, T., Kociuba, D. (2017). Models of governance in the urban functional areas: policy lessons from the implementation of integrated territorial investments (ITIs) in Poland. *Quaestiones Geographicae*, 36(4), 47–64. DOI: 10.1515/quageo-2017-0035.
- Karlsson, C., Olsson, M. (2006). The Identification of functional regions: theory, methods, and applications. *The Annals of Regional Science*, 40(1), 1–18. DOI: 10.1007/s00168-005-0019-5.
- Kociuba, D. (2015). Miejskie obszary funkcjonalne – wyzwania planistyczne. *Studia Miejskie*, 18, 39–53. DOI: 10.25167/sm.2424.
- Kociuba, D. (2018). Teoria i praktyka wsparcia zrównoważonego rozwoju miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych w Polsce. *Biuletyn KPZK PAN*, 272, 316–327.
- Krukowska, J., Lackowska, M. (2016). Metropolitalne kolory europeizacji. Instytucjonalizacja współpracy w funkcjonalnych obszarach miejskich w Polsce w świetle nowych instrumentów polityki spójności UE. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 1(63), 82–107. DOI: 10.7366/1509499516304.
- Kuć-Czajkowska, K. (2019.) *Obszary funkcjonalne miast wojewódzkich w Polsce. Przestrzeń współpracy i konkurencji samorządów terytorialnych*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Kuźnik, F. (2015). Miejskie obszary funkcjonalne a polityka miejska. *Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach*, 250, 7–24.

- MFIPR. (2022). Zasady realizacji instrumentów terytorialnych w Polsce w perspektywie finansowej UE na lata 2021-2027. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/zasady-realizacji-instrumentow-terytorialnych-w-polsce-w-perspektywie-finansowej-ue-na-lata-2021-2027> (2023.09.01).
- Nowak, A. (2018). Miejsce miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych w procesie rozwoju regionalnego. *Rozwój Regionalny i Polityka Regionalna*, 41, 51–69. DOI: 10.14746/rpr.2018.41.05.
- Noworól, A. (2021). *Hybrydyzacja zarządzania rozwojem terytorialnym*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Perło, D. (2020). The importance of sustainable urban mobility in shaping the quality of life of the inhabitants of functional urban areas. *Optimum. Economic Studies*, 4(102), 91–108. DOI: 10.15290/oes.2020.04.102.08.
- Potkański, T., Wanat, L. (2017). Dylematy rozwoju miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych z perspektywy partnerstw międzysamorządowych. *Studia KPZK PAN*, 174, 235–245. DOI: 10.24425/118535.
- Programowanie perspektywy finansowej 2014–2020, Umowa Partnerstwa. Retrieved from: <https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/strony/o-funduszach/dokumenty/umowa-partnerstwa/> (2024.03.12).
- Sellers, J., Hoffmann-Martinot, V. (2008), Metropolitan governance, United Cities and Local Governments. World Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy. Barcelona: United Cities and Local Governments. Retrieved from: https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/GOLDI_%20EN.pdf (2023.09.01).
- Sýkora, L., Mulicek, O. (2009). The micro-regional nature of functional urban areas (fuas): Lessons from the analysis of the Czech urban and regional system. *Urban Research & Practice*, 2, 287–307. DOI: 10.1080/17535060903319228.
- Szafranek, E. (2017). Miejskie obszary funkcjonalne a kształtowanie spójności terytorialnej. *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu*, 467, 113–129. DOI: 10.15611/pn.2017.467.10.
- Szafranek, E. (2018). Variability of the level of development of functional urban areas. *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu*, 502, 113–124. DOI: 10.15611/pn.2018.502.11.
- Szafranek, E., Kociuba, D. (2018). Development of urban areas in the conditions of territorial-oriented policy – theoretical assumptions and experience in functional areas of polish cities. *Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach*, 15(361), 53–75.
- Szafranek, E. (2019). *Terytorializacja polityki rozwoju*. Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.
- SurvGo, *Metodologia CAWI – technika badawcza*. Retrieved from: <https://www.survgo.com/blog/metodologia-cawi-technika-badawcza> (2023.09.01).
- Śleszyński, P. (2013). Delimitacja miejskich obszarów funkcjonalnych stolic województw. *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 85(2), 173–197. DOI: 10.7163/PrzG.2013.2.2.
- Ustawa o zasadach realizacji programów w zakresie polityki spójności finansowanych w perspektywie finansowej 2014–2020. (Dz. U. 2014 poz. 1146, ze zm.).

Wolański, M., Ledzion, B., Borowczak, A., Płoszaj, A., Kupiec, T., Popis, Z., Haber, A., Mrozowski, W. (2018). *Ewaluacja systemu realizacji instrumentu ZIT w perspektywie finansowej UE na lata 2014–2020. Raport końcowy – wersja II*. Retrieved from: https://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/media/62252/RK_ewaluacja_ZIT_na_strone.pdf (2023.09.01).

Summary

Functional urban areas (FUA) are an important stakeholder in urban policy. They were constituted in the institutionalised form of the so-called “ITI unions” (associations or local government agreements) in the 2014–2020 EU perspective, as the main entities for the implementation of the cohesion policy instrument – integrated territorial investments (ITI). Monitoring the role, various aspects and challenges of cooperation is important from the viewpoint of the success of an effective FUA development policy. Research in the literature on cooperation in FUA focuses mainly on aspects of cooperation between local governments, with less analysis of the role of the ITI union offices themselves in this process. Taking the above into account, the aim of this work is to assess the cooperation and its main problems and challenges from the perspective of the ITI union offices. Therefore, from September 8–22, 2023, a survey using the CAWI technique was carried out in 18 FUAs of voivodeship capitals in Poland. Feedback forms were sent by 67% of the respondents (12 unions). The results obtained mostly indicate good and very good assessments of the cooperation conducted by ITI union offices with various stakeholders and in different areas. The basic cooperation partners here, of course, remain FUA local governments, but also other ITI union offices in Poland. Cooperation is still focused mainly on aspects related to the implementation of the FUA development strategy (primarily the ITI instrument). The survey showed that ITI unions generally strive to build positive relationships with other stakeholders, which may provide potential for FUA development in the future.

Keywords: cooperation, functional urban areas.

Doświadczenia i wyzwania współpracy w miejskich obszarach funkcjonalnych ośrodków wojewódzkich w Polsce

Streszczenie

Miejskie obszary funkcjonalne stanowią istotnego interesariusza polityki miejskiej. Ukonstytuowały się one w zinstytucjonalizowanej formie tzw. związków ZIT (stowarzyszenia lub porozumienia międzygminne) w perspektywie 2014–2020, jako główne podmioty do wdrożenia instrumentu polityki spójności – zintegrowanych inwestycji terytorialnych (ZIT), dedykowanego właśnie miejskim obszarom funkcjonalnym. Monitorowanie roli, różnych aspektów, wyzwań prowadzonej współpracy jest ważne z punktu widzenia powodzenia skutecznej polityki rozwoju w ramach MOF. Badania w literaturze przedmiotu dotyczące współpracy w MOF koncentrują się głównie na aspektach współpracy między samorządowej, mniej analizując miejsce w tym procesie samych biur związków ZIT. Mając na uwadze powyższe celem pracy jest ocena prowadzonej współpracy i jej główne wyzwania z punktu widzenia biur związków ZIT ośrodków wojewódzkich w Polsce. W związku z tym w dniach 8–22 września 2023 roku przeprowadzono badanie ankietowe techniką CAWI w 18 miejskich obszarach funkcjonalnych ośrodków wojewódzkich w Polsce. Formularze zwrotne nadesłało 67% grupy respondentów (12 związków). Uzyskane wyniki wskazują w więk-

szości na dobre i bardzo dobre oceny prowadzonej współpracy przez te związki z różnymi interesariuszami i w różnych obszarach. Podstawowym partnerem współpracy pozostają tu oczywiście samorządy danego MOF, ale też inne biura związków ZIT w Polsce, a koncentruje się ona dalej głównie na aspektach związanych z wdrażaniem strategii rozwoju MOF (przede wszystkim samego instrumentu ZIT). Ankieta pokazała, że związki ZIT generalnie budują pozytywne relacje z innymi interesariuszami, co stanowi potencjał do rozwoju MOF w przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: współpraca, miejskie obszary funkcjonalne.

JEL: O18, H79.